

In this week's *Parashah*, *Bnei Yisrael* travel away from Egypt and Pharaoh gives chase--but then the tide turns. At that point we read (14:25), "Egypt said, 'I shall flee before *Yisrael*, for *Hashem* is waging war for them against Egypt'."

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercatz Harav) writes: At that moment, the Egyptians recognized the inherent holiness of *Bnei Yisrael* and understood that they (the Egyptians) must flee from before them (*Bnei Yisrael*). The Egyptians understood then that all the wars that *Hashem* had fought and all the wonders that He had performed were only for the Jewish People, in order to reveal the latter's eternal holiness to the entire world.

R' Charlap continues: When the inner holiness of the Jewish People will be revealed again in the future, it will become clear that the Jewish People never really tasted the taste of sin. Rather, their failings can be attributed to the negative influences of the nations of the world, while of *Bnei Yisrael* it can be said (*Mishlei* 31:12--the third verse in *Eishet Chayil*), "She bestows goodness upon Him, never evil, all the days of her life."

R' Charlap adds: Just as at the time of the Exodus *Hashem* showed that He loves *Yisrael* unconditionally, without needing a reason (for they were on a very low level), so it will be at the time of the Final Redemption, as we say in *Shemoneh Esrei*, "He brings a redeemer to their children's children, for His Name's sake, with love." And, just as at the *Yam Suf*, *Bnei Yisrael* had to demonstrate their love for *Hashem* (by traveling toward the Sea without a plan for how they would be saved) before He again revealed His love, so, now, as the arrival of *Mashiach* nears, we must demonstrate our love for *Hashem* without limits. (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.91)

## Shabbat

**"Elokim blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He abstained from all His work which Elokim created to make." (*Bereishit* 2:3)**

*Rashi* z"l writes: He blessed it through the *Mahn*--that on all other days of the week an *Omer*-measure of *Mahn* would fall for each person, whereas on the sixth day, twice as much would fall [in preparation for *Shabbat*]. Likewise, He sanctified *Shabbat* through the *Mahn*--that the *Mahn* did not fall at all on *Shabbat*. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Eliezer Ben-Zion Brok z"l (1904-1985; founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) writes: Picture to yourself bread raining down from Heaven day after day. It is ready to eat, packed with every nutrient a person needs, produces no waste, and can taste like anything a person desires. It is food that our Sages describe as "the bread of angels." Every morning, each person in *Bnei Yisrael* woke up and found this amazing bread waiting for him!

How much *Emunah* / faith, how much awe, could a person gain from seeing this bread fall, as we read in our *Parashah* (16:7), "In the morning you will see the glory of *Hashem*!" Every day, *Bnei Yisrael* saw G-d's *Hashgachah Peratit* / Divine providence through the *Mahn*.

Can we imagine anything that could inspire us to holiness and purity more than seeing the *Mahn* rain down every day straight from G-d? Yet, says the Torah, there is something G-d created that can inspire us to holiness, that can teach us *Emunah*, even more than the *Mahn* can. That "thing" is the holiness of *Shabbat*! (*Hegyonai Mussar* p.27-28)

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**"The Mikdash, Hashem, that Your hands established." (15:17)**

A well-known *Midrash* cited by *Rashi z"l* and *Tosafot* (to *Sukkah* 41a) derives from this verse that the future Third Temple will descend from Heaven already built. In the face of this *Midrash*, asks R' Avigdor Nebenzahl *shlita* (*Rosh Yeshiva* and former Chief Rabbi of the Old City of Yerushalayim), how can *Rambam z"l* assert (in *Hil. Bet Ha'bechirah* 1:1) that we have a *Mitzvat Aseh* / positive commandment to build the *Bet Hamikdash*?

R' Nebenzahl answers: *Rambam* himself writes (in *Hil. Melachim* 12:2) that we will not know how the future Redemption will transpire until it actually happens. Moreover, he writes, the Sages themselves had no received tradition explaining how the Redemption will play out. Rather, each of them interpreted the relevant verses in the way that seemed most reasonable to him, and that is why we find disagreements in the *Talmud* and *Midrashim* about this subject.

As such, R' Nebenzahl writes, *Rambam* should not be understood as rejecting the *Midrash* entirely. Rather, he means that if it turns out that the *Bet Hamikdash* does not descend from Heaven, then we will have a *Mitzvah* to build it. Conversely, *Rashi* and *Tosafot* are not saying that the *Bet Hamikdash* will definitely descend from Heaven. Rather, if one looks at the context in which their comments were made, one sees that the *Gemara* there was entertaining a possibility that the *Bet Hamikdash* would be renewed on *Yom Tov*. How is that possible, *Rashi* and *Tosafot* wonder, given that construction is prohibited on *Yom Tov*? The cited *Midrash* provides a possible answer. But, that answer is only necessary according to one line of argument that the *Gemara* entertains; it is not a definitive statement.

(*Shiurei Maran Ha'gra Nebenzahl Al Hilchot Bet Ha'bechirah* p.20)

**"He cried out to Hashem, and Hashem showed him a tree; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There He established for [the nation] a decree and an ordinance, and there He tested it." (15:25)**

Our Sages say that *Hashem* instructed Moshe to throw bitter wood into the bitter water, and that sweetened the water. Our Sages also say that the *Mitzvah* of *Parah Adumah* / the red heifer, a quintessential decree that we cannot understand, was taught at this time.

R' Yehoshua Heschel Singer *z"l* (1848-1925; rabbi in Buffalo, NY) suggests that these two traditions are connected. *Hashem* said: Just as you cannot understand how bitter wood can sweeten bitter water, but you see that it happened, so you should accept the decrees of the Torah though you cannot understand them.

(*Mishneh Zicharon*)

**"Bnei Yisrael said to them, 'If only we had died by the hand of Hashem in the land of Egypt, as we sat by the pot of meat, when we ate bread to satiety, for you have taken us out to this Wilderness to kill this entire congregation by famine.'" (16:3)**

Just a few days before this, *Bnei Yisrael* had sung *Az Yashir* / the Song at the Sea! How could they speak like this so soon afterward?

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**"It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people that Elokim did not lead them by way of the land of the Plishtim, because it was near, for Elokim said, 'Lest the people will reconsider when they see war, and they will return to Egypt.'" (13:17)**

R' Moshe ben Maimon *z"l* (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) asks: What stopped *Hashem* from taking *Bnei Yisrael* to *Eretz Yisrael* by the most direct route, through the land of the *Plishtim*, and giving them the courage not to turn back if they experienced war?

*Rambam* answers: *Hashem* does not hesitate to perform miracles that involve changing something in nature, but there is one thing He will never change, and that is the nature of human beings. Thus *Hashem* says (*Devarim* 5:26), "Who will make it that they should always be of such a mind, to fear Me and observe all My commandments?" He, himself, will not make it so. This is not to say, *Rambam* adds, that it would be difficult for *Hashem* to change human nature if He wanted to. Rather, He never wanted and never will want to do so, for that would negate the concepts of reward and punishment and the commandments of which the Prophets spoke.

(*Moreh Nevochim* III 32)

**"Hashem will do battle for you, and you shall remain silent." (14:14)**

A *Midrash* records that *Bnei Yisrael* split into four groups at the *Yam Suf*. The first said, "Let us jump into the sea [and die]." The second said, "Let us return to Egypt." The third said, "Let us cry out to the Egyptians." Finally, the fourth said, "Let us make war." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' David Bliacher *z"l Hy"d* (*Rosh Yeshiva* of the Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva in Międzyrzec Podlaski, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes that perhaps the third group parallels the *Tam* / "Simple Son" in the *Haggadah*, who asks naively, "What's this?" They thought that they could reason with the Egyptians and convince them of the merits of *Bnei Yisrael's* "case." What do we answer the *Tam*? "With a strong hand *Hashem* removed us from Egypt from the house of bondage." Pharaoh is not interested in hearing logical arguments. Rather, the only correct response to the likes of Pharaoh is, as Moshe told this group, "You shall remain silent."

(*Divrei Binah U'Mussar* p.159)

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R' Yehuda Amital *z"l* (1924-2010; founder and co-*Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Har Etzion, popularly known as "Gush") explains that as useful as "religious experiences"--for example, witnessing the Splitting of the Sea--can be, their impact is short-lived. The *Yetzer Ha'ra* cannot be conquered with "religious experiences," R' Amital writes.

What then is the correct way? R' Amital quotes R' Yitzchak Meir Alter *z"l* (1799-1866; first *Gerrer Rebbe*, known as the "*Chiddushei Ha'rim*") who comments on the verse (*Shir Ha'shirim* 7:2), "How lovely are your footsteps when shod in shoes!"--How wonderful it is when enthusiasm wears shoes, *i.e.*, when it occurs within a framework.

(*Le'olam Yehei Adam* p.25)