



## A Lost Opportunity

**"It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people that G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near"** (Shemot 13:17).

Chazal teach us: The word ויִהְיֶה, it happened, is always an expression of distress. What distress was involved here? It cannot refer to the distress of Bnei Yisrael, but if it refers to Pharaoh's distress, we have already been told (Shemot 12:33), "Egypt imposed itself strongly upon the people to hasten to send them out of the land," and since Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, the Egyptians were no longer in distress.

Furthermore, Chazal say in Mechilta: "It happened when he sent" – send always means to accompany, so since Pharaoh accompanied Bnei Yisrael, it is a sign he was not upset about sending them out."

This is how we can answer the question: even though Hashem knows a person will sin in the future, He nevertheless only judges him according to his present deeds. And from this place of greatness that He is aware of everything, there you find His humility – how He acts towards His creations with the attribute of mercy.

According to this we can understand Hashem's statement to Moshe (Shemot 11:1), "One more plague I shall bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; after that he shall send you forth from here." However, we find that Hashem brought many more plagues upon them by the sea, so what is the meaning of "one more plague"?!

But as we explained, even though Hashem knew Pharaoh would pursue Bnei Yisrael, nevertheless at the time of the Plague of Firstborns he had the free choice to surrender himself to Hashem. Had he merited, he would have sanctified G-d's Name at that time, just as it was sanctified later at the sea.

That is why Hashem said to Moshe, "One more plague I shall bring upon Pharaoh." Hashem judged him according to that moment, and right then it seemed certain Pha-

raoh would repent and allow Bnei Yisrael to leave Egypt. Had he utilized this opportunity to repent, it would not have been necessary to smite them further by the sea, because Hashem's Name would have been sanctified right there in Egypt.

What happened in the end? ויִהְיֶה בשלח, and it happened when he sent." What was the distress? Pharaoh was distraught and concerned that he had to allow the Jewish people to leave his land, for he did not grant them permission out of recognition of Hashem's great power, but because the Egyptians could no longer bear the plagues and therefore drove them out.

At that moment Pharaoh resembled someone standing at a crossroad, unable to decide which direction to take. He said, "If I defer to Hashem and willingly allow Bnei Yisrael to leave, I will become a laughing stock in the eyes of all the kings. Yesterday I told them I created the Nile, and now I am surrendering myself to the G-d of the Jews. On the other hand, if I harden my heart, their G-d will punish me." While he was contemplating, his pride overcame him and he did not send them willingly; he was distressed about the decision. That is why the verse uses the expression ויִהְיֶה, It happened [when Pharaoh sent], because indeed Pharaoh was upset.

Since he did not surrender and Hashem's Name was not sanctified when they left Egypt, Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart and he pursued Bnei Yisrael. Hashem then brought more plagues upon the Egyptians, and eventually the entire army drowned in the sea. Even though at that point Pharaoh finally repented, nevertheless since he did not do so earlier, he caused Amalek to come and fight against Am Yisrael, and Amalek cooled off Am Yisrael's status in the eyes of the nations.

This teaches us how careful we must be with all our actions. We should weigh up all our deeds and not do things we will later regret and be unable to rectify.

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## Hilula

13 Shevat – Rabbi Yechezkel HaKohen

14 Shevat – Rabbi Yitzchak Abuchatzera

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

16 Shevat – Rabbi Shalom Mordechai HaKohen Schwadron, author of Responsa Maharsham

17 Shevat – Rabbi Yechezkel of Kozmir

18 Shevat – Rabbi Binyomin Beinush Finkel, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva

19 Shevat – Rabbi Shmuel of Slonim



## Torah Talk

Sometimes, even an ordinary conversation carries the weight of a Torah topic.

I was once very preoccupied and stressed about matters concerning our institutions. Just then, a fellow Jew approached me with a request. I answered him curtly, in an impatient manner.

After I had calmed down somewhat from my obligations, I recalled the incident. Was it this man's fault that I was concerned with other matters? Why should he suffer or feel hurt because of me?

I was very pained by this matter. I always try to help any Jew in need in a pleasant manner and truly participate in his predicament. And now I had hurt the feelings of a fellow Jew.

The matter gave me no rest, and at the closing of the Minchah prayer, I added a request. "Master of the World," I began, "I truly regret the way I acted toward this man. Please help me find him quickly, so I can ask his forgiveness and appease him."

After the prayers I looked around for the man and suddenly, with *siyata di'Shemaya*, I saw him walking by. I hurried over to him and succeeded in mollifying him and obtaining his forgiveness for my unpleasant attitude toward him earlier.

Asking his forgiveness was certainly not a Torah talk. Yet, without doubt, it was the fulfillment of Hashem's will. He surely wanted me to make amends. Therefore, it can be considered a holy Torah conversation.

## 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 sang by the sea.

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

## The Jar of Manna as a Remembrance

**"Moshe said, 'This is the thing that Hashem has commanded: A full omer of it shall be a safekeeping for your generations, so they will see the food with which I fed you in the Wilderness when I took you out of Egypt'"** (Shemot 16:32).

Rashi quotes from Chazal: "'For your generations' refers to the days of Yirmiyahu, when Yirmiyahu rebuked the people by saying, 'Why are you not engaging in Torah?' And they answered, 'If we neglect our occupations and engage in Torah, how will we support ourselves?' So Yirmiyahu took out the jar of manna and said, 'See the word of Hashem.' He did not say 'listen' but 'see'. 'Look and see that with this [manna] your forefathers were sustained. Hashem has many messengers to provide for those who fear Him.'"

After Rabbi Moshe Aharon's marriage, poverty prevailed in his home, but it did not disturb his avodat Hashem in any way. He trusted in Hashem fully that He will provide for him.

This state of poverty continued for about two years, and when Rabbi Moshe Aharon did not have what to offer the Rabbanit Mazal, he would tell her to go to the neighbors and ask for something to eat, so great was their poverty.

However, after a while, they experienced a turnaround. One day Rabbanit Mazal entered a side room where she came across a coin. At first she thought it belonged to her husband and he had inadvertently dropped it. But she immediately changed her mind, for how would he have gotten hold of this coin? She could find no satisfactory explanation for the mysterious find and to her surprise, from that day on, she found a coin in that room every day. With this money she would purchase food for her family. Their situation began to improve, and their dire poverty eased off.

One day, Rabbi Moshe Aharon asked his wife, "From where do you have the means to buy food? I haven't given you any money!" She told him about the mysterious coin, which she had been sure he was leaving for her to buy necessary provisions.

At first, Rabbi Moshe Aharon did not believe his wife and pressed her again as to the source of the money. She admitted that she could not explain where the money was coming from, since she herself did not know. She then led him to the room where she found a coin each day.

The Rav and the Rabbanit decided to lock the door and see what would happen. The next morning, they opened the door, and... again, there was a coin in the room. Fear gripped Rabbi Moshe Aharon's heart upon seeing the coin. How did it get there? They realized it was a miracle from Heaven.

Yet, from the day the secret was uncovered, the blessing came to a halt. The next morning, there was no coin in the room. At the same time, their situation began to improve. Blessing descended upon their home, and they began to enjoy a steady income.



## The Sabbatical Year

1. Peirot shevi'it are supposed to be eaten, as it says (Vayikra 25:6), "The Shabbat produce of the land shall be yours to eat." This is the significance of their inherent holiness – one may not cause them to go to waste, or use them for trade, because they are destined for consumption alone. Peirot shevi'it may only be sold in small quantities, with the intention of eating them.

2. Therefore, when one sells peirot shevi'it, they retain their holiness of being set aside to be eaten. In addition, the money one receives in exchange acquires the holiness of the produce and must be used to purchase food only. This food must be eaten before the time of bi'ur (renouncing of ownership) of the original fruits for which this money was received.

3. This makes it clear that peirot shevi'it cannot be traded in the regular fashion. The seller wishes to earn money, but the money he receives must be used to buy food that will be consumed in the near future, until the time of bi'ur.

4. One may not purchase peirot shevi'it (even in a permitted fashion) from someone one suspects will not treat the money he receives with the appropriate holiness.

5. One who sells peirot shevi'it should not sell them by weight, measure, or number as is the usual manner, but should sell them by rough estimation. In this way they will be sold for less than the actual price and one will remember that they are peirot shevi'it and be careful with their holiness. The main payment is for the service of making this produce available.

6. If one buys peirot shevi'it on credit, meaning he pays for them only after they have been consumed, the money does not acquire kedushat shevi'it, since the payment is considered as repaying a debt and not payment for the produce. One may be lenient and pay the debt even before eating the fruit, since the laws of Shemittah today are d'rabbanan.

7. Where it is prohibited to give d'mei shevi'it to an am ha'aretz, and not everyone is willing to sell on credit, some suggest paying with a check post-dated for the following day.

8. One who trades in peirot shevi'it and does not have any other profession, is unfit to be a witness.

9. Peirot shevi'it must not be taken out of Eretz Yisrael or given to a non-Jew to eat.

For any questions in practical application of these halachot, please consult a rabbinical authority.

## Treasures

Based on the teachings of  
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon  
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya  
Pinto, shlita



### Repentance is Impossible in the Absence of Good Middot!

Chazal have taught us (Avot 4:21), "Jealousy, lust, and glory remove a man from the world."

From where did Chazal learn this?

From Pharaoh. Even though he saw the land of Egypt being destroyed, and his servants told him (Shemot 10:7), "How long will this be a snare for us? Send out the men that they may serve Hashem, their G-d! Do you not yet know that Egypt is lost?" Pharaoh did not heed their words.

Why? Because he coveted kingship and glory. In addition, he was embarrassed of the kings who would say, "How weak is this Pharaoh! How many thousands of servants were under his control, who built so many cities for him. Yet he sends them from his land at the command of Moshe and Aharon, the leaders of the Jewish people. We thought the king of Egypt was a god who created the Nile; now that we see he is afraid of these two great leaders, we know he is not a god and did not create the Nile."

Since Pharaoh was afraid of this disgrace to his honor, he hardened his heart throughout this time and did not allow Bnei Yisrael to leave. Even though Egypt was slowly being destroyed, nothing could stand in the way of his honor.

"There is nothing that is not hinted to in the Torah." In the verse "It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people," (Shemot 13:17) there is an allusion to the above idea. Chazal say (Megillah 10b), "ויהי, it happened, is always an expression of distress." In the above verse it says ויהי בשלח, it happened when he sent, which teaches that Pharaoh was distressed; his image was weakened in the eyes of the kings. בשלח, when he sent, has the same letters as חלש, weak. Now everyone knew he was not a god and did not make the Nile, and his honor was disgraced.

The rule is, it is impossible to remove jealousy and honor from one's heart unless he rectifies his middot. As long as a person does not toil to rectify his middot, he will never attain good middot. He might even engage in Torah his entire life, but if he does not rectify his middot, he will never succeed in ridding his heart from these negative traits. And since Pharaoh was arrogant and said, "The Nile is mine and I have made myself!" he was not interested in rectifying his middot and eventually failed.



### Hagaon Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk zt"l

Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk was born in Cracow, Poland. He was a grandson of Rabbi Yehoshua Charif, author of *Maginei Shlomo* on Rashi. After his marriage dissolved, Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua (the Pnei Yehoshua) left his hometown and went to Lvov where he was accepted as Rav. Later on he served as Rav in the cities Terlov and Liska, following which he returned to Lvov, where he was appointed as Rav in place of the Chacham Tzvi.

Many students flocked to his yeshiva, which became famous far and wide. Due to a controversy in the city, Rabbi Yehoshua left Lvov and was appointed as Rav in several places, such as Berlin and Frankfurt. He then settled in Worms, where he supported himself from the trade of his industrious second wife, who was also very learned and understood her husband's chiddushei Torah.

The Chida, who was hosted by the Pnei Yehoshua, describes his personage: "I, the fledgling, merited dwelling with the Shechina for several days. His image is like the image of a G-dly angel, and he

gave me the sefer *Pnei Yehoshua* as a gift..."

Eventually Rabbi Yehoshua moved to Offenbach, where he passed away on 14 Shevat, at the age of seventy-six. Heavy mourning settled over the Jewish people. He was buried in Frankfurt where he had previously served as Rav. Even though he had asked not be eulogized, the Noda B'Yehuda spoke about him with great emotion. The tzaddik Rabbi Yitzchak Izik of Qumran wrote about him: "From Yehoshua [bin Nun] until Yehoshua, there has not arisen like Yehoshua."

A resident of Lvov was blind from birth. He had an exceptional memory and knew the prayers by heart, as well as halachot and aggadot. He had a special love for holy books. He would sit by the bookcase in the beit kneset and feeling the sefarim with his hands, would straighten their pages.

One day he was walking with the young lad who always accompanied him. They passed a beit kneset and he asked to be taken inside. The lad directed him to the bookcase and the blind man stretched out his hand and took a sefer. It was a thick sefer, bound with a wooden cover. As usual, he began feeling and straightening the pages, when suddenly he felt something prominent. It turned out to be a package wrapped in paper. He opened the paper, felt the contents with his hands, and realized it was a pair of glasses!

The blind man took the glasses and put them on his eyes. At that moment he felt a tremendous light which he had never seen

before! He grew frightened and immediately removed the glasses, and began praying with the congregation. After the prayers the lad told him it was time to go home. The man put the glasses in his pocket and went with the lad. He was very excited about the glasses and couldn't eat. The entire night he lay awake. In the morning he got up, washed his hands and put on the glasses. And once again – a new world was revealed to him!

"It is nothing but a dream," he thought to himself and did not tell his family. But they noticed their father getting along well without feeling his way around. Little by little they realized he could see just like everyone else. It was simply a miracle!

He then began to learn how to read and write. Eventually he progressed in his studies and became a successful trader. Of course, he never went anywhere without his wondrous glasses.

One day he was asked how he got hold of these glasses. He related that he had found them in a beit kneset in Lvov. His family investigated the matter and it turned out that this was the beit midrash of the Pnei Yehoshua! After praying, the Rav would sit and study there and place his glasses inside the sefer with the wooden binding. Because of a controversy that flared up in the town, the Pnei Yehoshua left hurriedly and his glasses remained behind in the sefer. Finally the day came when they brought salvation for that Jew who had such a great love for holy books!