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Hilula

13 - Rabbi Baruch Sorotzkin

14 - Rabbi Ya'akov Yehoshua Falk,
author of 'Pnei Yehoshua'

15 - Rabbi Chaim Mordechai
Margaliot, author of 'Sha'arei
Teshuva'

16 - Rabbi Shalom Mordechai
Hakohen Shwadron

17 - Rabbi Chaim Falaji

18 - Rabbi Binyamin Beinush Finkel,
the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva

19 - Rabbi Yitzchak Baruch Sofer



The Redemption from Egypt in Contrast to other Redemptions

"On that day, Hashem saved Israel from the land of Egypt, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore"

(Shemot 14:30)

The Chida questions why it is that at every opportunity, both in blessings and prayers, we mention 'a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt', while all the other redemptions that Am Yisrael experienced over time, are not mentioned at all. Not the salvations that took place during the period when the Judges ruled, as is brought in length in Sefer Shoftim, where Hashem saved the Jewish people time and again from the hand of every oppressor. Neither the deliverance from the Babylonians, nor the deliverance from Haman's plot at the time of Mordechai and Esther, nor the salvation from the Greeks that the Chashmonaim merited, that brought about the celebration of Chanukah. Why then is the redemption from Egypt singled out?

I would like to suggest, with Hashem's help, that the redemption from Egypt was fundamentally different than any other redemption. The miracle of leaving Egypt was comprehensive since every member of Am Yisrael was part of it. Without this redemption, Am Yisrael would have had no future. They would have all assimilated and given themselves up to the Egyptian servitude, under Pharaoh's rule, especially since they were so close to falling to the fiftieth and lowest level of impurity. But with the other redemptions, even without the salvation, a small group would have anyway survived. Had even only one Jewish woman remained, and even if she would marry a non-Jew, the children that she would give birth to would be considered Jewish (as is the case with a servant or non-Jew who marries a Jewish girl [Yevamot 45b]), and Am Yisrael would not become extinct. Even at the time of the Purim miracle, some remnant of Am Yisrael would have remained, despite Haman's decree to kill all the Jews. This is true also for the oppression that took place at the time of Chanukah, and all other world wars, including the most horrific circumstances that European Jewry suffered at the time of the Holocaust. Only the future and final redemption with the arrival of Mashiach will be remembered in its own right (Berachot 12b), for this redemption will be like the Exodus of Egypt, an all-encompassing redemption. As it says (Micha 7:15) "As in the days when you left the land of Egypt I will show it wonders", which refers to the final redemption.

The reason why we only mention the redemption from Egypt is that this redemption was the greatest and it includes all the other redemptions.

This can be compared to a rich man who when giving charity, gives a large donation, while a poor person donates merely a small amount. When faced with the rich man's donation, the poor man's gift becomes insignificant and does not register, but if we are focused on the poor man's donation, it will also remind us of the rich man's contribution. So too when comparing the Exodus from Egypt with all the other redemptions, its magnitude is mentioned when talking about the other redemptions since they were less significant. Certainly, it is appropriate to appreciate the more minor salvations as well, but they are included when mentioning the most significant of them. Therefore, when we mention 'a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt', which was the most powerful redemption, we are including within it all the other redemptions that Am Yisrael merited.

Furthermore, the other redemptions were not a universal redemption, as was the case in Egypt. After the redemption from the Babylonian exile, Jews still remained in this foreign country even once they had been delivered and were able to return to Eretz Yisrael and build the second Beit Hamikdash. With the Chanukah miracle too, although we were delivered from their hands, the Greek culture is still prevalent in the world. And even though Haman's decree was annulled, we are from time to time faced with new troubles.

Now we will return to the Chida's question: Why is the redemption from Egypt singled out? As we will explain, the true redemption of the Jewish people is Torah and repentance. This is the only way we can be liberated. Exile is distancing oneself from the Torah, for exile (גלות) has the same root as redemption (גאולה), the determining factor being the Torah.

The entire purpose of the redemption from Egypt was to receive the Torah. If the Jewish people would agree to accept the yoke of Torah and its mitzvot, their redemption would be immediate. Even though they had not actually received the Torah, Hashem redeemed them with supernatural miracles, although they were steeped in the forty-ninth level of impurity (Zohar Hachadash, beg. of Parshat Yitro). Therefore, at every opportunity, we mention Hashem's kindness in redeeming us from Egypt in a most miraculous way. All the other redemptions took place once we already had the Torah and mitzvot and the reason for the exile was because of a laxity in observing the Torah. Immediately upon returning to a life of Torah, the troubles are removed and redemption arrives. This is why there is no mention of the other redemptions since the power and merit to be redeemed is in our hands, if we only wish. For Torah can be found in an unobtrusive corner, and whoever wishes can come and partake of it and experience redemption.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoan Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

In the Merit of Inner Will

I was once visited by a Liberal Rabbi, whose outlook on life was in direct contrast to mine, as an Orthodox Rabbi. Nevertheless, he asked for my blessing in the merit of my forefathers. I was taken aback by his humbling himself by asking for my blessing on his matters, in light of the vast difference in our outlook on religion. After asking for my blessing, he added, "Honored Rav, I have a friend who has tried, for a long time, to convince me to meet you so that we can discuss matters of religion. I have come today in order to do so."

Unfortunately, I didn't have time just then to spend with him on this subject, as the line behind the door was growing longer by the minute. People were waiting for advice and berachot, and I had to cut our meeting short. Heaven put just the right words into my mouth, that had an effect on this Rabbi. I quoted the opening verse of Chumash Shemot (1:1), "And these are the names of the Children of Israel who were coming to Egypt with Jacob, each man and his household came." I have no idea why, but I kept emphasizing the name Jacob aloud a few times. Suddenly, I noticed the man's face turn pale and it looked like he was going to collapse any minute.

"How do you know that it was my friend, Jacob, who sent me to you?" he asked weakly.

"I had no clue that he sent you. Hashem put these words into my mouth. He saw that you made the effort to go and speak to an Orthodox Rabbi, who is in direct opposition to your worldview, with the intention of investigating your Jewish roots. I was, therefore, made His emissary to say the words that would shake you into doing complete teshuvah."

This Liberal Rabbi's inner desire to discover the truth was the merit that brought him to me and caused me to quote the most appropriate verse that would shake him up and inspire him to let go of his mistaken opinions on Judaism.

The Haftarah

"Devorah sang" (Shoftim 5)

The connection to the Parsha: The Haftarah speaks about the downfall of Sisera and his army, and about the shira of Devora the prophetess and Barak the son of Avinoam, where they praise Hashem for the miracle of saving them from their enemies. The Parsha talks about the downfall of the wicked Pharaoh and the drowning of his army in the depth of the Yam Suf, and about the shira of Moshe Rabbeinu and Bnei Yisrael that they sung by the sea.

Ashkenazim read from **"Devorah was a prophetess"** (Shoftim 4).

Guard Your Tongue

When It Is Permissible to Believe Lashon Hara

If it has been established that someone is a rasha, since it has become public knowledge that he contemptuously transgressed clear Torah prohibitions several times, one may believe the lashon hara that is said about such a person.



Words of our Sages

Which Kind of Music Speaks to You?

"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Hashem" (Shemot 15:1)

Judaism gives song a place of honor, as is evident from all mitzvah celebrations, for example, at weddings, Shabbat and Yom Tov meals, on completion of a Masechet, at a Brit or Bar Mitzvah. There are even certain sections in our prayers that are accorded special attention and we don't consider it sufficient to just recite the words; these sections are always accompanied by holy melodies. Even the Great Sages, for whom every minute was precious and calculated, set aside time to compose songs that would inspire the future generations.

The following lines are an excerpt from the viewpoint of the educator, Harav Pinchas Breuer shlita, who is involved in composing and singing. It is worth paying attention to his instructive insights:

Song has a powerful effect. Song speaks straight to the soul, it breaches walls and traverses borders. Even the toughest person will be moved on hearing a stirring tune, on the other hand, even a broken, despondent and depressed person will start dancing on hearing a cheerful and joyful song. This is the exclusive power of song. There is no physical element which can stir the soul,

like song. We have never come across a person who was moved to tears from eating a well-done steak. We have also never come across a miserable person who is suddenly joyful after a long sleep. It is only song that possesses this wonderful power of having an immediate influence on the soul.

One can arrive at a wedding tired, troubled, and with frayed nerves, yet suddenly find oneself spinning around joyfully in circles, indifferent to all that was and will be. The opposite is also true: on hearing a soulful, moving melody, we are drawn into a different world.

A song that is rooted in holiness, a song which is an expression of nobility, or a composition that one can sense was arranged by a G-d fearing person, this kind of song will certainly inspire one to avodat Hashem, as reality shows us. On the other hand, words that were set to music by an empty, hollow person, the kind of person whom you would not allow your precious son to be found in his company, how can you then let him talk to your son's soul?

Who is even talking about the new fashion of 'converting' secular or non-Jewish songs? Composers take a coarse song and patch it up with holy words, in the same way as the hypocrisy of immersing in a ritual bath whilst holding an impure creature. In no time this 'new' song becomes the latest hit at religious weddings and precious yeshiva bachurim dance and let off steam to its beat.

If song speaks to the spiritual soul, then these cheap songs speak to the emotional heart. It is as if we are listening to all those empty, shallow (original) composers. Would we be prepared to have a heart to heart talk with those empty-headed people? Why do we then allow them, in a round-about way, to speak straight to the hearts of our sons and daughters?!

One of the Gedolei Hador once asked a singer why he sings second-rate songs. He answered that this is his way of bringing Jews closer to religion, for they form a connection with him through the songs he sings.

The Gadol countered his reply with a story: Once this type of singer came to the Heavenly Court and when he was asked why he sang like a non-Jew, he answered that his intention was to bring Jews back to their source. He felt that his main occupation in life was instigating people to repent. The Heavenly Court had a ready response: Take a chair and sit next to the entrance of Gan Eden. As soon as the first ba'al teshuva arrives and declares that he became an observant Jew in the merit of your songs, you may then enter Gan Eden together with him.

The Gadol finished off: This singer is still waiting for his ba'alei teshuva...



Torah Exists Through Joy

"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said the following: I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea" (Shemot 15:1)

The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni 233) brings: "The angels wished to sing shira (a song of praise), but Hashem said to them: My Handiwork is drowning in the sea and you wish to sing shira?"

This gives rise to a question: How were Bnei Yisrael allowed to sing shira? What is the difference between them and the angels?

It could be that since it is hard for Hashem to punish His own Handiwork, He, therefore, did not allow the angels to sing shira. But Bnei Yisrael who suffered torment under the rule of the Egyptians during all those years of the bondage, were allowed to sing shira for their enemies who drowned in the sea. Without this joyful shira that gushed from the depths of their hearts, they would not have felt strongly that they are now freemen and able to become Hashem's servants.

One can also say that Am Yisrael was on the way to receiving the Torah and Torah cannot exist in the absence of joy. As it says in Tehillim (100:2), "Serve Hashem with gladness". This is the reason why Hashem allowed them to sing and rejoice, for with this joy they could prepare themselves for the receiving of the Torah with gladness. Besides, without this joy they would not merit seeing the Shechina.

It is told about Rabbeinu Tam zya"a, of the Ba'alei Tosfot, that when he studied Torah he would place money in front of him so that the money should cause his heart to expand with joy and in this way, he could connect to his learning. Without a doubt, Torah was more important to him than money, and the proof is that he spent his time occupied with Torah study and did not look for ways to earn money, but since money caused his heart to expand with joy, he placed it in front of him. According to this one can say that after Bnei Yisrael rejoiced about the downfall of the Egyptians, Hashem gifted them with the spoil from the sea, so that later their hearts would expand with Torah.

David Hamelech a"h says in Tehillim (84:3), "My soul yearns, indeed it pines, for the courtyards of Hashem". My esteemed grandfather, Rabbi Yeshayahu Pinto zya"a, explains that the word 'נכספה', (yearns), is an expression of the longing that David Hamelech had for the courtyards of Hashem. 'נכספה' also has the same root as the word 'כסף' (money). This implies that money brings joy and awakens a feeling of longing for the courtyards of Hashem.



Pearls of the Parsha

Crying About Lack of Yirat Shamayim

"And they were very frightened and they cried out" (Shemot 14:10)

Why did Bnei Yisrael cry out?

Rabbi Klonimus Kalman HaLevi Epstein of Krakow zt"l, the author of 'Maor v'Shemesh', explains that in fact, Bnei Yisrael cried out because of this fear. Their hearts were in pain from the fact that they were afraid of a human being, for a true G-d fearing person is embarrassed and ashamed to be afraid of anything in the world, besides Hashem.

For Whose Sake?

"They said to Moshe, 'Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the Wilderness?'" (Shemot 14:1)

Bnei Yisrael's complaint is explained beautifully by the 'Ktav Sofer': Since they saw all the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed for them in Egypt in order to redeem them, yet now once again saw themselves facing considerable hardship, they therefore despaired of being saved. They imagined that all the miracles that Hashem performed in Egypt were not for their sake, but solely so that they should be able to take out the bones of the tribes and the coffin of Yosef so that they should not be buried in Egypt, an impure place.

They therefore said: "Were there no graves in Egypt". Since there were no fitting graves for our ancestors in Egypt, therefore, "you took us to die in the Wilderness". What have we gained from this? It is only of benefit to our fathers, not to us.

In the Morning, 'Beloved'; In the Evening, 'Children'

"Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Hashem" (Shemot 15:1)

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky shlita, asks the following question:

Why in the evening prayer do we say, "When His children perceived His power, they lauded and gave grateful praise to His Name", while in the morning prayer we say, "For this, the beloved praised and exalted G-d". How does it come about that from evening until morning we change from being 'children' to 'beloved' ones?

Rabbi Chaim explains: There is a big difference between children and beloved ones. A son is something eternal; even a son who does the worst injustice to his father will not lose the title of 'son', as the Gemara brings (Kiddushin 36a): "Rabbi Meir says: Either way you are called sons, as it says, "evil offspring, destructive children". On the other hand, only a son who honors his father merits the title of 'beloved one'.

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer tells us that when Bnei Yisrael were in the desperate state of the Egyptians surrounding them from one side, with the sea on the other side, they were very afraid. They threw away all the abominations of Egypt and repented.

The Rambam (Hilchot Teshuva 7:6) writes, "Repentance brings those distant closer; yesterday this one was hated by Hashem, repulsive and distant and abominable, and today he is beloved and delightful and a close friend". We can derive from this that in the evening, before the Splitting of the Sea, Bnei Yisrael were only considered as children, but towards morning when they already repented, as the Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer tells us, they were now deserving of the title 'beloved ones'.

This, then, is the difference between the evening prayer where we say, "When His children perceived", to the morning prayer where we say, "the beloved praised".

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



"Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt"

(Shemot 13:17)

Rashi says: "They will think thoughts about their leaving and will want to return". This is quite amazing. Bnei Yisrael will wish to return? To where? To Egypt? To the crushing harshness of the enslavement?

Rabbi Leib Chasman zt"l explains that a person is made up of two opposing powers. On the one hand, every person possesses a G-dly essence which enables him to experience lofty moments, yet at the same time he is an ugly, obscure and foolish physical being, created from "dust from the ground". Man is open to change to either extreme at any given moment. "He is likened to the silenced animals," when faced with a battle, his intelligence disappears. Like a horse who perceives war will turn back, and it makes no difference to him whether a king or a simpleton is riding on him, so too a human being can change his position from moment to moment. One minute he behaves like a Heavenly angel, while the next moment he can behave like a horse.

What lies behind this concept is 'habit'. The power of habit is extremely great, and a person can even long for Egypt, for blows, for harsh work conditions, for this is the power of habit! Being familiar with the supermarket, the Health center and the bank, gives a good feeling- this is the power of habit!

Rabbi Shalom Schwadron zt"l would tell over the 'Story of the Chalutz (Pioneer)' that took place with the establishment of the State of Israel. The government ordered every household to foster a pioneer family (new olim). This is how it came about that the distinguished Auerbach family, the parents of the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman zt"l, were also requested to host a couple. This couple, who were

far from being observant Jews, came to stay in the house of the mekubal, the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Leib Auerbach. While welcoming the guests and helping them feel at home, he gently explained that they should try and preserve the delicate nature of living in close proximity, while taking care not to offend the atmosphere and orthodox way of life of the occupants.

But with the onset of the first Shabbat, the visitors openly profaned the holy day. This offense disturbed the Shabbat tranquility and blemished its holiness. So the Rabbanit a"h asked her son, then the young Shlomo, to try and explain in a pleasant way, about the receiving of the Torah on Har Sinai, the Ten Commandments and the holiness of Shabbat, in order to prevent further friction.

The young Shlomo cleverly started to explain, in a warm and affable manner, about the concept of the Shabbat Queen and how a Jew honors his Creator who created the world in six days. The husband jumped up and retorted: "Are you trying to tell me that there is a Creator? I saw him!" The young Shlomo was taken aback. "Where did you see Him, maybe you want to share the tale..."

Now it was the pioneer's turn to address the family:

"Many years ago, as was want to happen, when a local ruler either intentionally or unintentionally offended the neighboring ruler, a squabble would break out between the neighboring villages and this would end in a real battle, with both sides shooting at each other. The battle intensified until one side initiated 'reconciliation'.

It once happened that I found myself conscripted to fight in a battle that was waged on behalf of the honor of the ruler, who was seemingly offended by someone. From my hiding place between the pits of sand, I kept shooting at the 'enemy'. At a lull in the fighting, I started thinking to myself, why am I involved in this? What will anyone gain from this battle?!

Suddenly I noticed that a group of orthodox bachurim from my village had joined our forces. I also noticed that at every break, they utilized the time to read from small books that they kept with them.

I found myself approaching them and asking them to explain what they were doing. I didn't understand exactly what

they explained, but one thing was clear to me: While I was confused and disoriented in my present reality, they firmly believed that there is a Ruler of the World who directs every occurrence! There is order and purpose in every circumstance, even if we don't understand exactly how or why. These young boys were certain that there was some benefit behind the circumstances brought about by the Creator.

Then an interesting thing happened. For the first time in my life, I found myself talking to G-d! I said, "I apologize for being so blunt, but if You can really hear me, please send me a sign! I would love to be released from army service, but, perish the thought, not due to any disability which will harm my future. Can I maybe ask for some small injury, let's say in a finger? Something which will grant me release from the army but will not leave me handicapped?!"

"While I was still talking to G-d", the pioneer continued while waving his half thumb in the air, "I heard the sharp whistle of a bullet, and half of my thumb was severed, as you can see!

You should know, that of course I was then taken away from the front lines for treatment and then recovery in the military convalescent home. I promised myself that as soon as I would be allowed home, I will immediately find out exactly what Judaism means and come closer to my Father in heaven, who listens to the prayers of every single person...

But what actually happened was, although I intended to go straight to Yeshiva after my release, this didn't happen in the end. So today I am standing here, ignorant in the ways of Judaism, and you, young boy needs to reprove me for profaning the Shabbat. Had I gone straight to Yeshiva, I today, could be your teacher in the laws of Shabbat!" The pioneer continued:

"I am telling you this so that you should know that it is very hard for a person to let go of the chains of habit! Therefore, you at least, should take care that every time you feel some awakening to improve yourself, do something about it straight away, take some positive action."