

At the end of this week's *Parashah*, *Bnei Yisrael* are attacked by Amalek. The Torah relates that Moshe Rabbeinu climbed a nearby hill and held his arms in the air to inspire *Bnei Yisrael* to look Heavenward. The Torah continues (17:12), "Moshe's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it . . ."

Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Zuta (ch.1) asks: Did Moshe not have a pillow or a comfortable chair on which to sit? The *Midrash* answers: Moshe said, "Since *Bnei Yisrael* are in pain, I will share in their pain."

The *Midrash* elaborates: One who does not share in the pain of the *Tzibbur* / congregation, will not merit to see its consolation. Lest a person say, "I will shut myself in my house and eat and drink, and *Shalom alei nafshi* / all will be well with me," about him the verse says (*Yeshayah* 22:13), "Behold! There is joy and gladness, slaying of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, eating meat and drinking wine . . ." What does the prophet say in *Hashem's* name immediately after that? He says (22:14), "This sin will never be atoned for you until you die." If a person will say, "Who will testify against me?" The stones and beams of his house will testify against him. Other say that the two angels that accompany every person will testify against him. Still others say that a person's own *Neshamah* / soul will testify against him.

On the other hand, says the *Midrash*, one who does share in the *Tzibbur's* pain will merit to see its consolation.

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*.

The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 76a) relates that R' Shimon bar Yochai's students asked him: Why didn't *Hashem* give *Bnei Yisrael* an annual supply of *Mahn* once a year? He answered them with a parable: A father gave his son an allowance for the whole year, and the son never visited the father. The father began giving his son his allowance daily, and the son visited every day. So, too, *Hashem* gave *Bnei Yisrael* their sustenance daily--as described in our *Parashah*--so that they would direct their hearts to Him.

R' Yitzchak Blazer *z"l* (1837-1907; one of the three primary disciples of R' Yisrael Salanter *z"l*, founder of the *Mussar* movement; rabbi of St. Petersburg, Russia, because of which he is known as R' Itzele Peterburger) writes: At first glance, this is difficult to understand. We read in the *Tochachah* / rebuke and curses (*Devarim* 28:66), "Your life will hang in the balance, and you will be frightened night and day, and you will not be sure of your livelihood." The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 103b) explains: "Your life will hang in the balance" refers to someone who is obliged to buy grain annually; "You will be frightened night and day" refers to someone who purchases grain weekly; "You will not be sure of your livelihood" refers to someone who must rely on a baker for daily bread. [Until here from the *Gemara*.] It would seem, writes R' Itzele, that each phrase is a greater curse than the preceding one, for it entails more frequent worry. It emerges, therefore, that it was a curse that *Bnei Yisrael* in the desert received *Mahn* daily. Can that be correct? - **Continued in box inside** -

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10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

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"Is Hashem among us or Ayin / not?" (17:7)

R' Shlomo Eliasof z"l (1841-1926; a leading early 20th century kabbalist; grandfather of R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv z"l) explains *Bnei Yisrael's* question: *Midrash Shir Ha'shirim Rabbah* relates that when Moshe Rabbeinu told *Bnei Yisrael*, "In this month you will be redeemed," they responded, "How can we be redeemed, when all of Egypt is sullied by our own *Avodah Zarah* / idolatry?!" Moshe Rabbeinu responded, "*Hashem* wishes to redeem you, and He will not look at your *Avodah Zarah*." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Eliasof continues: The *Midrash* is teaching that *Hashem* redeemed *Bnei Yisrael* using His Attribute of Patience, such that He did not take into account whether they were deserving or not. This Attribute of *Hashem* is referred to as "*Ayin*" (literally, "absence," alluding to the absence of merit). This is the Attribute with which *Hashem* brought about the Exodus, and with which He split the Sea. *Bnei Yisrael* understood, however, that *Hashem* would not relate to them with this Attribute forever; at some point, He would begin to judge them based on their merit. This, concludes R' Eliasof, was *Bnei Yisrael's* constant fear, and what they were expressing when they asked, "Is *Hashem* among us or *Ayin*?"

(*Sha'arei Leshem Shevo Va'achlamah* p.405)

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R' Itzele answers: The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 48b) teaches, "One who has bread in his basket and says, 'What will I eat tomorrow?' is of little faith." [Until here from the *Gemara*.] One who has great faith does not worry at all about what he will eat tomorrow; he places his trust in *Hashem* who gives sustenance to all creatures. A person whose *Emunah* / faith is complete does not worry even if *Hashem* sends him his sustenance daily, and even if he does not know where tomorrow's bread will come from. To such a person, this situation is not a curse, since he trusts in *Hashem* and is not worried.

R' Itzele continues: In contrast, one who has little faith worries about what he will eat tomorrow. If earning his livelihood involves seeking his bread daily, and he never knows what he will eat the next day, then he cannot remove his worry from his heart--especially if he has children. For him, this situation is a curse.

R' Itzele concludes: The *Tochachah* is addressed to a generation that does not observe the *Mitzvot*. Obviously, that is a generation of little faith. In contrast, when *Bnei Yisrael* first received the *Mahn*, it was immediately after the Splitting of the Sea, about which we read (14:31), "They had faith in *Hashem*." To them, receiving bread daily was a sign of *Hashem's* desire for closeness, as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai teaches, not a curse.

(*Kochvei Ohr* No.11)

"Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang . . ." (15:1)

Midrash Mechilta states: Even nursing babies stopped feeding and sang along. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La'mishpat*) explains: Our Sages teach in several *Midrashim* that there are ten different levels of *Shirah* / song. The highest level song will be sung at the time of the future redemption.

What defined the song sung after the splitting of the *Yam Suf*? R' Arieli answers: This song resulted from a spiritual experience so powerful that all people--great and small--sang the same song, word-for-word. "Moshe and *Bnei Yisrael* sang," says the verse, and *Midrash Mechilta* comments: "Moshe was equivalent to all of *Yisrael*, and all of *Yisrael* was equivalent to Moshe." This song emanated from the soul, not from the intellect. Thus, even babies "sang." (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha'geulah* p.105)

From the same work:

"Who is like You Ba'elim / among the heavenly powers, Hashem!"

The *Gemara* (*Gittin* 56b) reads this verse homiletically: "Who is like You *Ba'ilim* / among those who are mute, *Hashem*!"--referring to the fact that, when the Roman Emperor Titus desecrated the *Bet Hamikdash*, *Hashem* remained silent and bided His time before punishing him. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

Why is this alluded to in the Song at the Sea? R' Arieli explains: During the long exile in Egypt, *Bnei Yisrael* wondered whether *Hashem* was, G-d forbid, too weak to save them. But, after *Hashem's* crushing punishment of the Egyptians at the Sea, *Bnei Yisrael* understood that that was not case. Sometimes, not reacting is not a sign of weakness; rather, it is the greatest sign of strength! (*Ibid.*)

A related thought:

R' Avraham Eliyahu Kaplan z"l (1890-1924; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, Germany) writes: We read in *Parashat Toldot* that Yitzchak dug wells and the Plishtim fought with him over them. The Torah relates (*Bereishit* 26:21), "Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also; so he called its name '*Sitnah*' / 'hatred.'" It seems odd, writes R' Kaplan, that Yitzchak would bother giving a name to a well he had decided to abandon! However, Yitzchak was making a statement: "The fact that the Plishtim are stealing my wells is nothing but hatred. I will rise above their hatred and walk away." That was Yitzchak's strength. What was the end result? Avimelech, king of the Plishtim, came to Yitzchak and acknowledged (26:28), "We have indeed seen that *Hashem* has been with you." (*B'ikvot Ha'yir'ah* p.126)