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MASKIL LE'DAVID

Hashem Desires Prayer from the Depths of the Heart

On the seventh day of Pesach, Bnei Yisrael faced the Yam Suf and experienced great miracles. The Gaon Rabbi Avraham Yaffan, zt"l, quoted in the *sefer Arzei Halevanon*, asks the following question: The Midrash (*Shir Hashirim Rabba* 2:35) quotes the verse, "Let Me hear your supplicating voice, for your voice is sweet." This can be compared to a king who has an only daughter, and he desires to hear her voice. Consequently, he arranged that when she would be taken for her daily walk, his servants would pretend to be bandits and attack her. They did so and she started screaming, "Abba, Abba, save me!" He said to her, "Had I not done this to you, you would not have cried out to me."

So, too, when Bnei Yisrael were in Mitzrayim, the Egyptians' cruel enslavement caused them to cry out and lift their eyes to Hashem, as it says, "And the Children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out." Immediately, "G-d heard their moaning" — Hashem heard their prayers and took them out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. However, once they left Mitzrayim, Hashem still desired to hear their voices, yet they no longer cried out.

What did Hashem do? He strengthened Pharaoh's heart and he chased after them. When Bnei Yisrael saw Pharaoh approaching, they lifted their eyes to Hashem and cried out to Him as they had cried in Mitzrayim. Hashem then said to them, "Had I not done this to you, I would not have heard your voice." About this incident it says, "At the sea, He said to me, 'My dove, trapped at the sea as if in the clefts of the rock ... let Me hear your supplicating voice.'" It does not say, "Let me hear *the* voice," rather, "*your* voice"; the same one I heard in Mitzrayim.

Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem by the sea and, "On that day, Hashem saved Israel from the hand of Egypt."

Rabbi Avraham Yaffan questions the comparison. The voice with which they cried out in Mitzrayim was one triggered by their suffering. Mitzrayim was full of idolatry, the Jewish people were bereft of mitzvot, and they had sunken to the forty-ninth level of impurity. But since then things had changed. They had witnessed the revelation of Hashem's Hand during the Ten Plagues, as the verse tells us, "... with great awesomeness," which refers to the revelation of the Shechina. They also merited fulfilling the commandments of the Pesach offering with great sacrifice and fulfilling the mitzvah of brit milah. They left Mitzrayim with an upraised arm and "Hashem went before them by day ... and by night." If so, by the sea, why did Hashem not demand from them a new, more lofty and elevated voice, rather than the same voice He had heard in Mitzrayim?

Rabbi Yaffan answers this difficulty. However, I would like to suggest a different solution by first asking another question: Why did the Egyptians need to be punished with ten forceful plagues before Am Yisrael were granted salvation? Surely one hard-hitting plague would have been enough? The answer is that when other nations are punished, it is a message for Am Yisrael. It is supposed to cause us to search our souls and realize that we, too, really deserve to receive this blow, for in some respects we are no different — "These serve idolatry and these serve idolatry." But Hashem, in His great kindness and mercy, made a distinction between Am Yisrael and the Egyptians and redeemed His people in the merit of the holy Torah they would ultimately receive. From the potency of these plagues, Am Yisrael will understand that "Kingship belongs to Hashem and He rules the nations." They will understand that if a person requires salvation, he should know clearly that he has no one to rely on but his Father in Heaven. The power to smite whoever He wishes is in His hands, and the power to heal and bring salvation is in His hands.

When Bnei Yisrael were in Mitzrayim it says (*Shemot* 2:23), "The Children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to Hashem." This groaning and crying came from a pure heart. They shouted out and cried to Hashem from the depths of their hearts, for they knew there is no one who can save them from their distress other than Hashem.

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21 Nissan 5785
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Shevi'i Shel Pesach



Hilula

21 Nissan
Rabbi David Laykess, a *talmid*
of the Ba'al Shem Tov

22 Nissan
Rabbi Reuven Krishevski

23 Nissan
Rabbi Kamos Amos Yemin,
Av Beit Din of Libya

24 Nissan
Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak
Chaikin, Rosh Yeshiva
of Aix-les-Bains

25 Nissan
Rabbi Chaim Halberstam of
Sanz, author of *Divrei Chaim*

26 Nissan
Rabbi Ephraim Navon,
author of *Machane Ephraim*

27 Nissan
Rabbi Yehuda Kahana,
author of *Kuntres Hasfekot*





TIMELY TOPIC

Mitzvot or Handcuffs?

The Ramban explains that Pesach is the festival when we renew our servitude to Hashem. This is the meaning of what we say in the Hagadah, "In every generation a person must regard himself as if he himself was released from the bondage of Egypt."

Rabbi Baruch Rosenblum, *shlita*, explains that in fact, the festival of Pesach is one of our greatest challenges in *avodat Hashem*.

There was once a Jew who poured out his heart saying, "I remember how it was in my parent's home on Pesach. What did we have to eat? Matzot, potatoes, and eggs! We drank water that had been previously boiled. We would buy three new bottles which we would fill up with soda. What was there to eat in those days?" Today, *baruch Hashem*, we have everything! We can enjoy an enormous variety of foods with assorted tastes. In previous generations, by the time it came to Pesach a person would know exactly how it feels to be a servant. Two weeks before Pesach, people would sit and eat their meals in a corner, from inside a plastic bag, so no crumbs would fall on the floor. Today, people spend Shabbat Hagadol in a hotel!

The preparations for Pesach are a great challenge to our *avodat Hashem*. How much of Hashem's servant are you? How well do you try to serve Him?

Hashem is testing us to see to what extent we are His servants! Shlomo Hamelech tells us (*Mishlei* 1:9), "For they are an adornment of grace for your head and a chain for your neck." This refers to the mitzvot that are considered like jewelry which adorns the head and neck.

The holy Alshich, *zy"ta*, brings a wonderful *mashal* that clarifies this idea:

It can be compared to a public dignitary who transgresses a tax law and is given a one-year prison sentence. Besides enduring the embarrassment of a public figure being imprisoned, as soon as he arrives he is handcuffed with iron chains. Every time he lifts his hands he is lifting ten kilos of iron. We can only imagine how difficult it is for him to move his hands and feet.

He decides to try and use his connections to ease his situation. His friends turn to *askanim* and plead, "Listen, you have connections in this prison. Try and get them to agree to remove the handcuffs." "There is no such thing as removing handcuffs," was the reply. "This prison is closely surveilled with cameras. Such a thing would immediately be spotted in the control room.

But if several thousand dollars make their way to us, we might be able to exchange his handcuffs for plastic ones."

The prisoner agreed to the deal. "Give them the money," he said. "The main thing is to relieve this suffering!"

The holy Alshich asks: what happens when a mother-in-law tells her daughter-in-law, "Listen, *baruch Hashem* my husband earned a good profit from a recent business deal, and he therefore wishes to give a substantial gift to each of his daughters-in-law. Each of you should go to the most expensive jewelry store and choose whatever piece you want!" Would the daughter-in-law ask the salesman to please show her the thinnest bracelet he has, weighing twenty-two grams? Or will she say, "Excuse me, can you show me a heavy piece of jewelry? I am looking for a bracelet with six strands." This is how she will ask! Why?

This woman is thinking, "If my mother-in-law is already giving me a gift, I'll go all the way and choose something special."

The holy Alshich continues: Why should she want to take a heavy piece of jewelry? Won't she feel the weight on her hand or around her neck? She will end up with a crooked back! Shouldn't she rather take something small?

The answer is that although people try to run away from burdensome handcuffs, one is happy to wear heavy jewelry! Why? Because one is a piece of jewelry and the other is a handcuff!

The *nimshal* is clear:

There are people who feel that the mitzvot are like six hundred and thirteen handcuffs. They try to run away from every type of mitzvah. Tell them about giving *terumot*, this is handcuff number one. Tell them about the mitzvah of *tzitzit*, they will cut off the corner of the garment! Wherever they can they will seek to shake off the mitzvot. Why? Because one wants six hundred and thirteen handcuffs!

Hashem says, "Then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves G-d and one who does not serve Him" (*Malachi* 3:18). This is the Haftarah that we read on the Shabbat preceding Pesach, and this is the challenge that Pesach presents! "I want people who will be My servants," Hashem declares! Not people who just observe the mitzvot, but people who will be true servants of G-d! People who will serve Me with a full heart!

This is the message that the prophet Malachi is telling us. The difference between "one who serves G-d" and "one who does not serve Him" lies in understanding the Alshich's penetrating *mashal*. It expresses itself in the way we observe the festival of Pesach with all its commandments.

cont. from p. 1 >>>

This was a pure cry stemming from a pure heart.

There are two types of prayer. Sometimes, a person prays to Hashem, but deep in his heart he does not trust Him completely. Immediately after he finishes praying, he starts planning how he can increase his efforts to achieve his goal. This type of prayer does not flow from the heart. On the other hand, there are people who understand that "There is none besides Him." They genuinely feel their entire salvation is totally dependent on Hashem and they have complete trust in Hashem Yitbarach. Therefore, when they pray, their prayers flow from the depths of their pure and sincere hearts.

This is how Bnei Yisrael felt when they were in Mitzrayim. They knew they had no other savior and no one to rely on but the Creator of the Universe. Therefore, their cry for help was pure and emerged from the depths of their hearts.

This type of pure prayer is what the Midrash is referring to when it says that Hashem longed to hear their cry. He said to Bnei Yisrael, "It is true that now, too, you are praying to Me and crying out, but there is nothing like that prayer you prayed to Me when you were in Mitzrayim — a result of the intensity of the bondage. It is this beautiful type of prayer that I long for and wish to hear once again."

That is why Hashem sent Pharaoh to chase after them while they were standing by the sea. Hashem returned Bnei Yisrael to their previous state of dependency and they felt as if they were back in Mitzrayim. As a result, they cried out once again with the same pure cry, free of any trace of reliance on anyone else, and realized that only Hashem could save them at this difficult moment.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Playing with Fire

The Gaon Rabbi Noach Yitzchak Diskin, *zt"l*, recounted an incident that raised a huge stir in the town at the beginning of his brother's Rabbinate.

An elderly scholar approached the young Rav (the Maharil Diskin), who was not yet thirty years old, and shared with him an innovative Torah insight: "When we say 'Az yashir' in the *shacharit* prayer, we repeat the verse 'מְלוֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד' — Hashem shall reign for all eternity,' followed by its translation from the Targum Onkelos. The Avudraham writes that the reason for the repetition is that this verse signifies the end of the *shira*. Rav Amram Gaon also writes in his siddur, "The end of the *shira* is, 'Hashem shall reign for all eternity.'"

This scholar pointed out other sources and then concluded: "If so, the verse that follows this verse, 'When Pharaoh's cavalry came with his chariots and horsemen into the sea ...' is not considered part of the *shira*!"

The Maharil explained to him: "Indeed there is an opinion like this. The Mordechai in Perek Lulav Hagazul also writes that it is customary to repeat the verse, 'Hashem shall reign for all eternity' at the end of the *shira*, just as we have the custom to repeat the verse, 'כל הנשמה תהלל' — Let all souls praise G-d, Halleluyah!' at the end of Pesukei d'Zimra. Similarly, the poet, Rabbeinu Shimon son of Rabbi Yitzchak, who lived at the time of Rashi, created a hymn for the seventh day of Pesach that follows the order of the verses of the *shira*, and he concluded it with, 'Hashem shall reign for all eternity' and not with the verse 'When Pharaoh's cavalry came ...'."

The elderly scholar rejoiced at this backing and said: "This being the case, the verse, 'When Pharaoh's cavalry came ...' should not be written in the *sefer* Torah in the same format as the *shira* is written, with a space between the words resembling a brick formation, since this verse is not part of the *shira*. The Rav should pass a ruling to correct this mistake in all *sifrei* Torah!"

The Maharil Diskin was shocked and cried out, "G-d forbid! Just because we think we understand, will we act on it?! The Mechilta tells us that this verse **is** included in the *shira*, and in Masechet Sofrim it states that this verse should be written in a brick formation. This is also the opinion of the Rambam, the Ibn Ezra, the Machzor Vitri, the Kolbo, and the Abarbanel. Who can tamper with the *sefer* Torah? We often rule according to tradition or Masechet Sofrim even when this differs from the Gemara." And the Maharil Diskin then began enumerating examples of words written in the Torah with either missing letters or extra letters, sections followed by a gap in the *sefer* Torah signifying a new section, and sections that are considered a continuation.

The scholar brazenly declared: "The Avudraham's reasoning seems to be the correct opinion and one should act accordingly."

The Maharil Diskin warned him: "You are playing with fire! The *sefer* Torah will not forgive this slight to its honor!"

This exchange carried on a little longer, but in the end the elderly scholar did not listen to the words of the young Rav and went to persuade *sotrim* that they should not write the last verse of the *shira* in the same format as the rest of the *shira*.

As is recorded in the *sefer*, *The Saraf of Brisk*, on erev Shabbat this elderly scholar went to immerse himself in the mikveh as he was accustomed to doing in honor of Shabbat, and while he was immersing, he suffered a stroke and died in the water. It was clear to all that this was a punishment from Heaven, measure for measure, in accordance with the verse, "For in the very matter in which [the Egyptians] had conspired against them ..." They sinned by throwing the baby boys into the water, so they were also punished with water: "When Pharaoh's cavalry came ... into the sea and Hashem turned back the waters of the sea upon them."



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

Personal Example and Guidance for a Life of Faith

Engraved in my memories from my youth are my esteemed teachers who personified holiness and noble *middot*; they each left an indelible impression on my character formation.

I absorbed the attribute of *bitachon* in my father's house right from my earliest days. I literally saw Hashem's presence hovering over the house and the *man* (manna) falling every single day. The livelihood in our home came miraculously, way above the laws of nature. Even though my father did not have any money, whenever my mother, *a"h*, asked for something, Abba would tell her that by the afternoon it would come. And indeed this is what happened, in a most wondrous fashion.

Once, late at night, my brother wished to light a cigarette, but he couldn't find any matches. Abba said to him, "In a few minutes you will receive what you are looking for." Suddenly, someone knocked on the door and asked for a certain family. It seemed he had mistaken the address, but what was he holding in his hand? A lit cigarette! My brother was able to light his cigarette. This was all as a result of Abba living a life of complete trust in the Creator of the World.

I continued absorbing this way of life from Rabbeinu Gershon Libman, *zt"l*. My master and teacher, Rabbeinu Chaim Shmuel Lopian, *zt"l*, transmitted to me his burning love for Torah. When travelling by train, he would ask us to let him know when his stop arrived. He would become so deeply engrossed in Torah learning, that without this reminder he would have continued travelling for another few hours! When he travelled, he would take a suitcase that contained the entire Shas. This is how he spent his whole life; immersed in Torah, fulfilling the verse, "... while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way".

The Sages note that the verse, "They journeyed from Rephidim," alludes to a slackening of the nation's Torah study. Rabbeinu Chaim Shmuel Lopian constantly pushed himself to study more and more Torah, and in this way he journeyed away from laxity in Torah. He was well aware that the Torah of Hashem "... is our life and the length of our days," and leaving it is like leaving life itself.

QUILL OF THE HEART

(סימן: אני חיים בר שלמה חזק. נועם ה' א-להי אתה)



The following is a sacred *piput*, penned from the pure heart of the holy Maran Rabbeinu Chaim Pinto Hagadol, זצ"ל, in honor of the Festival of Pesach

אשורר שירה חדשה,
לה' עושה גדולות
הלוא הוא, הפליא ועשה,
מופתים ואותות מעולות
ועדה ברה וקדושה,
הוציא אותה מאפלות
ואור גדול האיר לנו,
כאור חמה שבעתיים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

נתן לדם את מימיהם,
ולשתות מהם לא יכלו
וכן עשו חרטומיהם,
לשטח הנראה כולו
כי אין השליטה להם,
במה שהוא מתחת לו
ולא סר ממעללו,
האכזר מלך מצרים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

יחיד שליט בנבראים,
גזר וצפרדע עלתה
וממנה היו יוצאים
מחנות וזעקה רבתה
ובתוך מעיהם נחבאים,
לא האמינו גם עתה
כי בלהטיהם נעשתה
צפרדע במצרים.

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

חזק יסף להכותם,
בכנים בכל גבולם
רחשו בם ובבהמתם,
כי כן גזר מלך עולם
חרטומים קצרה יכולתם,
בושו ונכלמו כולם
אמרו זאת אצבע חי נעלם,
של א-להי השמים.

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

יחד באו ונאספו,
כל מיני חיות הטורפים
טרף גדול בהם טרפו,
מאד והנם זועפים

דבר ושחין בם נגפו,
ברד כבד בו רשפים
הכה בו רעים מקציפים,
אל מתחת השמים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

יסף אדיר להכותם,
מכה רבה ועצומה
ארבה עלה לאדמתם,
ויכסה את אור החמה
אכל פרי תנובתם,
וכל עשבי האדמה
נהלל לשוכן רומה,
השם נפשינו בחיים.

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

מלך שלח חושך להם,
ונעשו כולם כעורים
ולא ראו את אחיהם
שלושת ימים אמורים
ולא קמו מתחתיהם,
שלושת ימים אחרים
נגלו מצפונים אחרים,
אל בני א-להים חיים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

בכל זאת חיזק את לבו,
רשע עריץ ולא אבה
לשלח את עם קרובו,
אל ארץ טובה ורחבה
ויך כל בכור באויביו,
הוא ולא מלאך שר צבא
ויציל לאום אהובה,
ולא חלו בה ידים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

רצה לזכות עדתו,
וברוב חסדיו גמלם
לפרוש מחמץ מצוותו,
בזמן זה לדורות עולם
כי עם השטן חברתו,
אחים, ולא יתפרדו כולם
מצה חלקם וגורלם,
הנה טובים השניים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

שלוש השמורות סודם,
שלוש ראשונות מאירות
מוחין דאבא יסודם,
המה בראשו עטרת
זרוע קו ימין נגדם,
ביצה לצד הגבורות
מרור ביניהם מתווך,
לקח אליו פי שניים
ויהיו אלה בתווך,
והוא בין המשפתיים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

חרוסת תחת זרוע,
סודות נצח בה נתכנו
ההוד אל הכרפס ריע,
ותחת הביצה תנו
וביניהם הן בוקע,
יסוד חזרת אופנו
קערה מלכות אמנו,
נשלמו עשר אורים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

שירו מאד לא-ל הודו,
פינו יספר נוראותיו
טוב וסלח גבר חסדו,
עלינו על פי מידותיו
כל גויים כאין נגדו,
ובישראל שם תורותיו
ויכתירם בעטרותיו,
לאיש כתר שניים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים:

חדש כקדם ימינו,
למה נשכחנו
זה כמה, זכרנו ושמחנו
עשה בגויים נקמה,
קנא לכבודך אבינו
ושלח מנחם נחמה
אז יגדל שמך רב עוצמה
הנוטה כדוק שמים

בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים: