

EVERY GOOD DEED REWARDED

by Shlomo Katz

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Beshalach: Every Good Deed Rewarded

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Today's Learning:

Sanhedrin 7:8-9:1

Orach Chaim 575:9:11

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Metzia 65

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Terumot 2

Our parashah opens, "It happened when Pharaoh sent out the [Jewish] people . . .," and the midrash comments that "sending out" always means, "with accompaniment." (See, for example, Bereishit 18:16.) Says the midrash: "The same lips that uttered (Shmot 5:2), 'I will not send out Yisrael,' later said (Shmot 10:10), 'I will send you forth with your children.' What was Pharaoh's reward for these words? Hashem commanded us (Devarim 23:8), 'You shall not reject an Egyptian . . . Children who are born to them, in the third generation they may enter the congregation of Hashem'."

The midrash continues: "The same lips that uttered (Shmot 5:2), 'I do not know Hashem,' later said (in our parashah, 14:25), 'I shall flee before Yisrael, for Hashem is waging war for them against Egypt.' What was Pharaoh's reward for this? We read (Yishayah 19:19), 'On that day there will be an altar [dedicated] to Hashem in the midst of the land of Egypt'."

R' Eliyahu Lopian z"l (1872-1970; mashgiach of Yeshivat Knesset Chizkiyahu in Kfar Chassidim)

observes that this midrash is incredible. Pharaoh was an evil man who oppressed an entire nation, murdered babies, ridiculed Moshe and Aharon, and ignored G-d's obvious rebuke. Is it any wonder that he sent Bnei Yisrael away with accompaniment? [He probably wanted to make sure they really left!] Why did G-d reward him for this act?

Moreover, the midrash implies that if not for Pharaoh's saying, "I will send you forth," Egyptians would be prohibited to marry into the Jewish nation just like Moabites. What about Pharaoh's words made him worthy of having his descendants welcomed into Klal Yisrael?

Our Sages teach that no good deed goes unrewarded. Hashem does not deprive any person of his just reward, even when his good deed is incidental to a long series of bad deeds. Pharaoh was humiliated by the plagues and he had to free Bnei Yisrael, but he did not have to admit that "Hashem is waging war." He could have kept quiet. He did not have to humiliate himself further by sending Egyptians to accompany Bnei Yisrael on their way. He could have dispatched a messenger to Moshe to tell him to leave with Bnei Yisrael as quickly as possible. For having the courage and the moral strength to admit he was wrong, Pharaoh deserved a significant reward. (Lev Eliyahu)

"Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him, for [Yosef] had firmly adjured the Children of Israel, saying, 'G-d will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you'." (13:19)

R' Chaim Vital z"l (Tzefat and Damascus; 1543-1620) asks: What is added by the words "with you"? He answers: We read in Tehilim (114:3; recited in Hallel), "The Sea saw and fled." The midrash asks: "What did the Sea see that made it flee, i.e., split? It saw the coffin of Yosef." Thus, the words "with you" are crucial. Yosef was telling his brothers: "Only if I am with you will you succeed in leaving Egypt." (Etz Hadaat Tov: Parashat Vayechi)

What does it mean that the Sea split because it saw the coffin of Yosef? R' Naftali of Ropschitz z"l (died 1827) explains: Yosef's greatness was his refusal to succumb to immorality. When the Sea "saw" how the population of Bnei Yisrael had exploded in Egypt, it "realized" that they, like Yosef, had maintained the purity of their families. In this merit, the Sea split. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Ezrat Avoteinu)

"This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him." (15:2)

The gemara (Sotah 30b) teaches: "When Bnei Yisrael stepped out of the Sea, they wanted to recite a song of praise to G-d. How did they sing? Every child sitting on his mother's lap and every nursing infant looked up and said, 'This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him'."

R' Yoel Halevi Herzog z"l (1865-1933; Chief Rabbi of Paris) explains this gemara based on the following midrash on our parashah: We read in Tehilim (106:11-12), "And the waters covered their

tormentors, not one of them was left. Then they believed His words, they sang His praise." [This implies that prior to the splitting of the Sea, Bnei Yisrael did not believe.] The midrash says: Although the Torah states that Bnei Yisrael believed Moshe when he first appeared before them in Egypt - as it is written (Shmot 4:31), "And the people believed" - they later did not believe him. Thus it is written (Tehilim 106:7), "Our fathers in Egypt did not contemplate Your wonders." [Now they believed again.]

Says R' Herzog: Although Bnei Yisrael believed Moshe when they saw that he performed wonders in G-d's Name, as related in the verse from Shmot quoted above, many of them still were not sure that G-d exercises complete control over the world. They believed, yet they did not believe. As the verse in Tehilim relates, they did not contemplate His wonders. They did not realize that He alone controls everything; instead, they thought that there exist other powers besides Him. However, the midrash teaches, after the splitting of the Yam Suf, all of Bnei Yisrael realized that G-d alone is the only true power.

This is alluded to in our gemara. Nursing infants and very young toddlers do not know any source of sustenance other than their mothers. They do not realize that their mothers themselves must obtain sustenance from another source. Only when they mature do they realize that their mothers are not the ultimate power. This is what happened at the Yam Suf. Previously, Bnei Yisrael had recognized Moshe's power and they had recognized the power of other forces, for example, nature. Now, however, they realized that none of these is the ultimate power; rather, Hashem is. Like a baby who stops nursing and realizes that his mother too needs support and sustenance, Bnei Yisrael recognized G-d as the Power above all powers. (Imrei Yoel)

"They gathered it morning by morning, every man according to what he eats, and when the sun grew hot [the remaining mahn] melted." (16:21)

R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (the "Mirrer mashgiach"; died 1936) writes: Let us get an idea of the love which Hashem shows man with regard to his food-gathering. Was there any greater kindness than what Hashem did for Bnei Yisrael by giving them mahn in the desert? Our Sages say that enough mahn fell every day to feed Bnei Yisrael for 2,000 years. Why? After all, no matter how much a person collected, a miracle occurred so that he always found himself with exactly the amount that he needed to feed his family for one day. What was the purpose of so much mahn falling?

R' Levovitz answers: The Sages explain that the purpose of the extra mahn was to keep warm the mahn that would be eaten. It was "worthwhile" (so-to-speak) for Hashem to waste 2,000 years worth of food just so that Bnei Yisrael's food would stay warm.

Why did the mahn fall every day? Since it was miraculous in any case, why didn't a forty-year supply fall? The midrash explains that it was a favor on Hashem's part. Imagine a parent who has a child away at school. If the parent does not enjoy receiving letters from his child, he will send the child his allowance for the whole year in one lump sum. However, a parent who values any communication

that he receives from his child will send smaller amounts so that the child will have to write and call more often. [Ed. note: The preceding parable is an updated version of the parable which the midrash offers.] Similarly, Hashem values our prayers, and He therefore makes our sustenance harder to come by. He could give us our yearly sustenance on Rosh Hashanah, but this would have the effect of cutting us off from Him.

This is itself a kindness to us. Why is prayer important? Because it is through prayer that we experience closeness to G-d.

(Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Rashei Yeshivat Mir p. 229)

"Each man, for those in his tent he shall collect [mahn]." (16:16)

A couple once came to R' Asher'l Horowitz of Rimanov z"l (died 1935) with a problem. The woman complained that her husband could not earn a living because he was "too" honest. Did he have that right, his wife wanted to know, when his family was starving?

R' Asher'l answered: A person's obligation to support his family is learned from the above verse regarding the mahn. This verse was said at a time when Hashem openly sent food to each family according to its needs. No one took another's share, and no one cheated. [And if someone did cheat, he gained nothing from it, as the Torah testifies.] Similarly, now, even though Hashem's ways are less obvious, each person can, and must, support his family honestly, without any question of wrongdoing.

(Quoted in Iturei Torah)

R' Yisrael Elazar Hofstein z"l

R' Hofstein was born in Kozhnitz in 1898, where his father, R' Yerachmiel Moshe, was a chassidic rebbe. The elder R' Hofstein was a great-grandson of R' Yisrael, known as the "Kozhnitzer Maggid" (1740-1814), one of the founders of chassidut in Poland.

The younger R' Hofstein studied in the yeshiva of R' Meir Yechiel Halevi Halstock in Ostrovta, and was ordained by him. In 1925, R' Hofstein led a group of chassidim that made aliyah, and together with another group of chassidim (followers of R' Taub of Kozmark, Czechoslovakia), these immigrants established a new community called Kfar Chassidim. The village was located in a swampy area along the Kishon River, and the immigrants suffered a great deal until they succeeded in draining the swamps. They also experienced tremendous hunger and deprivation.

R' Hofstein himself took ill and was forced to leave Eretz Yisrael. He moved to Paris, where he was named Chief Rabbi of the chareidi community, succeeding R' Yoel Halevi Herzog. When the Germans invaded Paris, R' Hofstein was arrested, but he escaped. In 1941, he reached the United States.

In the U.S., R' Hofstein worked to reestablish Kozhnitzer chassidut, but he viewed himself as a visitor and dreamed of returning to Eretz Yisrael. In 1966, he established a Kozhnitzer bet midrash in Tel Aviv; however, upon returning to the U.S. to wind up his affairs, he died suddenly on 2 Elul 5726 / 1966. He was buried in Yerushalayim.

While still a young man in Europe, R' Hofstein published a pamphlet about the importance of settling in Eretz Yisrael. Besides his love for the Land, he also was known for his love of the Jewish people and for the vast amounts of charity he distributed.

R' Hofstein's Torah commentaries were published by his chassidim under the title Avodat Elazar (presumably a take-off, in part, on the title of the Kozhnitzer Maggid's celebrated work, Avodat Yisrael). R' Hofstein was succeeded as rebbe by his daughter's son, R' Shimshon Moshe Sternberg.

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