



3200 Year Old Artifact Refers to Israel

The Bible Validated

100 Years Post Exodus: Merneptah Stele (left)

The oldest mention of Israel outside the Bible. Merneptah was the son of Ramses II (Exod. 1:11). This stele describes the 1207 B.C military campaign against the Libyans, and eventually to Canaan by which a group of people named Israel would have been destroyed. *"Israel is devastated, it does not have more seed"* (below) displays the lies of Egypt's revisionist inscriptions, as Israel is alive and well.



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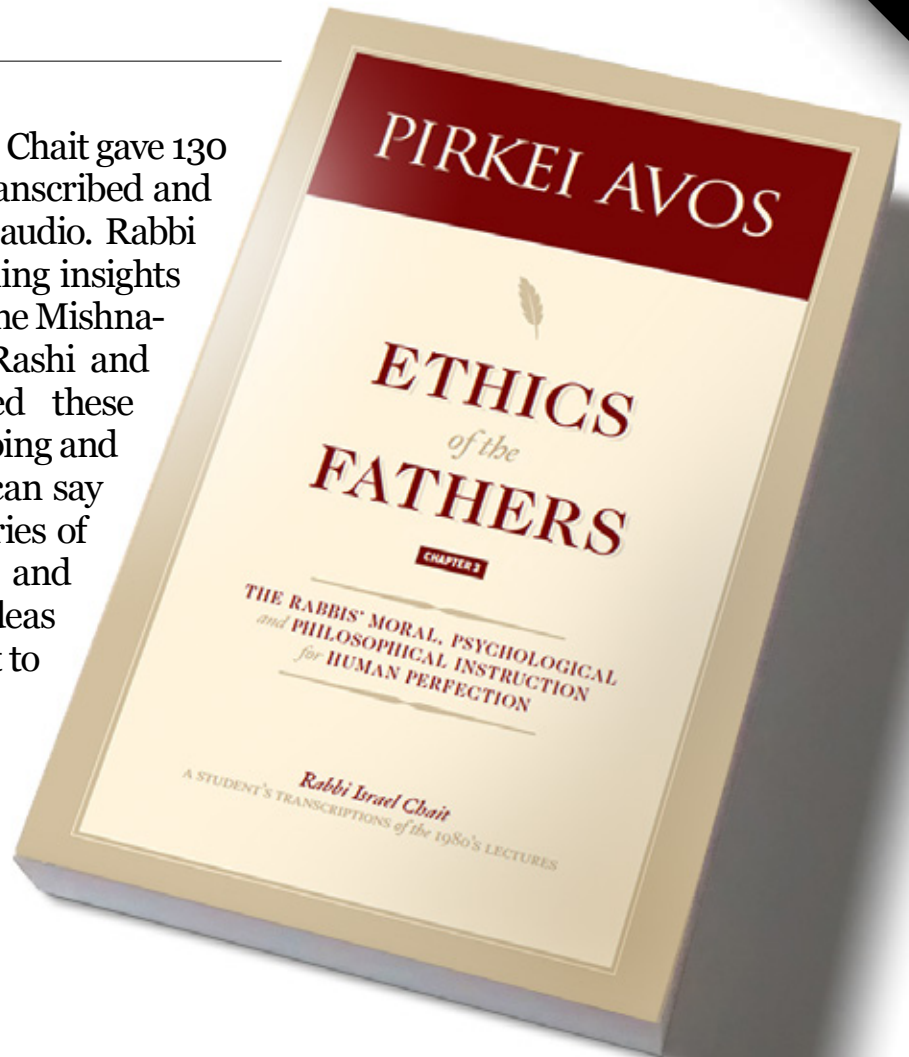
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COVER:

Just as the Merneptah stele validates Biblical accounts, one must consider that the remainder of the Bible, including the 10 Plagues and God's gift of the Torah at Sinai are equally true.

4 The Bible's Clues

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9 The Reed Sea

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The verses reveal clues to the purpose of this stupendous miracle.

LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Why Torah Records Mistakes

Reader: You say that Pharaoh's astrologers were incorrect, in essence guessing, and that Saul did not really hear Samuel. Why then were these untrue episodes recorded in Torah?

Rabbi: See Radak on the incident concerning Saul and the witch. Radak states that Samuel did not rise from the ground as a cursory reading would suggest. Radak states that it was all a projection on Saul's part; a fantasy of his mind. The Torah is designed to teach man about the law, which is aimed to benefit man's soul, his mind, and his drives. As such, the reason the Torah records such stories is to teach us how man operates psychologically, whether it be when man operates positively, or even negatively, as with Saul, and Pharaoh's astrologers. Seeing how Saul and Pharaoh's astrologers made mistakes, teaches the reader about incorrect notions, so we learn more about our nature as humans, and that we may also identify fallacy so we might distance ourselves from it.

Reader: Also, if the astrologers were guessing, why would Pharaoh be willing to kill the thousands of Egyptian boys who would have been born that day?

Rabbi: The astrologers were in positions of counsel due to Pharaoh's need for advice. They counseled Pharaoh with general statements, such as those where they could not be proved wrong, i.e., "you will have 7 daughters, and you will bury 7 daughters". If Pharaoh approached them and said, "Where are my 7 daughters?", they could respond. "You will have them yet". Similarly, they stated, "A savior of the Jews is to be born." Pharaoh was superstitious, and out of a fear of an uprising, he, like any other leader insecure of his reign, might resort to following the only prospect for success, that being the astrologers' advice of slaying even Egyptian males. ■

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PARSHA

The Bible's Subtle Clues Are Revealing Far More to Egypt's 10 Plagues than Meets the Eye

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



No religion except Biblical adherents can validate its claim of Divine Origin, for no other religion claims mass witnesses of a divine event. Revelation at Sinai remains the singular event where masses witnessed a supernatural phenomenon: a voice emanating from fire. All other religions demand belief, for they possess no such event, or they claim few witnesses, which can be conspiracy. But conspiracy cannot occur with millions, for conspiracy requires motive, and masses cannot share a common motive. All Bible's statements share vital concepts. Nothing is extraneous, and all verses are formulated with divine precision; one does not simply read the Bible like a novel. God didn't write it that way. Rather, He wrote the Bible with codes that can be unraveled only after years of tutelage under wise Rabbis. Therefore, we must patiently study until we are enamored by the hidden lessons we fortunately unveil.

The first six plagues were unavoidable: God decreed blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, the deaths of the herds and boils, and Egypt could do nothing but endure their devastating onslaught. But regarding the seventh plague of hail, God offered the Egyptians an escape hatch:

[God said to Pharaoh], "...This time tomorrow I will rain down a very heavy hail, such as has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. Therefore, order your livestock and

everything you have in the open to be brought under shelter; every man and beast that is found outside, not having been brought indoors, shall perish when the hail comes down upon them!" Those among Pharaoh's courtiers who feared the Lord's word fled their slaves and livestock indoors; but those who paid no regard to the word of the Lord left their slaves and livestock in the field. (Exod. 9:18-21)

The hail was very heavy—fire flashing in the midst of the hail—such as had not fallen on the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. (Exod. 9:24)

What was the intent in this seventh plague's deviation, allowing Egypt to avoid the hail's damage? What is God's intent in sharing that Pharaoh's "servants" (not the Egyptians) feared God and sought refuge? We are not told that they successfully shielded their servants and animals, but that they "feared God." Torah focusses on their attitude, not their salvation.

The following plague of locusts again records Pharaoh's servants' response:

Pharaoh's courtiers said to him, "How long shall this one be a snare to us? Let the men go to worship the Lord their God! Are you not yet aware that Egypt is destroyed?" (Exod. 10:7)

Why are Pharaoh's servant's reactions recorded twice? They fled their slaves and

animals from hail and they warned Pharaoh of the locusts' destruction of Egypt.

The plagues had a specific design, and were not intended to simply destroy. God wished to strip Pharaoh's many layers of security. God allowed his servants to avoid hail, and the focus is not on their success in protecting their possessions, but as Torah says, the focus is that, "they feared God." Of what relevance is this? It is of great relevance...to Pharaoh. For Pharaoh thereby witnessed his servant defecting him and favoring God. Thereafter, during the plague of locusts, Pharaoh's servants definitively warn Pharaoh that, "Egypt is destroyed." Again, his servants favored God over Pharaoh.

Through hail and locusts, Pharaoh experienced the progressive insubordination of his servants. This layer of security Pharaoh enjoyed until now—his dominion—was another line of resistance God obliterated in His plan to eliminate Egypt's idolatrous values as upheld by Pharaoh. Not only did God destroy objective matters such as Egypt's Nile god through blood and frogs, and reduce animal worship through Egypt's deified animals attacking them, but God addressed Egypt's ruler's internal psychological workings by allowing his servants to defect his authority. Removing this security, Pharaoh could more readily accept God's true reign.

Another layer of security was also removed. Torah says, "I will rain down a very heavy hail, such as has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now" (Ibid. 9:18), and, "such hail as had not fallen on the land of Egypt since it had become a nation" (Ibid. 9:24). Both, the land of Egypt and the nation of Egypt were undermined by hail. The people and the land never experienced such catastrophe. But why does God wish to undermine the "people" and the "land"? It is because in one's national identity as a people, and in one's identification with one's land, do people find some sense of collective identity and thereby, "value." This value intends to defend one against another, namely, God.

It is the very value invested in the masses that cultures are formed and sustained. A human being is deceived that in numbers, there is truth. But from the popularity of idolatry, this notion is refuted. People also find a certain security in their history of living on a certain parcel of soil. Man attributes a false sense of worth due to millennia of ancestors dwelling on the same location. "This is

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



The plague of hail

our land.” This too is a worthless value, as what value is there to “where” one lives? The only value is what one believes as truth and how he lives his life. Where one lives, and for how long he and his ancestors lived there, does not contribute anything to a person’s worth, which is truly gauged by his internal intellectual and moral compass, not his external zip code.

Now, God’s message that this hail is unparalleled by any previous storm from “before” the people’s existence and the land was occupied, awakens one to that prior era where Egypt and her people had not yet existed. This transient nature of the land and of the people eliminated the value that an Egyptian placed on either, paving the way to recognize God. The land and the people were no longer viewed as a force with which God must recon.

A third idea is learned from boils, the sixth plague:

And the astrologers could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the astrologers and all of Egypt (Exodus 9:11).

Boils—a malady of the skin, not bones or muscles—do not affect posture. And, of what relevance are the boils on “all of Egypt?” Why mention that “all Egyptians” had boils, if the verse’s message concerns only the astrologers’ inability to stand? Furthermore, of what significance is the astrologers’ inability to stand before Moses, as opposed to standing before Pharaoh or others? And if they truly could not stand, let them sit! But “standing before someone” has another meaning...

The astrologers (in their sustained deceit of Pharaoh) “attempted” to reproduce the plagues (knowing they could not), only to expose their lie. When they could not reproduce the plague of lice, they hid their incapability behind the lying claim, “...it is the finger of God” (Exod. 8:15). It is significant that God records their feeble attempts. So significant, that it appears from the very few words concerning the plague of boils, that the objective of this plague was precisely to disarm their claims of superiority of astrology and magic. Torah

verses are selective in their messages, not merely recounting every single historical occurrence. Our verse teaches that boils purposefully targeted the astrologers. “And the astrologers could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the astrologers and all of Egypt.” This refers not to posture, but their inability to sustain their dignity...they could not “appear” before Moses who outperformed them. They were ashamed. But why were they any more ashamed during the plague of boils? The answer is the second part of the verse: “for the boils were on the astrologers and all of Egypt.” Why was their “equal” status to all other Egyptians an embarrassment to them? We see the answer quite readily; it was their very equality to all other Egyptians that disarmed their claims to greatness. They were no better. They could not defend themselves from boils. What type of powerful astrologer allows painful blisters to afflict them over days? It is the liar who allows this to happen, since in fact, he has no more defense from boils than any other Egyptian. It was this diminution of status that was their embarrassment, and why they could not “appear” before Moses. God unmasked another of Pharaoh’s security in his Egyptian astrologers and magicians. They are charlatans. And God’s plan was a complete success, as we never again hear from the astrologers.

More and more, God exposed Pharaoh to his false beliefs, all to once again, pave the way to his and his people’s recognition of the one Supreme Being. And although God hardened Pharaoh’s heart in the five latter plagues, the lessons were witnessed by Pharaoh himself, and Egypt, as God said, “Nevertheless I have spared you for this purpose: in order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world” (Exod. 9:16).

Thus, the plagues were certainly a remarkable show, but Torah shares subtle clues that enlighten us to the many more subtle purposes of God’s actions. If we “let the words of Torah speak to us,” we open our minds to God’s amazing Bible and its profound and concealed lessons. ■



PARSHA

An Unwavering Faith

Rabbi Reuven Mann

This week's parsha, Beshalach, describes one of the greatest moments in Jewish history, the Exodus from Egypt. The Jews did not slink out like thieves in the night, but left in broad daylight. While the defeated enslavers were burying their dead, the former slaves marched out with a "high hand."

Such a miraculous development was unimaginable just a short time before. Hashem can orchestrate simply unforeseeable transformations in the human condition. Moshe had argued to G-d that he was incapable of leading the Jews or of negotiating successfully with Pharaoh. He lacked the verbal skills he deemed essential to a formidable leader's charisma.

Indeed, his initial foray into Pharaoh's palace proved to be a disaster, as the King retaliated by dramatically increasing the slaves' workload. The people blamed Moshe for his intervention in their affairs and harshly condemned him. However, as the plagues unfolded, Moshe's stature was greatly elevated.

Inexplicably, he even became an exalted figure in the eyes of the Egyptians, who suddenly developed a feeling of profound admiration for the Jews. "Hashem gave the nation abundant charm in the eyes of the Egyptians. Also the man Moshe was exceedingly great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants and in the eyes of the people."

The Jews now accepted Moshe as their superlative leader and were prepared to follow wherever he led them.

So when, after they had left Egypt, Hashem instructed Moshe to reverse course and instruct the People to encamp closer to Egypt, to tempt Pharaoh to chase after them, they willingly complied. While such a move seemed dangerous, the attitude was, "If that's what Moshe tells us to do, we'll do it." Such was the confidence they had in him.

But that sentiment did not last long. When the Jews saw the army of Pharaoh chasing after them, they fell into panic and wailed, "Are there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert? What have you done to us by taking us out of Egypt? Did we not say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone and let us serve the Egyptians, for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.'" This display of anger and disrespect seems shocking.

But that extreme disdain did not linger. All was seemingly rectified when the Jews saw the great miracle G-d had wrought for them at the Sea of Reeds and they "believed in Hashem and His servant Moshe."

However, this newfound reverence for their great leader also did not persist very long. They travelled for three days, but did not find an adequate water source, and immediately they quarreled with Moshe. The same shifting

of attitude kept occurring throughout their journey in the Wilderness. The faith of the people was subject to and contingent upon the shifting tides of their fortunes.

Such was not the case with our illustrious forefathers' whose example we should seek to emulate; their belief was constant and did not waver when adversities came their way. Their faith in Hashem was grounded in an absolute conviction that was not susceptible to doubts stemming from temporary disappointments.

This lesson has particular relevance for us. Like the generation of the Exodus, we too have experienced a great and unimaginable miracle. For thousands of years we were exiled, dispersed, and persecuted by every cruel despot. Hashem had promised that eventually we would be restored to the land of Israel and resume our independent national existence there. This was an article of faith in the abstract sense, but who could have foreseen how it would happen?

And now we have the merit to experience and take part in one of the greatest wonders of Jewish history, akin to the Exodus. We have the opportunity to go to Israel, to participate in the unfolding of the miracle of return and contribute to the growth and wellbeing of this uniquely Jewish society.

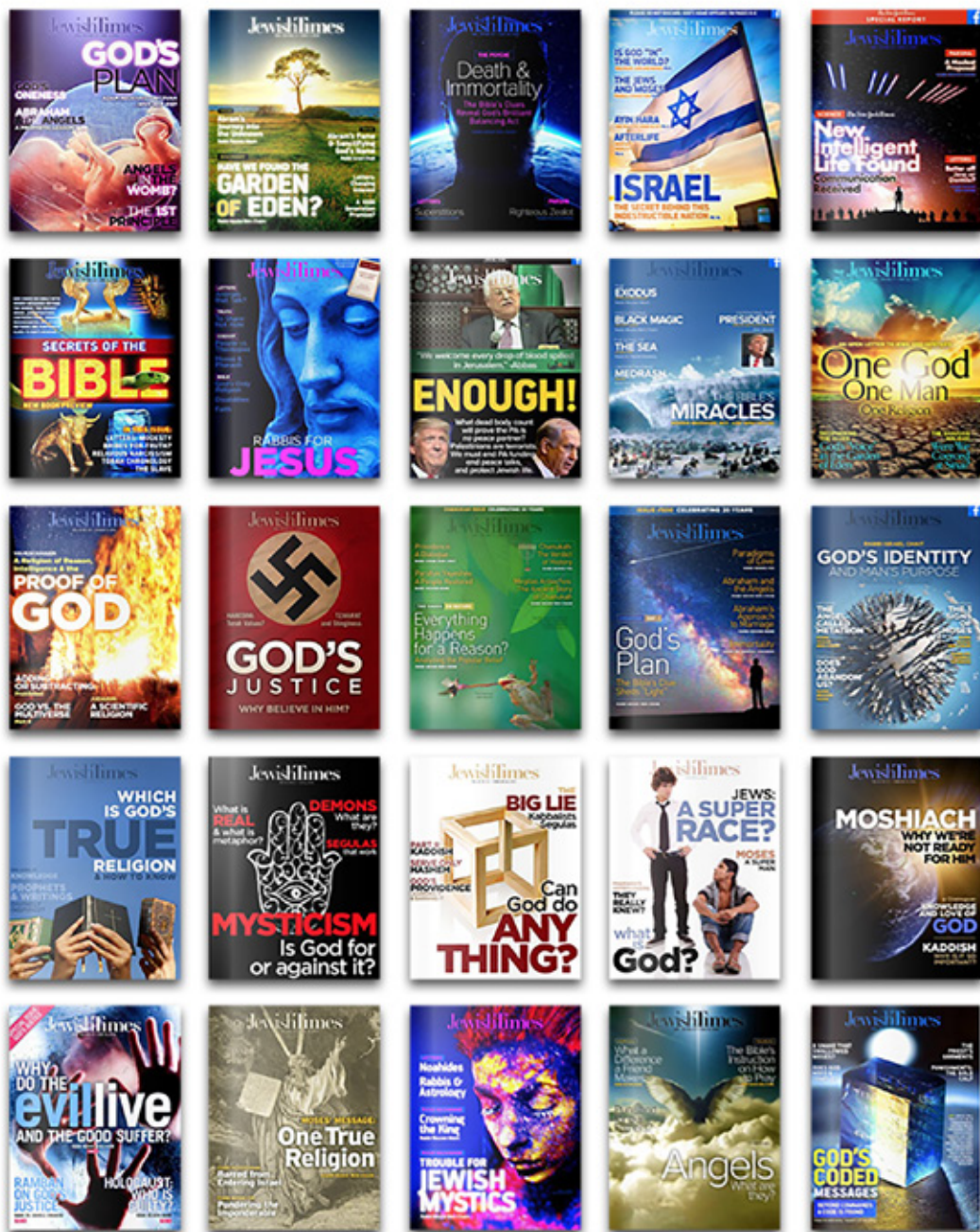
We believe in the Torah, which promised that Hashem would restore His people to His land. What must it take to convince us that the promise has been kept?

P.S. Have you completed the essays in Eternally Yours- Genesis and are feeling a bit sad that you don't have thought provoking material to look forward to reading on Shabbat? No worries because Eternally Yours- Exodus is available. The articles offer a new and original perspective on the weekly Parsha which will get you thinking and enhance your appreciation of Torah and enjoyment of Shabbat. Titles include "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished" "Reclaiming One's Dignity" "Love Is Not All You Need" "Saw You At Sinai" "The True Test Of Piety" "Betrayal" and many more. The book on Exodus can be obtained at <http://bit.ly/EY-Exodus> and the book on Genesis is available at <http://bit.ly/EY-Genesis>

Shabbat shalom. ■

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PARSHA

Kiddush Hashem: Taking the Plunge

Rabbi Dr. Darrell Ginsberg

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah records the famous story of the Jews fleeing from the Egyptians and reaching the Red Sea. The Talmud focuses on the moments while they were waiting by the shores. There is a discussion as to how Judah sanctified the name of God publicly, known as kiddush Hashem, and two well-known stories are told of what would appear to be acts of courage (Sotah 36b-37a). Rabbi Meir explains that when the Jewish nation came to the Red Sea, a scuffle broke out between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Each wanted to be the first to jump into the water. The people of Benjamin won the battle, leading to them to being stoned by those from Judah. The Talmud explains that each was subsequently rewarded. The tribe of Benjamin received the portion of land where the Kodesh Kodoshim, the Holy of Holies part of the Temple, would be situated. This is the place where the presence of God would be "located". The tribe of Judah received the line of kingship.

Tosfot, in his commentary on this section in the Talmud, cites a Mechilta, offering an analogy with a king and his two sons. He instructs the older one to wake him three hours into the day, while the other is requested to wake him at sunrise. When the younger son attempts to waken his father, his older brother stops him and explains he is supposed to wake him later. The younger son disagrees. In the ensuing argument, the king wakes up and explains he is happy with both his sons. Their intentions were correct, that being the critical part. Like the Talmud, the Mechilta relates this back to the story of Judah and Benjamin at the Red Sea. Judah's stoning of Benjamin was a reference to his jealousy of Benjamin fulfilling the task instead of him.

The Talmud referenced above presents a second, alternate version of the story. In this

account, none of the tribes were willing to jump into the sea. Nachshon, future head of the tribe of Judah, takes the lead and jumps in. His action thus served to be the public sanctification of God.

Often, these stories, especially the second, are used to demonstrate a tremendous level of courage and faith. Yet these stories raise many questions.

For one, there is a huge discrepancy between the two versions. In the first, the Jewish people seem to be on a very high level, fighting it out for jumping in first. In the second, they have the very opposite reaction, refusing to consider the dive of faith. One can also ask the importance of knowing about the supposed stoning. Finally, there are the two rewards. The actions of Binyamin and Judah seem to be identical, and Tosfot certainly equates the two based on the reaction of the king. However, the rewards are completely different. One reward has to do with the placement of a part of the Temple, while the other refers to the future kings of Israel.

The conventional interpretation focuses solely on the pure faith exhibited by these people. However, it could also be there is an important insight into the idea of sanctifying God and the traits of leadership. Let's take the story of Nachshon first. The line of Judah is known for the idea of leadership, traced back to the story of Judah and Tamar. When Tamar was being brought forward to be killed, Judah faced a pivotal moment. It was clear the public sentiment was to kill her, and most leaders, driven by popularity, would succumb and move forward with the capital punishment. Judah, though, acted in line with what was true and correct. He made the unpopular decision, going as far as acknowledging he was wrong. The paradigm of leadership is to decide the correct path no matter what the public perception is.

Not only does this impact the leader, but it can create a tidal shift in perspective on the part of those witnessing the action.

Nachshon displayed this same trait. The Jews felt they were trapped. They saw no hope, they began to question the entire plan of God and Moshe, and their faith in God began to wane. Nachshon sensed this and acted in a manner that was completely contradictory to their frame of thinking. This was a true act of sanctifying God, this being a critical trait of any future king.

The first story highlights an important insight into the idea of kiddush Hashem. The opportunity to engage publicly in kiddush Hashem is uncommon. When the opportunity presents itself, an individual is involved in a tremendous internal battle. The natural action would be not to perform such an action. Factors such as social peer pressure and survival instinct have a serious impact on the ability to act against the grain. To overcome such internal obstacles reveals the character of the individual in a profound manner.

The battle between the two tribes reflects the high level they were on, not remotely perturbed by the normative anchors holding back the average person. When the people of Benjamin were "victorious", the people of Judah understood they missed out on a special moment, one they may never have another chance to be a part of. The intense regret felt, the desire to be in that moment when one's entire existence is in line with the true path of action, explains the idea of "stoning".

The rewards reflect this idea of kiddush Hashem in two different ways. For the tribe of Benjamin, the location of the Divine presence is the natural result of their actions. The presence of God is the ultimate revelation of kiddush Hashem. It means the Jewish people are adhering to the Torah properly, the Temple running accordingly, demonstrating to the world the reality of God. For the tribe of Judah, being king meant many future opportunities to engage in kiddush Hashem. The kings of Israel would face many moments like at the Red Sea, and the chance to take advantage of them would be present.

The lessons here are obvious. Leaders today are driven by polls and the allure of popularity. The Jewish leader must be driven by what is correct. As well, the opportunity to act in a manner of sanctification of God is momentous and powerful. For many, the external and internal pressures serve as obstacles to this performance. To overcome them is to raise oneself to the highest possible plane of existence. ■

PARSHA

The Reed Sea Miracle

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



Parshas Bishalach commences with the Jews' journey immediately following their Egyptian exodus, "God did not guide them via the path of the land of the Philistines, as it was near, lest the people repent when they see war and return to Egypt" (Exod. 13:17). As Maimonides teaches in his great work, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Book III, Chap. 32), God's initial plan was not to lead the Jews towards the Red Sea, but towards the Philistines. A separate consideration demanded this route be avoided. But I ask, why would the Jews return to the very place they were now fleeing? Nonetheless, we are taught to prevent the Jews' return to Egypt, God circumvented their route.

We then read that God clearly orchestrated events to make the Jews appear as easy prey for Pharaoh, enticing him to recapture his fled slaves. God told Moses to encamp by the sea. What was the purpose? "And Pharaoh will say about the Children of Israel that they are confused in the land, the desert has closed around them" (Exod. 4:3). The purpose of traveling not by way of the Philistines, but towards the Red Sea now appears to have a different objective: to lure Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, ultimately to be drowned. But it does not appear this was the plan from the outset. Had it been, God would not have taught of His consideration regarding the Philistines. That nation's war would not have entered into the equation.

The ultimate purpose in the death of Pharaoh and his army is stated in Exodus 14:4, "And I will strengthen Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them, and I will gain honor through Pharaoh and his entire army, and Egypt will know that I am God..." God sought to gain honor by leading the Jews to the Red Sea, luring in Pharaoh, and creating the miraculous partition of waters. We are confused; did God lead the Jews to the Red Sea to circumvent the Philistines, or to lure Egypt to their death and gain honor? Furthermore, why does God seek to "gain honor" for Himself?

Upon their arrival at the Red Sea, the Jews soon see Pharaoh and his army in pursuit. Moses prays to God, and God responds, "Why do you cry unto me?" This is a surprising response. A basic principle in Judaism is the beseeching of God's help when in need, and the Jews most certainly were in need. Why does God seem to oppose prayer at this specific juncture?

Another question apropos of this section is what the goal was of the Ten Plagues, in contrast to the parting of the Red Sea? If the Red Sea parting was merely to save the Jews and kill Pharaoh and his army, God could have easily spared this miracle and wiped out the Egyptians during one of the Ten Plagues. God prefers fewer miracles; this is why there is "nature." Our question suggests that the

destruction of Pharaoh and his army had a different objective, other than the simple destruction of the Egyptians. What was that objective?

There is also an interesting Rashi, which states a metaphor taken from Medrash Tanchumah. Rashi cites that when the Jews "lifted their eyes and saw the Egyptian army traveling after them, they saw the 'officer of Egypt' traveling from heaven to strengthen Egypt" (Exod. 14:10). What is the meaning of this metaphor?

Looking deeper into the actual miracle of the Red Sea splitting we read, "And the waters returned and they covered the chariots and the horsemen and the entire army of Pharaoh coming after him in the sea, and there was not left of them even one. And the Children of Israel traveled on dry land in the midst of the sea and the water was to them walls on their right and on their left" (Exodus 14:28-29). Ibn Ezra states that Pharaoh and his army were being drowned, simultaneously as the Jews crossed through on dry land. This is derived from the Torah first stating that Pharaoh was drowned, followed by a statement that the Jews traveled on dry land. Although one section of the sea turbulently tossed and submerged the Egyptian army, "...and God churned Egypt in the midst of the sea", the adjoining sea section contained waters parted into two calm walls on either side of the Jews, bearing the dry seabed. Ibn Ezra calls this a "wonder inside a wonder."

We must ask why God deemed it essential to combine salvation and destruction in one fell swoop. God could have exited the Jews completely, prior to allowing the Egyptians entrance into the sea. What is learned from God's planned simultaneity of Jewish salvation with Egyptian destruction?

Now we must ask an unavoidable and basic question which Moses pondered: why were the Jews subjected to Egyptian bondage? To recap, Moses once saved the life of a Jew, beaten by an Egyptian. Moses carefully investigated the scene, he saw no one present, and killed the Egyptian taskmaster and buried him in the sand. The next day, Moses sought to settle an argument between the infamous, rebellious duo, Dathan and Aviram. They responded to Moses, "Will you kill us as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses feared the matter was known. But how was

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this matter made public? The Torah described the scene just before Moses killed the taskmaster, “And he turned this way and that way, and there was no man (present)...” (Exod. 2:12). So if there was clearly no one present, who informed on Moses? Rabbi Israel Chait taught there is only one possible answer; the Jew who Moses saved was there, he turned in Moses. We are astounded that one, whose life was saved, would inform on his savior. What causes such unappreciative behavior? The Torah’s literal words describing Moses’ astonishment are “(Moses said) therefore the matter is known,” referring to the disclosure of Moses’ murder of the Egyptian. Rashi quotes a Medrash on the words “the matter was known” paraphrasing Moses’ own thoughts, (Rashi on Exod. 2:14) “The matter has been made known to me on which I used to ponder; ‘What is the sin of the Jews from all the seventy nations that they should be subjugated to back-breaking labor? But now I see they are fit for this.’”

Moses now understood why the Jews were deserving of Egyptian bondage. This ungrateful Jew’s backstabbing act answered Moses’ question. But this ungrateful nature is not its own trait, but a result of another trait: The act of informing on Moses displays an inability to question Egyptian authority; “Even if my brother Jew saves me, Egypt is still the authority who I must respect.” It wasn’t aggression against Moses, but an unconditional allegiance to Egypt. The Jews’ minds were emotionally crippled by their decades as slaves. The famous Patty Hearst case teaches us of the Stockholm Syndrome, where victims sympathize with their captors. Israel too sympathized with Egypt. Such identification would cause one to inform on his own friend, even on his own savior Moses. Moses witnessed this corrupt character trait firsthand and realized that Israel justly received the Egyptian bondage as a response. But how does the punishment fit the crime? (You may ask that this is reverse reasoning, as this ungrateful nature came subsequent to bondage, not before. But I answer that Moses too knew this, yet Moses saw something in this ungrateful act which he knew predated Egyptian bondage, answering Moses’

question why Israel deserved this punishment.) So what was Moses’ understanding of the justice behind Israel’s bondage? Seeing that the Jew informed on him even after saving his life, Moses said, “the matter is known,” meaning, I understand why the Jews deserve bondage.

In approaching an answer, I feel our very first question highlights the central issue: the cause for the splitting of the Red Sea. The two reasons given for God redirecting the Jews’ journey are not mutually exclusive. The latter, drowning of Pharaoh and God’s gaining honor is in fact a response to the former: the Jews’ security in Egypt fostered by their extended stay. I suggest the following answer: God did in fact wish to take the Jews directly to Sinai. This is His response to Moses’ question as to the merit of the Jews’ salvation: “They are to serve Me on this mountain” (Exod. 3:12). Meaning, their merit of this Exodus is their future Torah acceptance at Sinai and their subsequent adherence. But due to a peripheral concern of the Philistines, a new route was required. And not just a route on the ground, but also a route that also addressed the underlying inclination towards an Egyptian return. God initially wanted only to bring Israel to Sinai. But now He sought to address the Jews’ draw towards Egypt. God wanted to drown Pharaoh and his army to respond to the Jews’ current mentality: the Jews preferred Egyptian bondage to warring with the Philistines to maintain freedom. This was unacceptable to God. God enacted the miracle of the Splitting of the Reed Sea, for many objectives, but primarily to remove the security Egypt afforded these former slaves. Destruction of the Egyptian empire was a necessary step in Israel’s development.

This answers why God responded to Moses’ prayer when the Egyptian army drew near, “Why do you cry unto Me?” In other words, God was telling Moses that prayer is inappropriate right now. Why? Because the very act of traveling to the Reed Sea was in fact the solution for what Moses prayed: the destruction of Egypt. God was

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informing Moses that what you pray for is already in the works, and therefore your prayer is unnecessary.

Egypt's destruction was not an end in itself. It had a greater goal: to replace Egypt's authoritative role with the True Authority: God. This dual 'motive' is displayed in a specific formulation of the Reed Sea miracle. Moses tells the Jews "as you see Egypt today, you will never again see them. God will war for you, and you will be silent" (Exod. 14:13,14). There are two ideas here. The first is the termination of the Egyptians. The Jews had to be rid of the Egyptian 'crutch.' Seeing them dead on the seashore emancipated them psychologically: there were no more Egyptian taskmasters to direct their lives. The phenomena of a slave can be created by nature, or nurture. In Egypt, the Jews were nurtured into a slave mentality, a dependency on a dominating authority. This mind set actually affords some psychological comfort, despite physical pain. When one prefers slavery, he in other words prefers not to make decisions, and relies heavily on a leader. Perhaps for this reason, the very first laws given (in Parshas Mishpatim) address slavery. They outline this institution as a simple, monetary reality. One has no money, so he pays his debt via servitude. But in no way is human respect compromised when he is a slave. The master must give his slave his only pillow and suffer a loss of comfort himself to accommodate another human. The slave remains equal to the master in all areas and deserves respect as any other man. Slavery is simply an institution under the heading of monetary laws. This teaches the Jews that the slavery they experienced is not a way of life, but a temporarily state. The fact that God does not prefer slavery for man is His statement that "you are servants to Me" (Lev. 26:42,55). The Torah law of boring a slave's ear physically brands him of his corruption in not "listening" to God's command on Sinai, "servants to Me are you, and not servants to servants (man)" (Rashi, Exod. 21:6).

The second idea derived from "God will war for you, and you will be silent," is that God alone delivers salvation. Your "silence" means God alone will bring salvation. There cannot be another cause sharing God's role as the "Go'ale Yisrael," the Redeemer of the Jews is God alone. Why is this necessary? This underlines the primary concept of the miracle of the sea. The goal was to instill in the Children of Israel an appreciation for God, and an acceptance of His authority. This authority would remain compromised, had



Egypt survived. Respecting God's exclusive authority is also a prerequisite for the Jews' impending acceptance of the Torah on Sinai. For this reason, many of God's commands are "remembrances of the Exodus" for the goal of engendering appreciation for the Creator's kindness. When man's relationship with God is based on appreciation for Him—as guided by the commands—man is thereby reminded that God desires the good for him. As man acts to fulfill his Torah obligations, he will not view them as inexplicable burdens, but he will seek to understand God's intended perfection in each command. Man will then arrive at his true purpose, and find the most fulfillment in his life. Man will be guided in all areas by Divine, rational and pleasing laws which conform perfectly to man's mind. All conflicts will be removed.

The males and females of the Children of Israel verbalized identical, prophetic responses to God's triumph, "God is greatly exalted, the horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea" (Exod. 15:1). God's objective of not only eliminating Egypt's authority, but gaining honor for Himself was achieved. This identical song of praise (Az Yashir) of both the male and female Jews displayed the newly instilled appreciation for their victorious God. The destruction of the Egyptians and the acceptance of God were the two primary issues that were addressed successfully. This explains why in the Reed sea, Jewish salvation and the Egyptian destruction happened simultaneously; they formed one goal. Had God desired

simple destruction of the Egyptians as its own ends, He could have done so in Egypt. But it was only in response to the Jew's overestimation of Egypt, that God destroyed them in the Red Sea, together with the Jewish salvation. The death of the Egyptians was a means for the acceptance of God, not obscured by any other master. Subsequent to the parting of the sea, the Jews in fact attested to God's success in His plan, as it is said, "and they believed in God and in Moses His servant" (Exod. 14:31).

Additionally, God's desire that the Jews glorify Him, is not "for" God. Nothing man can do can benefit God, nor does God share man's nature of "need," as in needing to gain honor for Himself. All that God does is to benefit man. This was most clearly witnessed in Egypt, where the Creator of the universe educated man (both Jew and Egyptian) with the hopes of their conformity with reality, with monotheism. Only after the Egyptians displayed disobedience and ignored the fundamentals taught through the Ten Plagues, did God have no recourse but to destroy them. God then continued His acts of mercy on man, and delivered the Jews to freedom s they could accept the Torah.

How do we explain the Medrash regarding the "officer of Egypt"? It now fits precisely with our theory: The Jews felt unconditionally bound to Egypt as inferiors. At the shores, they did not actually see any "officer of Egypt traveling from heaven." This metaphor means they looked at Egypt as invincible, as if some

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heavenly force defended Egypt over which they could not prevail. This is the meaning of the Medrash. It is a metaphor for Israel's subservient psychological state.

In summary, the plagues of Egypt served to spread fame of God, "And you will speak of My name throughout the land." The splitting of the Reed Sea had a different purpose, "And I will gain honor through Pharaoh and his entire army." The honor God acquired was for the good of Israel, not just Egypt. The Jews will view God as One who is incomparable, the true Creator, and the One who takes notice of man and manages his affairs (Ramban, Exod. 13:16). The Reed Sea miracle was executed as a response to the crippled mentality of the Jews, as God stated, "...lest they repent when they see war and return to Egypt." The circumvention from Philistine to the Reed Sea was to avoid an inevitable return to Egypt, and to also correct that very impulse, by the Jews witnessing God's triumph over Egypt, simultaneously instilling tremendous appreciation for God. In one act, the corruption in Israel was removed and a new faith in God was born, "and they believed in God and in Moses His servant." This simultaneous termination of Egypt and salvation for themselves was reiterated twice in the Az Yashir song, "God is greatly exalted, the horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea". This response displayed how affected the Jews were by God's miraculous wonders and salvation.

In all honesty, the Jews do revert to "fond" recollections of Egypt not too long after these events, and in the Book of Numbers. However, we cannot judge any acts of God's as failures, if His subjects subsequently err. God's method and perfection is to offer man the best solution at a given time. This is a tremendous kindness of God. Man has free will and can revert back to his primitive state even after God steps in to assist him. This human reversion in no way diminishes from God's perfect actions. Our appreciation of His wisdom and His precision in His divine actions remains firm. All of God's actions displaying His perfection and honor are not for Him, as He does not need a mortal's praises. He does it for us, so we may learn new truths and perfect ourselves in our one chance here on Earth. ■

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