

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

לססתי ברכבי פרעה דמיתך דעיתי וגר' (שיר השירים א-ט)

There was once a Jew who lived in abject poverty. He worked all week, traveling from place to place to try to earn a living for himself and his family, but he was just not successful. Life was difficult and he disliked his status in life immensely.

On one of his trips, he came to Nikolsburg, where he gained an audience with the holy **Rebbe, R’ Shmelke Hurvitz ZT”L**. He brought his petition and cried bitter tears, seeking salvation from his poverty. He worked all day long for a livelihood but couldn’t make ends meet. He begged the *Rebbe* to intercede in Heaven on his behalf.

R’ Shmelke listened to his plight and said, “Reb Yid, if this is all that troubles you, then truly you are deserving of blessing. From what I understand, you have no requests regarding spirituality; it sounds like everything is fine, you set aside time for *Torah* study, prayer and *chessed*. Therefore, may *Hashem* grant you a speedy salvation!”

“*Rebbe*,” protested the pauper, “The burden of *parnassa* weighs heavily upon my shoulders. I have not a free moment all day, and by night I collapse into bed, my strength sapped. I have no time to learn *Torah* and no money to give *tzedaka*.”

“I see,” replied the *Rebbe*. “Then perhaps I may assume that at least you oversee your children’s education or monitor their progress in their studies. Surely, seeing to their spiritual growth is important to you.”

The man’s face reddened but he had his excuse all ready. “I do not even see my children all week. I leave for work at the crack of dawn and return late at night. On *Shabbos*, I make up for all the sleep I do not get during the week.”

R’ Shmelke did not answer. The astonished look on his face accurately told of what he thought of such a *Shabbos*. “And davening with a minyan?” he finally asked, almost afraid to hear the answer.

The man spread his arms out to his sides and said, “I am too busy looking for livelihood. I pray alone in a corner.”

With a sigh, R’ Shmelke intoned, “Indeed, ‘קשה מיותרתך כקרית ים סוף’ - your livelihood is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea. In fact, it seems that *Shlomo Hamelech* had you in mind when he wrote in *Shir Hashirim*, ‘*I have likened you, my beloved, to a horse in Pharaoh’s chariots.*’” (א-ט)

The man was utterly confused. “*Rebbe*,” he asked hesitantly, “am I to be compared to a horse?”

“Not just any horse!” said R’ Shmelke excitedly, “Pharaoh’s horse and chariot!” The look of despondency overclouded the pauper’s face and R’ Shmelke hastened to explain. “*Chazal* comment in the *Mechilta* that during the splitting of the Red Sea, the pillar of clouds came down and moistened the ground, turning it into mud. Then, the pillar of fire came and boiled the mud so that the hooves of the Egyptian horses melted from the intense heat. They tried turning around to flee, but the Almighty removed the wheels from the chariots, leaving the poles stuck in the mud. Then, when they were totally mired and unable to move at all, the walls of water came crashing down and drowned them in the sea.”

The man was enraptured by the drama, but then R’ Shmelke continued, “In our world, living creatures dominate the inanimate world - a man guides the pen in his hand, the horse pulls the chariot. At The *Yam Suf*, however, something unusual happened - the animal tried to flee from the burning ground underneath, but the inanimate object, the chariot, held it back. The chariot, in fact, is what prevented the horse’s escape, and led to its destruction.

“Spirituality, the *neshama* of a man, is to be his central component, while the physical, the body, should remain subordinate. *Torah* learning, children’s education, proper *tefilah* with concentration and a minyan - all these are to be our focus. The Egyptians, however, reversed the order. For them, the physical became the focal point, their desires, food and mortal needs, were all they cared about. Thus, *Hashem* punished them measure for measure - their chariots controlled their horses. The inanimate dominated the animal, and together they were destroyed. Shlomo, therefore, cries, ‘*I have likened you, my beloved, to a horse in Pharaoh’s chariots.*’ Reb Yid, the living spirit lies within you, a portion of the Heavenly G-d! Will you let the chariot gain the upper hand; will you allow your livelihood to subjugate your soul, or will you place the emphasis on matters of real importance?”

משל למה הדבר דומה

משל: There was once a merchant who would purchase his merchandise on credit, sell it at a profit, pay off the money he owed, and then repeat the process. Once, a fire broke out in his store and destroyed all his merchandise. He was left with a huge debt and not a penny to his name. He assembled his creditors and said, “I have lost everything. I do not intend to avoid payment, but I must ask you to forego the interest.”

They all agreed since he was an honest man and a good customer. All except for one creditor who refused. “The debt still stands in full and I expect interest as well!”

Troubled and distraught, he consulted with the governor, who was a close personal friend. The governor had a novel idea. “Make all your payments and pay off your debt. Then, inform your creditor that you are moving far away, across the desert. He will surely chase after you since he is a cruel man and when he does, we will have a surprise waiting for him.”

The man crossed the desert safely with an armed escort. The creditor hurried after him and fell prey to the attackers sent by the governor who were waiting in ambush. The man’s lust for money and cruelty brought about his tragic end.

ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים והמים להם חמה מימינם ומשמאלם וגר' (שמות יד-כט)

The underlying difference between the beginning of *Pesach* and its end is that initially, *Hashem* wanted Pharaoh to release His people from bondage. At *Krias Yam Suf*, however, His people were in mortal danger. The entire nation’s existence was threatened. It was there that *Hashem* revealed Himself in a new way: as the Savior of Israel.

R’ Simcha Bunim Berger Shlit’a says that the act of saving the Jews was not just a miracle, but also an act of creation. On the third day of creation, *Hashem* ordered: יקח”ק - “*Let the waters gather and dry ground be seen.*” This was the moment of creation of the dry land of earth. The Jewish people were saved in the same manner. *Hashem* divided the waters and created new land at the bottom of the sea so that His people would be saved.

Two profound lessons are learned from this. Firstly, while the world has provided a place for Jews as slaves, it has no place for them as a nation. Therefore, *Hashem* created new ground on which His nation could emerge. Even when other nations give us no space, *Hashem* will create the area needed, even if it means creating new ground. Secondly, this demonstrated that *Bnei Yisroel* are above the physical world. The miracle of the splitting of the sea was not only to save us physically, but also to give us a spiritual reality. The rules of nature are not binding, for when needed, the Almighty will intervene on our behalf.

It is with this deep sense of belief we pray to *Hashem*. No matter how bleak or grim the situation may seem, even when it seems as if there is no possibility of escape or a positive conclusion, we are confident that *Hashem* will save us. We pray for health even when all medical reports indicate there is no hope. *Hashem* is the Liberator of the Jewish people. We stand in front of Him with this recognition, confident that He can and will answer all of our prayers.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

גאולה

In the morning, afternoon and evening prayers, we praise *Hashem* with the blessing: “*Blessed are You, Hashem, the Redeemer of Israel.*” This title refers to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* as the savior of His people. The situation in *Mitzrayim* was terrible; we were enslaved, beaten, tortured and lived an intolerable life - but we were alive! When we finally left Egypt and came to the shores of the Red Sea, however, our Nation stood at the brink of annihilation. Death was our only option. The *Torah* quotes the Jews complaining to Moshe: “*Are there not enough graves in Egypt?*” Thus, our miraculous salvation at the *Yam Suf*, “earned” *Hashem* the title of “*Goel Yisroel*”!

The words “גואל ישראל” can also be understood to mean “*the One Who is redeeming Israel*” in the present tense. Why is it written in the present tense and not in the past tense, “גאל ישראל,” - “*the One Who had redeemed Israel*,” as we find, for example, in the blessings over the *Shema* in the Evening Prayer and before *Shemona Esrai* by *Shachris*?

R’ Yonosan Eibenschutz ZT”L (Yaaros Dvash) answers that the present tense is teaching us that *Hashem* is redeeming, delivering and saving us every single day, at all times. We are never safe, totally in the clear. We need *Hashem* to save and redeem us even when we think we are secure. Not only that, but the *Yaaros Dvash* seems to imply that the present tense includes the obligation incumbent upon every Jew to praise *Hashem* for the past, as well as to pray for our current and future redemption, this day and every coming day. May all of *Klal Yisroel* merit *Hashem*’s continued protection at all times.

TORAH GEMS

נחית בחסדך עם זו גאלת גדלת באזך אל נודה קדשך וגר' (שירת הים שמות טז-ג)

On the night of *Pesach*, **R’ Chaim Shmulevitz ZT”L** was sitting at the *Seder* with his young son telling over the story of *Yetzias Mizrayim*. When he reached the part about the splitting of the Red Sea, R’ Chaim quoted *Medrashim* that told of how apple and orange trees were growing in the middle of the dried-up sea and the Jewish people were able to eat and drink as they walked. He explained that the ground was perfectly dry and the water around it formed a solid wall.

R’ Chaim noticed that despite his picturesque description of the miracles, his son didn’t seem to be impressed. True, he was a small child, but he was blessed with deep intellect. He thought that perhaps his son did not fully internalize his words, and he asked the child if he heard and understood what was just said. After affirming that he did, R’ Chaim surprisingly asked him, “So how can you not be impressed?”

The young boy responded a bit embarrassed, “I don’t understand what is the big deal. *Hashem* created the world. He made the sea and the dry land. If so, what is the wonder that He can make the sea dry and the land wet. What is there to be impressed about? *Tatte*, I don’t understand!”

R’ Sholom Schwadron ZT”L told over this story and added, “In fact, this bright child is correct. Why are we so impressed and amazed with the splitting of the sea?”

The answer, says R’ Sholom, is that *Hashem*’s intention is to allow the world to run its natural course. Nature works, however, unless *Hashem* wishes to make an exception for an exceptional reason and alter the normal course of nature to perform an obvious miracle. In the case of *Bnei Yisroel*, *Hashem* chose to alter the course of nature in a miraculous way in order to display His great love for us, and to reinforce the notion we are a nation that is above nature. How can we not be impressed when He literally interchanged the water for dry land - just to prove His love for the Jewish people?

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

וגאלנו גאולה שלמה מהרה ברוך אתה ה' גואל ישראל (שמונה עשרה)

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