

וְהָיָה לְךָ וְהָיָה לְךָ THE PATH TO FOLLOW

Nº 119
BESHALACH
13 SHVAT 5766
FEBRUARY.11.2006

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ONLY FAITH IN G-D LEADS TO REDEMPTION

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto Shlita)

It is written, “The Children of Israel raised their eyes and behold – Egypt was journeying after them, and they were very frightened. The Children of Israel cried out to the L-RD. They said to Moses, ‘Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness? What is this that you have done to us, to take us out of Egypt? Is this not the statement that we made to you in Egypt, saying, “Let us be and we will serve Egypt?” For it is better that we should serve Egypt than that we should die in the Wilderness.’ Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of the L-RD that He will perform for you today. For as you have seen Egypt today, you shall not see them ever again! The L-RD shall do battle for you, and you shall remain silent’ ” (Exodus 14:10-14).

Several questions need to be addressed:

1. How could the Children of Israel talk in such a way to Moses? What caused this sudden deterioration in their behavior (Ismah Israel)?

2. Why were they overcome by panic? They had, after all, witnessed great miracles in a harsh country that was ruled by a cruel king (Rashi, Exodus 13:10), and from which no slave could escape (Mechilta, Yitro). Had they lost faith and no longer believed in Hashem’s deliverance?

3. Furthermore, why did Moses begin to beseech Hashem? Was he not certain that Hashem was going to liberate the Children of Israel? Who then told him to pray for them? Did Hashem not interrupt him during his prayer?

4. Hashem punished the Children of Israel each time they complained to, or irritated Him. Yet here we see that Hashem did not even mention their sin. On the contrary, He performed miracles for them. Why?

The author of Ismah Israel replies by citing the Kedushat Ha-levi, who himself cites the Rambam: “Why should you awaken, or stir up love, until it pleases?” (Song of Songs 8:4). In other words, as soon as we feel an awakening above (meaning, as soon as we feel overtaken by a love and fear of G-d), we should

make a vessel to receive it. We should perform a mitzvah in order to continue to be imbued with these holy feelings. The author concludes that we should do this because, as we know, this sudden awakening is the spiritual light sent to a person from the celestial spheres above. It is called Neshama (soul), and it is appropriate to clothe it with a body (the mitzvah we perform), so that it can firmly be preserved.

During the plague of darkness, the Children of Israel who survived experienced a great outpouring of love for Hashem, and they began to fear Him with all their heart. So that this awakening above could continue in them, G-d gave them two additional mitzvot: The blood of circumcision, and that of the Passover sacrifice. Thus the Children of Israel were not afraid of the Egyptians, and they did not hesitate to acquire lambs (which the Egyptians idolized) and bring them to the door of their homes and then slaughter them (Zohar III:251a). This occurred because they loved and feared only Hashem, and without these additional mitzvot, their enthusiasm would have dissipated. It was this awakening that allowed them to follow the path made by Hashem in the desert, in a land not sown (Jeremiah 2:2), devoid of all provisions other than matzah (Exodus 12:39).

A man should therefore advance “from strength to strength” (Psalms 84:8). This awakening should encourage him to perform a mitzvah, which always generates ever-new enthusiasm, and which in turn brings about the performance of another mitzvah, as it is written: “One mitzvah brings about another” (Perkei Avoth 4:2).

The fact that the Children of Israel respected Shabbat while in Egypt (Shemot Rabba 1:32), a mitzvah that is considered as equal to all the rest of the mitzvot in the Torah (Yerushalmi Berachot 1:5), indicates that their enthusiasm was indeed very great. In fact, they continued to observe other mitzvot besides Shabbat so that they could have a vessel capable of containing their enthusiasm, their faith, and their fear of G-d.

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Hashem told our forefather Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt, but He promised that they would leave from there with great wealth, meaning that they would remain virtuous even while in exile and despite their prosperity. These were the riches that Abraham appreciated. As for Moses, even though sharing the spoils of Egypt was a great mitzvah, he preferred to perform an even greater one – that of finding the remains of Joseph, as it is written: “The wise of heart will seize mitzvot” (Proverbs 10:8).

The Midrash (Shemot Rabba 20:2) recounts something very surprising: Pharaoh, that cruel king who hated the Children of Israel so much – and whom they completely plundered of all wealth – accompanied the Children of Israel when they left Egypt. Such was the reward of the mitzvot that they performed, and which infused them with ever-new enthusiasm. Even when they did not perform mitzvot, they recited prayers (as at the Sea of Reeds, for example). That is the way a man should act, for mitzvot (ones that we cannot perform) can be replaced by prayer.

As we have seen, before their passage through the Sea of Reeds the Children of Israel felt a tremendous love for G-d and greatly feared Him. Their enthusiasm to serve Him did not stop growing. Yet if so, why were they frightened by the Egyptians pursuing them, and why did they begin to cry out to Hashem? One should not pray to Hashem only during times of trouble and distress; a man should constantly pray to Hashem, both in times of peace and joy as well as during moments of suffering (G-d forbid). If a prayer is not answered, it is perhaps because Hashem keeps this prayerful request in keeping for more difficult times. Hence we should continue to retain our faith in Him.

Hashem takes great pleasure in the prayers of the Tzaddikim, and He complicates their lives in order that they cry out to Him, call upon His Name, and ask Him for help. Nevertheless, we should realize that a true Tzaddik does not wait until misfortune comes before addressing his prayers to Hashem. According to the Talmud, when the Tzaddik (as well as the Jewish people) is in distress, the Divine Presence shares in this suffering and cries, “My head hurts! My arm hurts!” (Hagigah 15b).

At their departure from Egypt, the Children of Israel were to organize themselves in their new life. After all the miracles that they had witnessed, the love they felt for G-d and their faith in Him took on a new dimension. Hence they began to laud Hashem and to sing His praises for all things. All the same, they should have known that prayers are not always granted. A prayer is often at the mercy of a man’s slightest fault, which risks ruining everything. Even if it is written, “I am with him in distress” (Psalms 91:15), Hashem sometimes seems to distance Himself from a man, as it is written: “Though I would cry out and plead, He shut out my prayer” (Lamentations 3:8). A man should nevertheless maintain his faith and demonstrate resolve.

Such, however, was not the behavior of the Children of Israel. They revolted against the attributes of G-d. They acted “like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward” (Perkei Avot 1:3). Their love and fear of G-d was self-serving and they revolted against Moses, saying: “Were there no graves in Egypt?” (Exodus 14:11). Their prayer was not answered, and their love and faith in G-d decreased.

As for Hashem, He wanted to teach the Children of Israel that their prayers are not always answered. It is necessary, therefore, that we demonstrate perseverance and never give up hope. We should not wait until adversity to pray. Prayer should be a constant, daily practice, and if it is not answered, let us be vigilant, above all, to not revolt against Him. We must continue to perform mitzvot and believe in G-d. Despite all the mitzvot that the Children of Israel performed in Egypt, Pharaoh pursued and wanted to kill them. If they had prayed regularly, they would not have known such distress. Far from being afraid by the Egyptians, they would have had faith in G-d’s help and could have awaited a miracle.

We see from here the importance of prayer, which awakens man from his lethargy and reconnects him to his Father in Heaven.

Let us not act, therefore, like those who believe in G-d only during good times and revolt against Him when adversity strikes. Let us also not imitate those who exhibit their faith only when they are tried, for it is only then that they begin to pray and perform mitzvot and good deeds. A man should be firm in his faith, during good times as well as during adversity (G-d forbid), for “is it not from the mouth of the Most High that evil and good emanate?” (Lamentations 3:38). When we are assailed by all sorts of difficulties and undergo trials, let us study Torah and pray. That will strengthen our faith.

Such is what Hashem said to Moses, namely: “Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth” (Exodus 14:15). It is precisely during times of adversity that it is fitting to strengthen one’s faith in G-d, to fear Him, and to begin diligently studying Torah, without rebelling against Him. “‘Why these cries?’ Hashem continued. ‘Why do you only cry out to Me in times of distress? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth. Let them constantly believe in Me, even in distress, without relying too much on a miracle’” (Pesachim 64b). G-d does not send trials without good reason. “Hityatzivu [wait]! May your faith always be yetzivah [firm]. Pray constantly and Hashem will answer all your desires. Devote yourself to serving G-d without faltering in the least.”

That is what Nachshon, the son of Aminadav, did when he became the first to journey into the waters of the Sea of Reeds. His courage and spirit of sacrifice filled all the Children of Israel with faith, and the waters split before them. It was this same Nachshon who nearly caused a great tragedy for the Jewish people during the rebellion of Korach and his assembly. This is why our Sages teach, “Do not be sure of yourself until the day you die” (Perkei Avot 2:4).

IN MEMORY OF THE TSADIKIM

RABBI TZVI HIRSCH CHAYUT

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chayut, known as the Maharatz Chayut, merited three crowns: The crown of Torah, the crown of greatness, and the crown of a good name. Yet he also merited being crowned with the people's love. The people appreciated and loved its Rav with a very great love indeed. As for him, he was as humble as he was great, welcoming everyone with kindness and always being the first to say hello. He was always ready to offer his help to whoever was in need and his home was open wide to all, which is why everyone respected and loved him.

The son of Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch was born in Brody, Galicia during the month of Kislev 5566 (1805). He was an only son, and his father, who was wealthy and educated, taught him the ways of Torah and wisdom. Thanks to his intellectual gifts and great diligence, as a boy Tzvi Hirsch succeeded in every subject, be it in sacred matters (Tanach, Talmud, and the Poskim), foreign languages, or the sciences.

By the age of five he knew the Torah and early prophets by heart, and by the age of 11 he was studying with the greatest rabbis of his generation. He acquired an immense knowledge of Gemara and meticulously studied the works of Ramban, which he knew in detail. When he turned 13, he was already exceptional for his age.

At the age of 22 he received semichah (authorizing him to make Halachic decisions) from the Gaon Rabbi Zalman Margaliot of Brody, who loved him dearly. Great honors were bestowed on Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch when he became the Rav of Zolkiew, and when he arrived in town everyone went to welcome him with great joy, acknowledging him as their Rav and Av Beit Din. The town of Zolkiew was a large Jewish center, and 17 communities were under his jurisdiction. He quickly became famous as a Rav who was very learned in Torah and very knowledgeable concerning the affairs of the world, as a man who was extremely intelligent and pleasant to speak to. He always knew the proper Halachic response to give, and his words of wisdom spread to all segments of the community.

One story goes that when he accepted to become the Rav of Zolkiew, he was given a meager salary that did not allow him to sustain his family. After a year, he addressed the leader of the community and asked for a raise to be able to devote himself to Torah without having to worry about material concerns.

The community leader replied, "I'm surprised at the Rav's behavior. Should a man as great as he is in Torah also want to profit from the good things of this world, just like one of us?"

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chayut replied, "What do you think – that the Holy One, blessed be He, went to the trouble of creating good thing of this world only from the ignorant and unlearned?"

Another story concerning Rabbi Tzvi states that one day he was questioned about a certain wealthy man (who was very wicked) because he was eating a fine meal in the middle of Tisha B'Av, a meal consisting of fish, meat, and all sorts of delicacies. The Rav replied, "For a wicked man such as him, this meal is the greatest of sufferings."

"So as a result," one asked, "should he also drink a glass of wine during this meal, for then he will have fully carried out the mitzvah of mortifying oneself?"

"At that point," the Rav retorted, "his life would be in danger, and nobody is obligated to go to that extent to mortify himself."

The Maharatz Chayut wrote many important works, and his commentary on the Babylonian Talmud is well known. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch was 29 years old when he first published his books. The first that he had printed was *Torat HaNeviim*, in which he shows that G-d's Torah is perfect, eternal, and immutable. This book made a tremendous impression on the Torah world. Next came *Ateret Tzvi*, *Mishpat HaHora'ah*, *Tiferet L'Moshe*, *Darchei Moshe*, and many others. Much of his works has been translated into several languages. He also wrote the *Responsum* of the Maharatz, and in his answers we see that he was in contact with the greatest of his generation, such as Rabbi Moshe Sofer (the author of *Chatam Sofer*) and Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (the Rav of Brody). Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch published all his works within 14 years, from the age of 29 to 43.

The Maharatz Chayut did not live exclusively within books. He was also very active with the needs of the community and he fought G-d's battles. During his time the Reform movement began to spread in Germany, and certain people wanted to "update" the Jewish religion by permitting things that our fathers and forefathers had always forbidden. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch wrote a book entitled *Maamar Minchat Kanaut* ("An Article on the Jealousy Offering"), in which he described this movement using an in-depth approach and revealed the evil intentions of the Reformists. He demonstrated such zeal for the religion of Israel and its holy men, and for Zion and Jerusalem (which the Reformists had erased from their prayer books), that he called the leaders of the movement "accursed criminals." He arrived at the conclusion that "they modified the fundamentals of the religion. Without a doubt, they have done so because they believe in nothing."

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch remained in Zolkiew for 29 years. In 5612 (1852), he was appointed as Rabbi of the large city of Kalish, but he only stayed there for three years, during which time he suffered greatly from the Russian authorities. He also suffered from people who did not understand him, and all these troubles made him ill. Under the orders of physicians, in the summer of 5615 (1855) he went to the springs of Marienbad to treat his ailments. There his illness became worse, and he returned to Lvov, dying there on the first day of Heshvan, 5616 (1855) at the age of only 49. He is buried in Lvov.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch lived a short, difficult life, yet it was rich and potent in good deeds and creativity, full of substance. All those who study Torah mention the name of the Maharatz Chayut with great respect, awestruck by his holiness. Indeed, his memory is a blessing for all.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY FROM THE MAGGID OF DUBNO

It is written, “And I – behold! – I shall strengthen the heart of Egypt and they will come after them. And I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through his entire army, through his chariots and through his horsemen. Egypt will know that I am the L-RD when I am glorified through Pharaoh” (Exodus 14:17-18).

Let us stop and look into the repetition of the phrase “glorified through Pharaoh.”

Concerning this subject the Midrash states: “ ‘I shall strengthen the heart of Egypt’ – This is like two people, one of whom is very strong and the other is weak. The strong person overcomes the weak one and seizes the crown that is on his head. What was the cause of the strong person getting away with the crown of the weak one? Was it not the weak person himself? Similarly, what was the cause of the Holy One, blessed be He, being glorified? Was it not Pharaoh, whom He drowned?”

Let us use the following parable to explain this Midrash:

When a well-to-do person organizes a large feast, this represents a considerable undertaking, for it includes salting meat, koshering it, cooking, etc. These preparations require several skills, and many things are needed to properly carry them out. In general, all these tasks are entrusted to a single cook, who works from out of her home. Once the meals have been cooked and properly seasoned, workers then come to take all the meals from there to the site of the feast. Yet everyone knows that not everything is taken from the cook; that would not be right. She is left with a bit of everything, fish as well as meat (such as the wings, gizzard, head, feet and liver).

The Holy One, blessed be He, prepared (as it were) a great feast with Pharaoh. This means that He made him pass through fire and water, as well as demonstrating to the entire world the magnitude of His power and influence. This is why, near the end of the preparations, it would not have been right for Him to leave the “cook” (that is, Pharaoh) without a bit of something. This is what constitutes: “I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through his entire army, through his chariots and through his horsemen. Egypt will know that I am the L-RD” (Exodus 14:17). All these wonders would also make the Egyptians recognize G-d because He will be “glorified through Pharaoh” – Pharaoh will be the cause of the proclamation of G-d’s glory and the realization of His divine nature. This is even the way that the Midrash expresses it: “What was the cause of the Holy One, blessed be He, being glorified? Was it not Pharaoh, whom He drowned?” That is the reason why G-d “will be glorified.”

THE STORY OF THE WEEK CARE FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR, FOR THE TORAH WILL EMERGE FROM THEM

Rav Aaron Soloveitchik Shlita recounted the following story about the beginning of a marvelous dynasty of Talmidei Chachamim that included, among others, Rav Chaim of Brisk (the author of Beit Halevi) and his descendants. During the time of Rav Chaim of Volozhin Zatzal, there lived a Jew by the name of Reb Moshe Soloveitchik. He owned forests and did business in wood products, and he was known for his great wealth and equally great generosity toward all the poor and those in need. One day his wealth suddenly dried up, an incident that appeared very strange. By order of Rav Chaim of Volozhin, a special tribunal was set up to look into all his business dealings in order to ascertain the reason for his sudden economic ruin.

After having conducted a careful examination, the judges arrived at the conclusion that there was nothing objectionable about the way his business was managed. The only supposition put forward was that he had transgressed the words of the Sages who said, “One who desires to bestow his wealth to Tzeddakah may not give away more than a fifth.” In fact, Reb Moshe had very generously distributed his money to whoever asked for it or was in need. However Rabbi Chaim Zatzal rejected this conclusion, saying that it was not possible for him to be so severely punished for such a reason.

Reb Moshe himself, since he no longer had a business to manage, went to the Beit Midrash and began studying with great energy and extreme diligence. It became quickly apparent that he was very gifted in Torah, and he made great progress in his studies. He elevated himself without stop, to the point of being considered as one of the best in this domain. He also brought his children with him to the Beit Midrash, and they progressively began to earn a reputation as Torah greats.

After several years, Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin said, “Now I understand the reason for Reb Moshe’s economic ruin. Apparently, Heaven wanted to grant him a magnificent dynasty of Talmidei Chachamim as a great reward for the Tzeddakah that he distributed. Yet since it is impossible for such a dynasty to emerge from a wealthy home, all his wealth was taken from him in order that he should study Torah in poverty. Now generations of very great Talmidei Chachamim can be given to him.”