

Our *Parashah* opens, "And these are the names of *Bnei Yisrael* who are coming to Egypt; with Yaakov, each man and his household came." *Midrash Rabbah* comments: Thus it is written (*Mishlei* 13:24), "He who loves [his child] disciplines him in his youth." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

What does one verse have to do with the other? R' Eliezer Dan Ralbag z"l (1832-1895; Yerushalayim) answers: The *Midrash* is bothered by the verse referring first to "*Bnei Yisrael*" and then to "Yaakov." After all, they were first the sons of Yaakov, and only later, the nation of *Bnei Yisrael*!

To this, the *Midrash* answers: "He who loves his child disciplines him in his youth." R' Ralbag explains: *Hashem* brings *Yissurin* / suffering upon the Jewish People to atone for our sins so we may merit *Olam Ha'ba*, and also so we may merit to receive *Eretz Yisrael* and the Torah. This is why our ancestors had to go down to Egypt in the nation's youth. In contrast, Esav, who did not go down to Egypt, did not receive *Eretz Yisrael*, though he too was a descendant of Avraham and Yitzchak.

R' Ralbag concludes that the *Midrash* is teaching us to read the verse as follows: "And these are the names of *Bnei Yisrael*." Why do I refer to them as *Bnei Yisrael*, the name that alludes to the nation that received *Eretz Yisrael*? Because, they "are coming to Egypt" as a young nation to undergo *Yissurin*. That is now ("are coming"--present tense). In contrast, when they left home ("with Yaakov, each . . . came"--past tense), they did not yet have the merit of the exile, so they were only the family of the individual, "Yaakov." (*Damesek Eliezer*)

Bitachon

This year--a *Shemittah* year--we will iy"H devote this space to discussing the related subject of *Bitachon* / placing one's trust in *Hashem*.

In previous issues, we learned what *Bitachon* means according to R' Avraham ben Ha'Rambam z"l (son of Maimonides; Egypt; 1186-1237): A person with *Bitachon* engages in natural means to obtain his needs, achieve his goals, and avoid harm, never relying on miracles, but always remembering that his success or failure is determined by *Hashem*. He prays to *Hashem* before each endeavor and thanks Him for his success afterward, never attributing success or failure to his own effort or lack of effort--unless he did not make a reasonable effort. A person with *Bitachon* does not engage in excessive effort that distracts him from his primary obligation, which is to study Torah and perform *Mitzvot*. R' Avraham continues:

A person who practices *Bitachon* as described above is the true master of *Bitachon*, and from there he will rise higher and higher until *Hashem*, in His kindness, if it is His will, will free him from having to work for his sustenance. . .

Having *Bitachon* may result in distancing harm from a person or may help him achieve some end--not only an end that is necessary, but even one that is a complete luxury. *Bitachon* can help a person achieve material goals and, also, spiritual goals. However, why *Bitachon* sometimes results in a person getting what he wants and sometimes does not is a secret that has not been revealed even to the prophets. Thus, the Psalmist says (*Tehilim* 73:16), "When I reflected to understand this, it was iniquity in my eyes." Likewise, *Hashem* said to the master of all prophets, Moshe (*Shmot* 33:19), "I shall show favor when I choose to show favor, and I shall show mercy when I choose to show mercy."

(*Ha'maspik L'ovdei Hashem*, ch. 8)

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“Behold, he is going out to meet you and when he sees you he will rejoice in his heart.” (4:14)

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni states: If Aharon had known that the Torah would write about him that he was happy to see Moshe, he would have come to meet his brother with a marching band. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

Is the *Midrash* suggesting that Aharon would have performed his *Mitzvot* better if he had known his acts would be publicized? G-d forbid! writes R' Yosef Yoel Horowitz z"l (1847-1919; the *Alter* of Novardok).

Rather, explains the *Alter*, this *Midrash* is teaching the following: Aharon felt absolutely no jealousy towards his younger brother Moshe when the latter was appointed to lead the Jewish People; the thought never even crossed Aharon's mind. Nevertheless, had Aharon known that the Torah would praise him for not being jealous, he would have realized that he had a reason to be jealous, so he would have taken extra steps to ensure that he would feel no jealousy. He would not have relied on his intellectual understanding that jealousy is wrong. Rather, he would have taken extreme tangible steps, such as hiring a marching band, to forestall any jealousy.

This, concludes the *Alter*, is the difference between someone who reveres G-d intellectually and someone who “lives” reverence of G-d.

(*Madregat Ha'adam: Ma'amar Yir'ah Va'avahavah* ch.9)

R' Shmuel Hominer z"l (1913-1977; Yerushalayim) writes: One is obligated to rejoice at another's success as if it was his own success. When Moshe Rabbeinu anointed Aharon as the *Kohen Gadol*, he rejoiced as if he himself was being anointed. Thus, *Midrash Rabbah* comments on the verse (*Tehilim* 133:2), “Like the precious oil upon the head running down the beard, the beard of Aharon”--Did Aharon have two beards? Rather, says the *Midrash*, when Moshe saw the oil running down Aharon's beard, he rejoiced as if it was running down his own beard. (*Eved Ha'melech*)

“And the people believed, and they heard that Hashem had remembered Bnei Yisrael and that He saw their affliction, and they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves.” (4:31)

R' Shalom Noach Berezovsky z"l (1911-2000; *Slonimer Rebbe* in Yerushalayim) writes: Many people try to grow in their spirituality and religious observance, but they do not succeed; therefore, they resign themselves to remaining at their current level. This is a great tragedy! If one refuses to be satisfied with his current level, that itself will ensure his eventual growth, though it may take additional time and effort. Just as the key to the redemption from Egypt was *Emunah* and *Bitachon* / faith and trust, so *Emunah* and *Bitachon*, believing that one can succeed and trusting in *Hashem's* assistance, is the key to personal redemption.

(*Netivot Shalom: Divrei Shalom Ve'emet* p.74)

“But the midwives revered Elokim and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them, and they caused the boys to live.” (1:17)

R' Meir Juzint z"l (1924-2001; rabbi and educator in Chicago) asks: Did the midwives really require *Yir'at Elokim* / reverence of G-d in order to save the newborn boys? Wouldn't basic human decency and empathy require the same result?

He answers: There is a significant difference between assistance that one offers because of empathy and assistance one offers as a fulfillment of the *Mitzvah* to love one's fellow (“ואהבת לרעך כמוך”). One who is motivated by the *Mitzvah* will go “above and beyond,” even when there may be negative consequences. In contrast, one whose entire motivation is to quiet his own feelings of empathy and decency will not continue his assistance if it causes discomfort--and, certainly, danger--to himself.

R' Juzint adds: The practical lesson we can derive from this is to always perform good deeds because they are *Mitzvot*--even deeds that we would have performed anyway. (*Nechamat Meir* Vol. II, p.31)

“And it was because the midwives revered Ha'Elokim that He made them houses.” (1:21)

Rashi z"l explains: “Houses” refers to houses--i.e., dynasties--of *Kohanim*, *Levi'im* and royalty that descended from these midwives.

R' Moshe Binyamin z"l (Baghdad; early 1700s) asks: Why does the verse say that they revered “*Ha'Elokim*” / “the *Elokim*,” instead of just “*Elokim*”?

He answers: The introductory letter “*Heh*” refers to those who are ancillary to or associated with “*Elokim*”--i.e., Torah scholars. The verse is teaching that the midwives--who were actually Yocheved and Miriam--revered Torah scholars, and that is why they merited to be the ancestors of Moshe Rabbeinu, Chur, King David, and other Torah scholars.

(*Sha'arei Yerushalayim* p.352)

“Hashem saw that he turned aside to see, and Elokim called out to him . . .” (3:4)

R' Ovadiah Seforno z"l (1470-1550; Italy) explains: Moshe “turned aside to see”--to reflect on the phenomenon. “And *Elokim* called out to him”--as our Sages say, “One who comes to purify himself receives Divine assistance.” Similarly, we read (*Shmot* 19:3), “[First,] Moshe ascended to *Elokim*, and [then] *Hashem* called to him from the mountain.”

R' Dovid Kviat z"l (1920-2009; Rosh Yeshiva in the Mir Yeshiva and rabbi in Brooklyn NY) observes: *Hashem* “created” Moshe specifically in order to take *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt. Even so, if Moshe had not taken some initiative, he never would have been given that mission. Likewise, without his initiative, he would not have been called to ascend Har Sinai to receive the Torah.

(*Succas Dovid* [English edition] p.17)