

THE WAZE OF HASHEM

by Rabbi Label Lam

It came to pass when Pharaoh sent the people, that G-d did not lead them [by] way of the land of the Philistines for it was near, because G-d said, "Lest the people reconsider when they see war and return to Egypt." (Shemos 13:17)

"Lest the people reconsider: They will have [second] thoughts about [the fact] that they left Egypt and they will think about returning. (Rashi)

The Jewish People have finally been granted permission to leave Egypt, after 10 powerful plagues. There is a short cut to go to the "Promised Land" and they take a detour that leads them into a trap by the Red Sea and a circuitous route through the desert. Why were they led the longer way?

They were sent by Pharaoh. The umbilical cord had not yet been severed. They were still like a yoyo on the end of his string. The greatest proof for this is when they were trapped by the sea. Pharaoh was accompanied by 600 chosen chariots and they managed to terrorize a group of more than 3 million people. The Jewish People were still under the spell of Pharaoh as their boss. They were not ready to confront the warrior resistance required to enter Eretz Yisrael.

As a nation we needed to go through some enormous training sessions that would fully install the lessons of Emunah and Bitachon – absolute trust in G-d! They were in need of experiencing, the splitting of the sea, a war with Amalek, the daily gift of Bread from Heaven before they could begin to be ready to face the real challenges of life.

We are granted here a window into the one of the ways of HASHEM. It's helpful to understand what happened here at this point in history and it is instructive for many other situations as well.

I once heard the following profoundly practical answer from Rabbi Nota Schiller the Dean of Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem in response to an oft asked question: "Rabbi, why do bad things happen to good people? Why is there suffering and disappointment in this world?"

Rabbi Schiller pithily stated that when it comes to answering the question of suffering on any scale there is a difference between an answer and an approach. An answer eliminates the question. If I ask what 2 plus 2 is, the number 4 negates the need for the question. We have our answer.

Any single approach might include understanding life in a greater context from a number of angles. There are a few approaches that can be rattled off here and now. There are transmigrating souls finishing parts of previous missions. There's a "pay now" versus "pay later" plan- in the face of

eternity. Sometimes people are being saved from becoming corrupted and ruined. Then there is the possibility that someone is currently not ready for the size of the challenge. Even though we may not know which approach applies in a particular situation, some approach we may be aware of or another which is way beyond our ken must apply. An approach unlike an answer allows us to live with the question.

I have learned (the hard way) to trust my GPS- WAZE. One Friday morning I went to pick up my son at the airport. I was taken off the parkway and sent on a long series of side roads. When I was directed to merge back onto the Hutchinson River Parkway from the service road, just behind the ramp to go on was a truck stuck under an overpass. The traffic was backed up for miles. I was spared that whole mess. I picked up my son on time.

A family in Bnei Brak was granted a much needed free vacation in Sefad. When they arrived they were shocked to discover that the rental had been double-booked and someone was already there. Before heading back home, deeply disappointed the father and his son stopped to Daven Mincha.

The son let channeled his family's frustration into his prayers. Impressed by the quality of his devotion, the Rabbi of the Shul took notice of him and thought he might be a good match for his daughter. The idea was pursued. They were introduced and later wed. It was certainly worthwhile to take that detour and follow trustingly **the WAZE of HASHEM**.