

CHAPTER 4, VERSES 19-22

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

(4, 19)

"And the people went up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month (Nissan) and they camped in Gilgal at the edge of the eastern side of Yericho." Although the exact date of the miracle was not mentioned until this point, it is appropriately introduced here. We will discover in the upcoming verses how the effect of the miracle upon the Canaanite nations was one of total paralysis. They were overtaken by Hashem's awesome demonstration and clearly understood the miracle's penetrating message. Most appropriately, this experience transpired on the tenth of Nissan, a date replete with such lessons. Only forty years prior the Jewish people were instructed to purchase sheep, the Egyptian deity, and prepare them for sacrificial purposes. Miraculously, every Egyptian stood by without saying a word - incapable of interfering with the slaughtering of his most sacred item. This was the result of the total commitment of the Jewish people placing their entire trust in the hands of Hashem. This date marked the beginning of the process of the Jewish people's journey home from the Egyptian exile. Now, after their many travels in the desert, they are completing their journey on this very same date. Once again, they have placed their total trust in Hashem confident that He would defeat the powerful Canaanites for them. Our Chazal (see Yalkut Shimoni 15:4) see a direct corollary between the two experiences and comment that the merit of the Jewish people's earlier devotion assisted them at the Jordan. Total trust in Hashem was, by far, no foreign concept to them. By following in the footsteps of their predecessors, the Jews achieved similar results. In fact, the outcome was precisely the same as before. On the tenth of Nissan the Canaanites who were overwhelmed with awe stood by helpless ready to surrender their sacred land to its true owners, the Jewish people.

(4, 20)

"And these twelve stones which were taken from the Jordan were erected by Yehoshua in Gilgal." We have already discussed at length (see above verse 8) the placement of the stones in Gilgal. However, as we close this chapter in history, one final dimension is introduced. In addition to the placement of the stones, Yehoshua saw fit to erect them as a monument for all future generations. It was conceivable to Yehoshua that the inhabitants of Eretz Yisroel would eventually forget their miraculous entry. Their sense of security in their homeland would allow them to forget how it all began. They could actually lose sight of the fact that it was Hashem who settled their land and defeated the mighty Canaanite nations. To this end, Yehoshua erected a monument reminding all

future generations of Hashem's great miracle in the conquest.

(4:21, 22)

"And he said to the Jewish people stating, "When your children will ask their fathers stating, "what are these stones?" you shall inform your children stating, "The Jewish people crossed this Jordan on dry land."" It is interesting to note the specific dimension of focus chosen by Yehoshua to be commemorated for all times. Although this dimension was basically overlooked by the generation of its time, it was nonetheless an important lesson for all future times. The present generation was obviously focused on conquest without allowing much time for reflection upon Hashem's greatness. However, the splitting of the Jordan did demonstrate Hashem's tremendous power and control over the forces of nature. Upon command, the Jordan did perfectly respond, prepared and with immediacy, with conducive conditions for the Jewish people's crossing. This was certainly an important lesson to be commemorated for all times. For this reason Yehoshua saw fit to erect the stones as a monument. He instructed the people to relate to their children that, in only a few moments, the land became dry allowing for their crossing.

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Kollel Toras Chesed of Skokie
3732 West Dempster
Skokie, Illinois 60076
Phone: 847-674-7959 Fax: 847-674-4023
E-mail: kollel@arlin.net
