



SHEMOT

STILL HERE, BUT WHY?

Survival Explained—or Not

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Shemot

The Children of Israel multiply in Egypt. Threatened by their growing numbers, Pharaoh enslaves them and orders the Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Pu'ah, to kill all male babies at birth. When they do not comply, he commands his people to cast the Hebrew babies into the Nile.

A child is born to Jochebed—the daughter of Levi—and her husband, Amram. This baby is placed in a basket on the river, while the baby's sister, Miriam, stands watch from afar. Pharaoh's daughter discovers the boy, raises him as her son, and names him Moses.

As a young man, Moses leaves the palace and discovers the hardship of his people. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and kills the Egyptian. The next day, he sees two Jews fighting; when he admonishes them, they reveal his deed of the previous day, and Moses is forced to flee to Midian. There, he rescues Jethro's daughters, marries one of them (Zipporah), and becomes a shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks.

G d appears to Moses in a Burning Bush at the foot of Mount Sinai and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and

demand, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me." Moses's brother, Aaron, is appointed to serve as his spokesman. In Egypt, Moses and Aaron assemble the elders of Israel to tell them that the time of their redemption has come. The people believe them, but Pharaoh refuses to let them go and even intensifies the suffering of Israel.

Moses returns to G d to protest, "Why have You done evil to this people?" G d promises that their redemption is close at hand.



עַם הַנֶּצַח—*"am hanetzach"*

The Jewish people are called the "eternal nation."

TEXT 1

*Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak
Hakohen Kook, Igrot
Avraham Yitzchak
Hakohen 3, Epistle 771*

וּגְאוֹן יַעֲקֹב הוֹלֵךְ הוּא וּמוֹשֵׁךְ מְשֻׁךְ עֲנוֹת צְדָק בְּכָל תּוֹעֲפוֹת רוּחוֹ וּבְכָל הַיְקוּם . . . שׁוֹמֵעַ הוּא אֶת דְּפִיקַת הַשָּׁעוֹת וְהַרְגָּעִים מִתּוֹךְ רִגְשֵׁת הַרְת עוֹלָמִים שֶׁל נְצָחֵי נְצָחִים. וְהוֹלֵךְ הוּא וְחוֹצֵה בְּעִזּוֹז נְצָחוֹ, בְּתוֹךְ שְׁטָפֵי גְלֵי הַזְּמַנִּים, וּמִימֵיהֶם וַיְמִי שְׁאוֹנָם פְּהֵמוֹן מִים כְּבִירִים לֹא יִבְעֲתוּהוּ. יוֹדֵעַ הוּא כִּי כּוֹתֵם, כֹּחַ עוֹבֵר הוּא, וְעִמּוֹ עִזּוֹז נְצַח וְהוּד מִמְקוֹר חַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם. אֲשֶׁר בְּחִילוֹ יָשׁוּב וַיִּחְיֶה גַם כָּל מֵתֵי עוֹלָמִים. בְּנְצָחוֹ יִנְצַח כָּל רְגָעִים שׁוֹטְפִים, אֲשֶׁר נִהְיוּ לְיָמִים וְשָׁבוּעוֹת וַיִּקְוּוּ בְּמַעֲיָן הַנְּצַח, בְּיָם הַחִירוֹת הָעֶלְיוֹן.

Jacob strides forward with pride and winds the tendrils of righteousness as his spirit rises across the world. . . . He hears the ticking of hours and moments with a sense of perpetuity and eternity. He journeys onward with eternal strength and forges the floods of waves and flow of time; days of sorrow, like a multitude of mighty waters, never frighten him.

He knows their force is merely passing, while he derives strength, eternity, and splendor from the Source of all existence. With G-d's might, Jacob will be returned, and those who perished, resurrected. His eternity will overcome the fleeting moments that coalesce into days and weeks and pool in the wellspring of eternity—the supernal sea of freedom.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Do you believe we are an eternal, immortal nation?
If yes, by what merit do we deserve this?



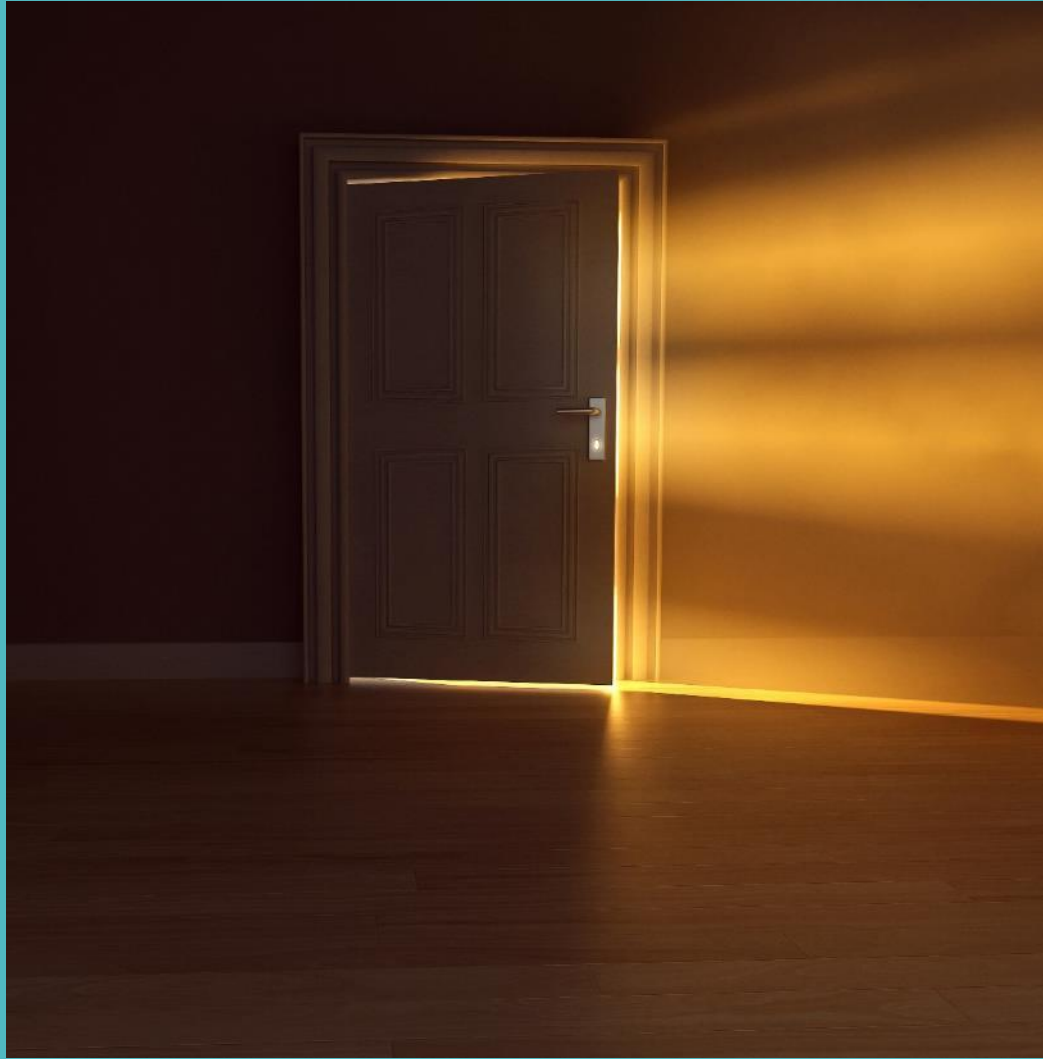
TEXT 2

Talmud, Sotah 12a

בְּשָׂעָה שֶׁנִּוְלַד מֹשֶׁה, נִתְמַלֵּא הַבַּיִת כּוֹלוֹ אֹר.
כְּתִיב הֶכָּא: "וַתֵּרָא אוֹתוֹ כִּי טוֹב הוּא", וְכִתִּיב
הֵתָם: "וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאֹר כִּי טוֹב".

The moment Moses was born, the entire home filled with light.

[We know this from a juxtaposition of two passages.] One verse states, "And she [his mother] saw that Moses was good" (Exodus 2:2). Another verse states, "And G-d saw that the light was good" (Genesis 1:4).



When Moses was born, the house was filled with the light of his soul, as his body didn't obstruct his soul.

QUESTION

Why does the Torah describe Moses' light, and what are we meant to learn from it?

TEXT 3

*Jerusalem Talmud, Rosh
Hashanah 3:8*

אימתי שישראל משליכין דברי תורה לארץ, המלכות הרשעה הזאת גוזרת ומצלחת.

מה טעם?

"ותשלה אמת ארצה ועשתה והצליחה" (דניאל ח, יב). ואין אמת אלא תורה.
היה מה דאף אמר, "אמת קנה ואל תמכור חכמה ומוסר ובינה" (משלי כג, כג).

This evil empire flourishes when Jews hurl the Torah to the ground.

What is the source?

"And You cast the truth to the ground, and it will do and prosper" (Daniel 8:12). Truth can only refer to the Torah, as it is written, "Buy truth and never sell wisdom, ethics, and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23).

Falsehood holds no power over truth, and when we remain connected to Torah, no nation has power over us.



QUESTION

Why does the text describe the entire world as false, grounding its message in the concept of truth?

TEXT 4

*Rabbi Tzadok Hakohen
Rabinowitz of Lublin,
Tzidkat Hatzadik 257*

הַאִי עֲלֵמָא נִקְרָא עֲלֵמָא דְשִׁיקְרָא. כִּי שְׁקֵר נִקְרָא דְבָר
לְפִי שְׁעָה, כְּלִשׁוֹן כְּזָב, דְרִצּוֹנוֹ לֹמַר: דְבָר הַפּוֹסֵק. וְכֵן
כָּל חֻמְדוֹת עוֹלָם הַזֶּה – לְשַׁעָה, "וְלֹא בְּמוֹתוֹ יִקַּח
הַכֹּל" (תְּהִלִּים מֵט, יח).

This world is called a fraudulent world, for falsehood is another name for things that are transient—in other words, subject to termination. All worldly delights are transient, as it is written, “For at the time of death, one cannot take everything” (Psalms 49:18).



Truth is eternal and
unchanging.

TEXT 5A

Proverbs 12:19

שִׁפְתַי אֱמֶת תִּכּוֹן לְעַד, וְעַד אֶרְגִּיעָה
לְשׁוֹן שָׁקֶר.

A true tongue will be established forever, but a lying tongue, just for a moment.

TEXT 5B

*Rabbi Levi ben Gershon,
ad loc.*

דְּבַר אֱמֶת יִהְיֶה נָכוֹן וְצוֹדֵק תָּמִיד, לֹא יִתְּכַן
חֲלוּפּוֹ בְּעֵת מִן הָעֵתִים. וְאִמָּנָם לְשׁוֹן שְׂקָר, אִם
הָיָה שֶׁבְּמִקְרָה יִצְדֵּק בְּעֵת מָה, לֹא יִתְקַיֵּים כִּי אִם
עַד רְגֵעַ.

Something true will always be correct and proper;
it cannot be reversed at any point. However,
something false can happen to exist for a little
while, but it is fleeting; it can't last long.

Anything that is subject to change is false.



TEXT 6A

Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a

אָמַר רַב קַטִּינָא: שֵׁית אֱלֹפֵי שְׁנַי הָוֵי
עַלְמָא, וְחַד חָרוֹב, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וְנִשְׁגַּב ה'
לְבַדּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא".

Rabbi Katina said, "The world will exist for six thousand years, followed by destruction, as it is written, 'G-d will be exalted and alone on that day'" (Isaiah 2:11).

TEXT 6B

*Rabbi Yosef Chaim of
Baghdad, Ben Yehoyada,
ad loc.*

אין הכּוֹנֵה שְׂיִהְיֶה בוֹ חֲרָבָה וְשִׁמְמָה חֵס וְשָׁלוֹם. אֲלֵא הַכּוֹנֵה,
הַטֵּבֵעַ וְהַחוֹמֵר שֶׁמִּצּוֹי בְּשִׁשָּׁה אֲלָפִים שָׁנָה יִחָרֵב, וְיִתְחַדֵּשׁ טֵבֵעַ
וְחוֹמֵר אַחַר מְעוֹלָה וְיִפֶּה מְאֹד שְׂאִין בוֹ תַעֲרוּבַת רַע, וְאִין בוֹ
יָגוֹן וְאַנְחָה וְיִסּוּרִין וְלֹא שׁוֹם רַע כָּלֵל, אֲלֵא הִיא כּוֹלוֹ טוֹב גְּמוּר
וְתַעֲנוּג יָפֶה וּמְתוּקוֹן מְאֹד.

This doesn't mean there will be destruction and desolation, G-d forbid. Rather, the natural law that will prevail for six thousand years will end. It will be replaced by a new, much improved, beautiful environment with no negative properties. There will be no grief, moaning, suffering, or negativity. Instead, we will enjoy only goodness and wonderful, healthy delights.

ANSWER

The world is described as false because it is temporary and will eventually be replaced by a higher, enduring reality. Since truth is eternal and unchanging, anything destined to end cannot be considered truly real.



Only G-d and his Torah are
entirely true and unchanging.

TEXT 7A

*Maimonides, Mishneh
Torah, Laws of Torah
Fundamentals 9:1*

דָּבָר בְּרוּר וּמְפָרֵשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא מְצֻנָּה
עוֹמֶדֶת לְעוֹלָם וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים, אֵין לָהּ לֹא
שְׁנוּי וְלֹא גִרְעוֹן וְלֹא תוֹסֵפֶת.

It is clear and explicit in the Torah that the commandments remain forever without change, subtraction, or addition.

TEXT 7B

*Rabbi Don Yitzchak
Abarbanel, Rosh
Amanah, Chapter 13*

שְׁזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה הָאֵלֶּקֶת אֲשֶׁר בְּיַדֵּינוּ הִיא נִצְחִית, וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר
לְשַׁתְּנָהּ בְּשׁוּם זְמַן. כִּי הוּא יִתְבָּרַךְ הַפּוֹעֵל אוֹתָהּ
וְהַמְּצִיָּאָה כָּפִי חֲכָמָתוֹ הַבְּלִתִּי בַעַל תְּכֵלִית, רְאֵה שְׁזֹאת
הַתּוֹרָה רְאוּיָה לְכָל אִישׁ וּלְכָל זְמַן. וַיִּדְעָתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ לֹא
תִּתְּלֶהּ בְּזְמַן מֵה מוֹגֵבֵל.

The Divine Torah that is in our hands is eternal and cannot change at any time. This is because the blessed G-d created it according to His unlimited wisdom. The Torah is relevant to every person at every time because G-d's knowledge is not limited to any particular time frame.

ANSWER

We become an eternal nation through our connection with the Torah. By embracing and internalizing its eternal truths, we connect to what is everlasting and we can transcend the transient nature of the physical world.

TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 26, p. 5*

בְּשַׁעַת מַתַּן תּוֹרַה הָאֵט זִיךְ אוֹיִפֿגֶעטאָן . . . "חֵירוֹת מִמְּלֶאךָ הַמָּוֶת". דּוֹרְךָ נְתִיבַת הַתּוֹרָה צוֹ אֵינְדן לְמִטָּה אֵיז אֵין זַי אַרִיִּינְגֶעגֶעבֿן גֶּעוֹאָרן דֶּער עֲנִין פֿון נְצֻחִיוֹת, אַז אוֹיִךְ זַיִעֲנֶדִיק נְשָׁמוֹת בְּגוֹפִים, וְוֹאס דֶּער גּוֹף גִּשְׁמִי (מֵצַד עֲצָמוֹ) אֵיז אַ הוֹנָה וְנִפְסָד, הָאָבֿן זַיִ אֵין זִיךְ חַיִּים נְצֻחִיִּים (חֵירוֹת מִמְּלֶאךָ הַמָּוֶת).

נָאָר דּוֹרְךָ דֶּעם חֵטָא הָעֵגְלֵ אֵיז דָּאס בְּטֵל גֶּעוֹאָרן, וְוִיִּל כְּדִי אַז תּוֹרָה זָאל אוֹיִפֿטאָן נְצֻחִיוֹת אֵין דֶּעם אָדָם, מוֹז תּוֹרָה נְחַקֵּק וְוִעֶרן אֵין זַיִן גּוֹף הַגִּשְׁמִי. אָבְעֶר דֶּער חֵטָא הָעֵגְלֵ הָאֵט אַרִיִּינְגֶעבֿראַכֵּט אַ "זוֹהֶמָא" אֵין דִּי גּוֹפִים וְוֹאס פֿאַרשְׁטֶעלֵט אוֹיִף תּוֹרָה, בְּאִוֶּפֿן אַז תּוֹרָה קֶען גִּיט נְחַקֵּק וְוִעֶרן בְּגוֹפִים.

When G-d gave us the Torah, He liberated us from the grip of death. . . . By giving us the Torah, here on earth, He endowed us with a measure of eternity: . . . even as we resided in physical bodies subject to aging and decay, we would live forever, free from the angel of death.

However, this came undone when we worshipped the Golden Calf. For the Torah to imbue humans with eternity, it must be embodied in our physical experience. The sin of the Golden Calf introduced unholiness into our bodies, forming a barrier to holiness. This prevented the Torah from being absorbed into the body.



At Mount Sinai, the Jewish body reflected the immortal soul, making the nation eternal.

By reconnecting with the Torah, we can restore this transparency and reclaim our status as the Eternal Nation.

Moses body was fully transparent to his soul from birth.



TEXT 9

*Rabbi Bachya ben Asher
ibn Halawa, Kad
Hakemach, Ner
Chanukah*

כְּוֹנֵת הַמְדָּרָשׁ בַּפְּתוּב הַזֶּה הוּא שְׁמֵשׁ רַבִּינוּ
מִתְחִלַּת תּוֹלְדוֹתוֹ הָיָה רָאוּי לְהַאִיר אֶת כָּל הָעוֹלָם
עַל יְדֵי הַתּוֹרָה שְׁקִיבֵל בְּהַר סִינַי.

The meaning of the text [“the entire home filled with light”] is that from the time of his birth, Moses was worthy of illuminating the entire world with the Torah he would receive at Mount Sinai.

TEXT 10

*Rabbi Levi ben Gershon,
Sefer Milchamot
Hashem 6:15*

וְזֶה מִסְגּוּלַת הָאֱמֶת, שֶׁהוּא מִסְכֵּיִם
לְעֵצְמוֹ מִכָּל צֵד.

To be consistent from every angle is
the property of truth.



Moses was entirely aligned with Torah and fully synonymous with the truth.

TEXT 11

Talmud, Bava Batra 74a

אָמַר לִי: תָּא אַחֵי לָךְ בְּלוּעֵי דְקַרְחָה.

חֲזָאִי תְּרֵי בִיזְעֵי . . . אָמַר לִי: "אַצִּית מַאי שְׁמַעְתָּ?"

וְשָׁמַעִית דְּהוּוּ אָמְרִין: "מִנְשָׂה וְתוֹרָתוֹ אֵמֶת, וְהֵן בְּדָאִין".

[Rabah bar bar Chanah said: an Arab once said to me] "Come, I will show you those who were swallowed by the earth due to the sin of Korah."

I saw two rifts in the ground. . . . He said to me, "Listen; what do you hear?"

I heard them calling, "Moses is the truth, his Torah is the truth, and we are the frauds."

When you internalize the Torah so completely that it becomes part of you, you don't merely possess truth—you become it.

Moshe became the Torah itself, true and unchanging.



TEXT 12

Midrash, Mechilta 15:1

נָתַן בְּפִנְיוֹ עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְנִקְרְאָתָה עַל שְׁמוֹ,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: "זְכוֹרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי"
(מְלָאכִי ג, כב).

[Moses] devoted his life to the Torah; therefore, it is called his Torah, as it is stated, "Remember the Torah of My servant Moses" (Malachi 3:22).

OPTIONAL



Truth never ends; Moshe never truly died but continues to live on in the bodies of his successors.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 13

Talmud, Sotah 13b

לֹא מֵת מֹשֶׁה . . . מָה לְהֵלֵךְ עוֹמֵד
וּמְשַׁמֵּשׁ, אַף כָּאֵן עוֹמֵד וּמְשַׁמֵּשׁ.

Moses never died. As he stood and served G-d then [at Mount Sinai], so does he continue to stand and serve G-d today.

OPTIONAL

TEXT 14

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 26, p. 7*

ביי מִשְׁהֵיִן זָאגט מָען "לא מת": וויבאלד אז מדתו של מִשְׁהָ אִיז מדת הָאֱמֶת, אִיז סִיּוֹ אויף ווי זיי זיינען געווען פארבוינדן מיט גשמייות העולם, קען אין דעם ניט זיין קיין מיטה וְהֶפְסֵק. עָס בְּלִיבט אן ענגן נצחי אויף אין גשמייות פון עולם הזה.

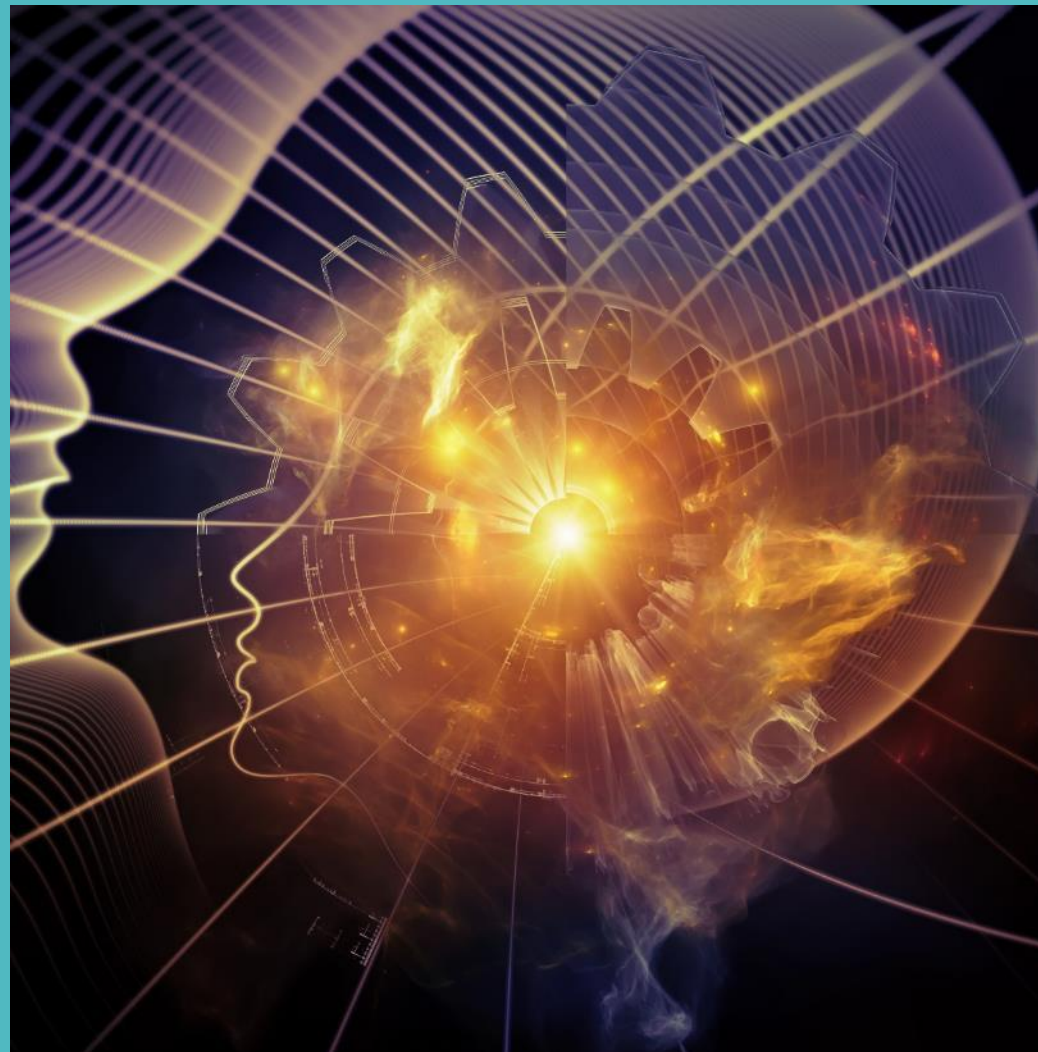
און חכמינו זכרונם לברכה זאגן "אתפשטותא דמשה בכל דרא ודרא" (תיקוני זהר סט), אז נשמת משה טוט זיך אן אין די "חכמי הדור עיני העדה" שְׁבְכָל דור ודור, ובמיוחד אין דעם נשיא הדור, וואס "אין דור שאין בו כְּמִשְׁהָ" (בראשית רבה נו, ז), עָס מוז זיין א "משה" בְּכָל דור ודור אין וועלכן ס'איז אָנגעטאן נשמת משה.

Our sages taught that Moses never died. If his nature, even his physical nature, was truth, his earthly presence couldn't end and die. Truth is eternal even in the physical world.

[We can explain the immortality of Moses like this.] Our sages spoke of an "extension of Moses in every generation" (Tikunei Zohar, p. 69). This means that Moses's soul integrates into the leaders and sages of each generation. His soul is especially present in the leading spiritual giant of the generation, for "there is someone just like Moses in every generation" (Midrash, Bereshit Rabah 56:7). The soul of Moses integrates into the body of this leader.

OPTIONAL

Moses's soul was transmitted to each successive leader of every generation in an unbroken chain until the present.



ANSWER

We are told about Moses's light and truth so we can emulate him by dedicating ourselves to the Torah, letting it guide and shape our lives.



Why do we rise when
our Torah teacher
enters the room?

TEXT 15

Talmud, Kidushin 32a

תּוֹרָה דִּילֵיהּ הִיא?

הַדֵּר אָמַר רַבָּא: "אִין, תּוֹרָה דִּילֵיהּ הִיא, דְּכַתִּיב:
'וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה'" (תהלים א, ב).

Does the Torah belong to the teacher?

Rava said, "Yes, the Torah belongs to the teacher, as it is written, 'And he studies his Torah day and night'" (Psalms 1:2).

When Torah becomes
our primary occupation,
we become Torah, and
Torah becomes us.





By internalizing Torah in daily life, we become its living embodiment and ensure that the Jewish people endures as an eternal nation.

KEY POINTS

1. Truth is eternal and unchanging. What is true today was and will always be true. What is true here is true everywhere. What is true for one is true for all.
2. Only G-d and His Torah are entirely true. Everything else is subject to change and therefore false. Falsehood has no power over truth. Thus, no nation has power over us when we embrace the Torah.
3. When we embrace the Torah, we absorb a measure of eternity and become the eternal nation, but only if we study it in a way that is fully absorbing.
4. For us to be absorbed in the Torah and the Torah absorbed in us, it must become our highest priority. We must turn to it morning and night and whenever we can snatch a moment in between.
5. This is especially critical at times of war when we are attacked by our enemies. At such times, we must ensure that Jewish students are constantly studying Torah and that we study Torah every moment we can. When we absorb the Torah's eternity, we become the eternal nation that never fears and is never vanquished.

