**Class # 15 – When The Rav Went To College**

Senior Fellowship Leadership Program

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12 Steps to Redemption

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdmxCe2l8Ag>

While their pictures do not adorn the halls of the University, Jewish luminaries who studied and/or taught in Berlin in the first decades of the 20th century include Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman, Rav Chaim Heller, Rav Soloveitchik, Nehama Leibowitz, Rav Yitzchak Hutner. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, Rav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg (who it appears is the one who gave the Lubavitcher Rebbe semicha), Shai Agnon, Rabbi Leo Jung, Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits, Gershom Scholem, Zalman Shazar, and Professor Yishayahu Leibowitz.

**Rabbi Soloveitchik -** At the age of 22, already a world renowned scholar, moved to Berlin and attended the university there first majoring in math and physics eventually changing to philosophy and received his Ph.D. in philosophy 6 years later.

He was part of the group of major Orthodox greats who chose to study in Berlin at the time. His mentor was R. Chaim Heller and his comrades were R. Hutner (later Rosh Yeshiva of Chaim Berlin) and R. Sheneerson (present Lubavitcher Rebbe).

There is also a story that he was introduced to Nechama Lebowitz but could not find her in the library because she was hidden behind a stack of books that she was studying. He received his Ph.D. in 1931 and a year later moved to Boston where he later helped found the Maimonides school and became the leading light of Modern Orthodox thought.

Question:

* + 1. Why did Rabbi Schneerson seek out Rabbi Soloveitchik?
    2. Would it be a good idea for the ordinary day school grad to choose an isolated Ivy, say Dartmouth, as his school of choice?
    3. Why would Rabbi Soloveitchik and his comrades leave the secure halls of the Beit Midrash and choose instead to a relatively isolated life at the University of Berlin?
    4. Today, R Soloveitchik is perhaps, the best known Rabbi in academic circles as well as the general community, both Jewish and Non Jewish. Do you think the Rav’s study at University of Berlin was an important factor in this accomplishment?

Shemos – Ch:2:1-6

Moses

2:1 A man of the house of Levi went and married Levi's daughter. 2:2 The woman became pregnant and had a son. She realized how extraordinary [the child] was, and she kept him hidden for three months.

2:3 When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus box, coating it with asphalt and pitch, and she placed the child in it. She placed it in the rushes near the bank of the Nile. 2:4 [The child's] sister stood herself at a distance to see what would happen to him. 2:5 Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe in the Nile, while her maids walked along the Nile's edge. She saw the box in the rushes, and sent (amatah) her slave-girl (**note**: “amah”: hand or slave girl) to fetch it. 2:6 Opening [the box] she saw the boy. The infant began to cry, and she had pity on it. 'It is one of the Hebrew boys,' she said.

* + 1. Why deny Moshe the experience of being raised in his own natural family- the best home of the Jewish people - Amram, Yocheved, Aaron & Miriam and instead raise him in with an adopted mom –of all people -the princess of Egypt?!!!

Rambam, Laws of Idolatry 1:3

When the Jews extended their stay in Egypt, however, they learned from the [Egyptians'] deeds and began worshiping the stars as they did, with the exception of the tribe of Levi, who clung to the mitzvot of the patriarchs - the tribe of Levi never served false gods.

Within a short time, the fundamental principle that Abraham had planted would have been uprooted, and the descendants of Jacob would have returned to the errors of the world and their crookedness. Because of God's love for us, and to uphold the oath He made to Abraham, our patriarch, He brought forth [lit. made] Moses, our teacher, the master of all prophets, and sent him [to redeem the Jews]. After Moses, our teacher, prophesied, and God chose Israel as His inheritance, He crowned them with mitzvot and informed them of the path to serve Him, [teaching them] the judgement prescribed for idol worshiper and all those who stray after it.

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra – 2:3

“…The Thoughts of Hashem are deep. And who can understand the foundational principles or various causes that [Hashem uses]. Perhaps, Hashem caused Moshe to grow up in the royal palace in order that he should acquire a spirit of distinction and dignity through their training program and habits and would not[suffer with]a low spirit of one who is enslaved. We see that he killed the Egyptian because his act of violence [against the Jew] and he saved the daughters of Midian from the shepherds, since that were acting aggressively and unjustly by having their sheep drink from the women’s drawn water.”

The Ralbag – Gersonides – The 7th lesson of the Parsha [Shemot] is one of Philosophical principles

“This is to inform us of the power of the G-d’s Providence to His recipients of this Providence. Hashem caused that the Daughter of Pharaoh would find baby Moshe and have compassion on him and to rescue him. This caused Moshe to be raised in the Royal Palace and learn from the wise men of Egypt. This was a cause in his education of science and advanced concepts which ultimately led Moshe to becoming a Prophet. The ideas of the Egyptian elite, although incorrect, were instrumental in Moshe finding the truth. It also gave Moshe the confidence of an aristocrat, since he was spared the slavery and humiliation that occurred to his brothers. This empowered him to stand before Pharaoh and bring out the Jews from Egypt. This shows the [nature of divine justice] as Pharaoh wanted to do evil to thwart a future leader of the [Jewish] rebellion from arising, Hashem caused Pharaoh to help grow, nurture and develop Moshe [into the future redeemer of the Jewish People].”

* + 1. Jane Levi , reflecting on her life before MJE, feels regret. If only she had gone to yeshiva day school instead of public school! She enjoys her classes at the Senior Fellowship and has a weekly Chavruta, but still she feels frustrated about her lack of basic high school Torah knowledge.

Using the example of Moshe’s experience: is Jane correct, incorrect or partially correct?