

December 21, 2013

SH'MOT - Names

When the twelve tribes of Israel first came to Egypt in last week's *parashah*, they were treated like royalty. They were embraced and showered with gifts because their brother Joseph was Pharaoh's right-hand man. When Joseph had reached the age of 110, he died. In the first chapter of this week's *parashah*, there was a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph. Are you kidding me? How can that be? There is no way that the new Pharaoh could **not** know who Joseph was unless he had been living under a rock. Joseph was a national hero. It was virtually impossible to live in Egypt and not know who Joseph was.

And yet, the new Egyptian ruler advised his people to deal shrewdly with the Israelites and to control them by making them slaves. How could Pharaoh be so unkind to Joseph's descendants? Well, the new boss did not really know Joseph personally and the memory of what he had done for the Egyptians had faded. Before, the memory of what Joseph had done stirred emotions of gratefulness and appreciation. Now he was just a name from the past. Once their gratitude was gone, it was just a matter of time before the Egyptians turned upon these alien people living in their land.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians sound horribly unjust to forget all of the good that had been done by Joseph and then turn around and repay his kindness with cruelty - but are we any better? Can we say that our gratitude lasts forever? So many people have been kind to us. Someone gave birth to us, fed us, changed our diapers, and took care of our needs. Someone taught us to read and write and gave us the confidence to succeed. Somewhere along the way we needed someone to lean on, and someone was there. And, of course, there is HaShem Who brings forth bread from the earth, creates the fruit of the vine, and gives us what we need. Sometimes we forget the good done to us and we even repay kindness with anger or resentment. Don't be an ungrateful *nudge*. Live your life with gratitude towards your family, friends, and to the one who brings forth bread from the earth.

Hebrew reading	Exodus 1:8-9
English reading	Exodus 1:7-11
Haftarah	Jeremiah 1:19-2:3
B'rit Chadashah	Acts 7:17-19