



SHEMOT

This week, we begin the second book of the Torah, Sefer Shemot, beginning, of course, with Parshat Shemot.

The Jews as a nation begin suffering greatly in this week's Parsha. The king of Egypt no longer has a friendly attitude towards the Jews, and forces them into performing hard labor.

We are also introduced to Moshe, a man who G-d feels has the potential for extreme greatness, and he is commanded by G-d at the famous "burning bush" to go down to Egypt and help convince the Pha'aro to let the Jews go.

Why a bush? The powerful and mighty G-d of Israel should speak to the forthcoming greatest prophet of all time from out of a little bush?

The Midrash answers that it was meant to be symbolic. The Jews, at this point in time, were in a very low and depressed state of being; G-d wished to show the people, through Moshe, that just as He would be with them in times of greatness and joy, so too he was with them in this time of bitterness and sorrow.

When tragedy occurs and things look bleak, we can at least try to take comfort from the fact that we know that G-d is still with us, and will eventually pull us through.

As our world gets increasingly scary and volatile, we need to keep that little thornbush in mind. We may not know the reasons behind why things are happening, but we know that G-d is there to help us overcome.

May He do so soon, both on national and personal levels.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Cohen