

# PARSHAS BESHALACH AND TU BESHVAT

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

'When Pharaoh sent out the people, G-d did not lead them by way - baderekh- of the land of the Philistines..... perhaps the people will see war and return to Egypt. [Rather] He turned them through the desert way, to the Red Sea' (Shmot, 13: 17). Did Pharaoh send them out? After all Hashem took them out. 'G-d takes them out of Egypt' (Bilaam. Devarim, 23:22). What are we to understand from the use of baderekh rather than the simple derekh, through? What is the connection with the Philistines, whose land lies to the north of Har Sinai to which the people were to travel in order to receive the Torah, as G-d told Moshe, 'You will worship at this Mount'? Were the people so stupid as to willingly go back to the slavery and oppression they had only just left?

*[The last part of the question must be seen in the perspective of the treatment by Chassidic thinkers of the various rebellions and backslidings of Israel in the desert. They did not explain these as did the Rambam, Rashi and others as an effect of their slave mentality or of the need to wean them from that relationship with Egypt. Rather, in accordance with Chazal's view of them as dor deah, a wise and knowledgeable generation, they saw all of them, throughout the Torah as the errors in religious thought or the spiritual misunderstandings of a great generation who, more than any other in our history, merited miracles and Matan Torah].*

When one accompanies somebody it is as though one has sent them. The midrash tells us that Pharaoh accompanied them and the Maharal teaches that â??baderech' is a connection. So the Avnei Nezer explained that he wished to accompany them on their way so that he could retain his evil connection with them even though they were no longer his slaves. Through this he would be able to infuse them with the evil spirit that our sages taught can distort a person's mind and remove one from this world; thereby Israel could indeed return to Egypt. At the same time, there was the danger from the Philistines whose characteristic was tzchok, the levity that leads above all to the sexual immorality that permeated Egypt. They would therefore strengthen the evil relationship that Pharaoh desired and Israel would be exposed to a spiritual war with the evil spirit. If Israel would have been fully purified when they left Egypt, they would have easily been able to win this war. However, because the full period of the 400 years of exile had not been completed, it was necessary to further arm them against the evil spirit. In the Mechilta, Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Ishmael relied on the second verse above to show two different ways this could be done. Rabbi Elazar thought this could only be achieved through the suffering that would refine and purify. So, there is Baderech as in â??He chastised you on the way' (Devarim, 8:2); there is desert as in, â??Who led you through the great and terrible desert' (Devarim, 1:19); and there is the Red Sea to test them. Rabbi

Ishmael saw the verse as ennobling and elevating Israel above the natural order. In this way Pharaoh would be powerless to forge any connection with them. So, there is 'Baderech to give them the Torah as, 'in all the way that G-d commanded'; there is the desert to give them the Manna as, 'Who fed us manna in the desert'; and Yam Suf to give them miracles. The Torah purifies the mind, the manna purifies the body since it is the food of the angels and the Sea is a combination of mind and body as the waters came to the soul. In these ways Israel became above nature and Pharaoh was unable to connect with them.

'If the chazzan forgot the splitting of the Red Sea, we do not make him repeat the prayers. However, if he forgot the Exodus, he repeats the prayers' (Shmot Rabbah 22).

This statement is strange since we know that the miracle at Yam Suf was greater than at Yetziat Mitzraim. Regarding the former, we are told, 'And they saw the great hand', while of the latter, the Egyptians said, 'the finger of G-d'. So, in Egypt there were 10 plagues and on the sea, 50. At the beginning of Pesach there is a Shabbat and at its conclusion there is one. The Avnei Nezer taught that Shabbat has 2 contradictory qualities. There is a Shabbat where all the spirituality and religiosity descend from Heaven, as Mankind has no merits nor is able to create on their own. Then there is a Shabbat where everything is earned through the efforts of the 6 days of the week. In the first luchot [Shmot, Yitro], Shabbat comes because G-d created during the week. The second commandments [Devarim, Vaetchanan], however, refer to the Exodus that came to Israel purely as chesed since they had no merits as we read in the Haggadah, 'And you were naked'. At the sea, Israel earned its redemption. They had followed Moshe for six days without question and in all their actions they were guided by him. Then they had entered the sea till the waters covered them to their chins. That Shabbat came in justice as a reward for their endeavors during the 6 days. [Elsewhere, the Shem Mi Shmuel explains that they only sang the Shirah after the crossing of the sea and not when they were redeemed from Egypt, because that was charity, while at Yam Suf they had earned their redemption in justice.]

Although, kariat Yam Suf was greater, yet its greatness reflects the actions of Israel. However, our prayers are for the abundance of mercy and chesed that comes to us from G-d. Therefore, in prayer, the yetziat mitzrayim is greater and so if one forgot to remember the Exodus in prayer, he has to repeat it..

*Shem Mi Shmuel, 5671. 5672.*

The Shem Mi Shmuel uses this duality that exists in every Shabbat, of mercy that brings spirituality from Heaven, and of the justice that reflects the action of human beings, to explain why we call the Shabbat before Pesach, Shabbat HaGadol. The Tur refers this name to the miracle that prevented the Egyptians from killing the Jews when they took the lamb, the idol of Egypt on the 10th of Nissan. Although in that year this was a Shabbat, this is not so every year and therefore there must be another reason for signaling out the Shabbat before Pesach.

'Unto You HaShem is the greatness and the power' (1Chronicles,29:13), is seen by the Midrash to refer to Kriat Yam Suf and the Creation of the world respectively. The power of HaShem is shown through the chesed He pours out onto the world and the Creation is the greatest example, since there was nothing preceding it that could earn reward for actions taken. This was the situation of Israel in Egypt where everything was given to them in chesed. Kriat Yam Suf came as a result of din, in return for their actions. When they took the korban Pesach on the 10th of Nissan it was their action that brought about the miracle. Chesed and din are contradictory merits and their union is not possible under normal circumstances. However, the two aspects of Shabbat discussed above, provide a strength that makes the joining of such contradictions possible. Therefore they needed Shabbat to enable them to join action and charity in taking the korban. This means that we always need Shabbat HaGadol before Pesach, even if it is not the 10th of Nissan.

*[The Shem Mi Shmuel uses the same aspect of Shabbat to explain elsewhere, why the shofar was sounded on Rosh HaShanah that falls on Shabbat in the Temple but not outside it. The Temple possessed the same power of being able to join two contradictory merits, chesed and din as does Shabbat]. Shem Mi Shmuel, Haggadah Shel Pesach- Shabbat HaGadol.*

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## TU BESHEVAT

*'Bet Shammai said Rosh HaShanah Le Illanot is the 1st of Shvat and Bet Hillel, the 15th of Shvat' ( Rosh HaShanah, chapter, Mishnah ).*

A tree is the connection between the soil and the fruit. Through it the tree gets its strength to grow and produce. Spiritually Mankind is compared to the tree, ' HaAdam etz hasadeh'. We too connect Earth and Heaven through our mitzvot and torah study.

Physically, the connection of the tree starts to take effect after a third of the year has past and most of the rain has fallen. The opinions of Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel regarding the date for the trees, is the reflection of their spiritual concepts. The former holds that the year begins with Rosh HaShanah so that the third ends on the 1st of Shevat and we begin our spiritual growth and power. This is their merit of din. Bet Hillel whose merit is chesed, saw the year of our lives actually beginning with Sukkot which is the festival of G-d's mercy, protection and chesed. Therefore the third of the year is Tu BeShevat. From there we begin our growth through the 4 parshiot, Purim, Pesach and Sefirat HaOmer till Matan Torah on Shavuot.

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