

# IT'S RAINING BREAD!

*by Shlomo Katz*

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**Beshalach**

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Today's Learning:  
Berachot 6:8-7:1  
Orach Chaim 47:8-10  
Daf Yomi: Yoma 26  
Yerushalmi Yoma 19

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*Hamaayan is pleased  
to welcome Daniel Dadusc to its  
staff as a contributing editor. We look  
forward to his contributions and wish  
him much success in his endeavor.*

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We read at the beginning of this week's parashah that Hashem led Bnei Yisrael on a circuitous route through the desert lest they witness a war and wish to return to Egypt. Why did Hashem do this?

Why didn't he simply give Bnei Yisrael the courage to overcome their fear of war?

The answer to this question implicates a fundamental axiom regarding Hashem's relationship with His creations, says R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l (the mashgiach of the Mir and Ponovezh yeshivot). Specifically, Rambam writes that Hashem will perform miracles and change all of nature, if necessary, but He never, under any circumstances, will change a person's nature. The reason is that if Hashem would change a person's nature, He would obliterate the very thing that defines what man is.

In a related vein: Ibn Ezra writes that the first generation of the Jewish people was destined to die in the desert because it was unable to adapt to freedom. Only the next generation, which had not grown up in slavery, could successfully conquer and settle Eretz Yisrael.

On the other hand, R' Levenstein adds, a person can change his own nature. Indeed, that is why man was created. [See Iyov 5:7 - "Man was born to toil"]. However, the greatest gift from Heaven cannot change a person; for example, Hashem rained mahn on the Jewish people for 40 years, but that did not imbue them with the spirit and the courage that they needed to function as a people. In the area of Torah study, too, Hashem sometimes sends angels to teach individual great men, but one cannot achieve greatness that way. That can only come through toil. (Mi'mizrach Ha'shemesh

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*"Va-chamushim"/And armed, Bnei Yisrael went up from Egypt." (13:18)*

R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (died 1909) writes: Rabbi Akiva taught (in the Pesach Haggadah) that each of the ten plagues in Egypt consisted of five separate plagues. Thus, the ten plagues were, in reality, 50 plagues. This, explains R' Yosef Chaim, is the meaning of "va-chamushim," which can also be read as "chamishim" (the number 50). The Torah is saying that through the 50 plagues that were brought on the Egyptians, Bnei Yisrael were able to leave Egypt.

Rabbi Akiva also teaches that there were an additional 250 plagues at the Red Sea. This is hinted at by the letter "vav" at the beginning of word "va-chamushim." The gematria of the letter "vav" is six, and  $6 \times 50$  ("vav" times "chamishim") equals 300, the total number of plagues in Egypt and at the Red Sea combined. (Aderet Eliyahu)

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*"Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem had inflicted on Egypt, and the people feared Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant." (14:31)*

R' Yehuda Gruenwald z"l (Hungarian rabbi; died 1921) writes: When Bnei Yisrael saw that all of the Egyptians died on the shores of the Red Sea, they realized that had Hashem wanted to judge the Egyptians in Egypt and kill them there, He could have done so. Why didn't He? So that the peoples of Eretz Canaan would hear of His power and tremble in fear of Him.

This is the meaning of the above verse: Bnei Yisrael saw the great hand that destroyed the Egyptians now instead of in Egypt, and they realized that His intention was to make the people fear Him. This is why the song that was sung at the Sea specifically mentions the fear experienced by the Canaanites and includes a prayer that we be brought safely to the Eretz Yisrael.

R' Gruenwald adds (in the name of his teacher, R' David Shick z"l): At the beginning of Moshe's mission, when he complained to Hashem that Pharaoh had worsened Bnei Yisrael's condition instead of releasing them, Hashem replied (according to the midrash), "You will see what I will do to Pharaoh, but not what I will do to the 31 kings of Canaan." How did this punishment fit Moshe's complaint? Because Hashem's purpose in making the Exodus a drawn-out process was to scare the Canaanite kings (as indeed happened). By demanding a faster Exodus, Moshe was effectively strengthening those kings. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Olelot Yehuda)

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*"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold I shall rain down for you (plural) bread from heaven, and the nation shall go out and gather each day's portion on its day'." (16:4)*

Why does the pasuk begin in second person ("for you") and then change to third person ("the nation shall")? R' Yosef Karo z"l (1488-1575; author of the Shulchan Aruch and other works) offers two answers:

Hashem may maintain the entire world for the sake of one or two tzaddikim, i.e., this means that the world may give its produce for the sake of those tzaddikim, and the rest of the world will benefit incidentally. Therefore Hashem, said, "Behold I shall rain down for you - Moshe and Aharon - bread from heaven, and, incidentally, the nation shall go out and gather."

Alternatively (R' Karo preferred this second explanation): "I shall rain down for you, Moshe and Aharon, straight to your doorsteps, but the rest of the nation shall go out to the fields and gather." (Chiddushei Maran Ha'Beit Yosef Al Ha'Torah)

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## Letters from Our Sages

This week's letter was written by R' Yitzchak Hutner z"l (1904-1980; Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Chaim Berlin in Brooklyn) in response to a former student. The correspondent apparently had bemoaned the fact that he faced spiritual struggles; as quoted by R' Hutner, he had written: "I will never forget the desire that I once had to succeed and to climb 'from strength to strength,' but now, my hope is lost."

This letter appears in Pachad Yitzchak: Igrot U'ketavim (No. 128).

Your letter reached my hand, and your words touched my heart. Know, my friend, that your very letter belies the descriptions that it contains. Now, let me explain this statement.

It is a terrible problem that when we discuss the greatness of our gedolim, we actually deal only with the end of their stories. We tell about their perfection, but we omit any mention of the inner battles which raged in their souls. The impression one gets is that they were created with their full stature.

For example, everyone is impressed by the purity of the Chafetz Chaim's speech. [Ed. Note: The Chafetz Chaim led a crusade against lashon hara and is held up as the model of how a Jew should speak.] However, who knows about all the wars, the battles, the impediments, the downfalls, and the retreats that the Chafetz Chaim experienced in his fight with the evil inclination?!

As a result [of this gap in our knowledge of gedolim], when a young man who is imbued with a [holy] spirit and with ambition experiences impediments and downfalls he believes that he is not planted in the house of Hashem. This is because this young man thinks that being planted in Hashem's house means experiencing tranquility of the soul "in lush meadows beside tranquil waters" [Tehilim 23:2].

However, know my friend, that the key for your soul is not the tranquility of the yetzer hatov, but the war against the yetzer hara. Your letter testifies that you are a faithful warrior in the army of the yetzer hatov. In English there is a saying, "Lose the battle and win the war." You surely have stumbled and will stumble again, and you will be vanquished in many battles. However, I promise you that after you have lost those battles, you will emerge from the war with a victor's wreath on your head.

The wisest of all men [King Shlomo] said [Mishlei 24:16], "The tzaddik will fall seven times and will rise." The unlearned think that this means, "Even though a tzaddik falls seven times, he will rise." The wise know well that the meaning is: "Because a tzaddik falls seven times, he will rise." On the verse [Bereishit 1:31], "And Elokim saw all that He had made and it was very good," the midrash comments, "'Good' refers to the yetzer hatov; 'Very good' refers to the yetzer hara."

[In line with this midrash, R' Hutner continues:] If you had written to me of your mitzvot and good deeds, I would have said that it was a good letter. Now that you tell me of your falls and stumbles, I say that I have received a very good letter from you. Please, don't picture to yourself that a gadol and his yetzer hatov are one and the same; rather, imagine the gedolim at war with all types of base tendencies . . .

I have seen fit to write these words to you so that you can refer to them from time to time. Regarding specific details, it is preferable to speak face-to-face.

You are one who is planted in Hashem's house!  
Sharing in your suffering,  
Confident that you will prevail,  
Praying for your success,  
[Signed] Yitzchak Hutner.

P.S. Now you understand the opening sentence of the letter, i.e., that your very letter belies the description that it contains.

*Sponsored by Micheline and David Peller in memory of David's parents Irving and Arline Katz on the yahrzeits of grandmother Henia Rachel bat Pinchas Spalter a"h, mother Fradel bat Yaakov Shulim Reiss a"h, and father Chaim Eliezer ben Avigdor Moshe Hakohen Katz a"h The Marwick family in memory of Reba Sklaroff a"h The Dadusc family on the first yahrzeit of father Zion ben Gamliah a"h*

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.

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