

A TASTE OF SHABBAT

PARSHAT BESHALACH 5778

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[EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY HIS STUDENTS]

A TIME TO BE SILENT

ה' ילחמם לכם ואתם תתקשו.¹

God will fight for you and you will be silent

Moshe's demand of silence from Am Yisrael is the same demand made of Moshe himself from Hashem

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי דְּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִסְעוּ.²

And Hashem said to Moshe "Why are you shouting to me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael, and they should move"

"Be silent Moshe!", but why should we all be silent? Why not pray? The Baal HaTurim tells us

This was a hint to Moshe that he will shout at me for forty days on the mountain, praying for Israel, and also the five words he will pray from Miriam "Please O God heal her", because there is a time for long prayers and a time for short ones. Now is the time to be silent and not pray, just tell Bnei Yisrael to move

Moshe made two great prayers, the first was the longest ever, forty days, and the second, the shortest ever, just five words. Why should he be silent now?

Rashi tells us:

דבר אחר 'מה תצעק אלי' - עלי הדבר תלוי ולא עליך...³
Why are you shouting at me? Its up to Me not you..

If it is up to Hashem, why not pray to him for mercy

The answer can be found in the first seder night, when we were forbidden to leave our houses in

order not to meet the angel of destruction in the middle of the night, so that no Israeli first born would perish. Rashi tells us what happened if a Jew would have been in an Egyptian house

ולא יהיה בכם נגף. אבל הווה הוא במצרים... הרי שהיה ישראל בביתו של מצרי שומע אני ילקה כמותו? תלמוד לומר 'ולא יהיה בכם נגף'.⁴

But there will be [a plague] upon the Egyptians.... Let us say that an Israelite was in an Egyptian's house. I would think that he would be smitten like him. Therefore, Scripture states: "and there will be no plague upon you."

In other words, despite it being an Egyptian house with no blood on the doorframe, and the Egyptian first born in the house will die, the Jew in the house will be saved. Let's look at the situation: We are talking about a Jew, who after nine plagues, at the announced time of the exodus is sitting in an Egyptian house. This is a Jew who hasn't got a seder night, who hasn't listened to the mitzvah not to leave the home or to prepare to leave. Instead of doing what he should, he is sitting down for a drink with an Egyptian friend. God himself, not an angel, goes down to the Egyptian house and saves this Jew!

This is not because this Jew has prayed, it is because of what becomes apparent at the exodus and again at the splitting of the sea; *"my first born, Israel", "Israel and the Holy one, blessed be he, are one"*⁵

¹ שמות י"ד, י"ד.

² שם, ט"ו.

³ רש"י, שם.

⁴ רש"י שם, י"ב, י"ג.

⁵ רמח"ל ע"פ הזוה"ק ח"ג דף עג עמוד א

Many die during the plague of darkness, but when the moment of "and it was at midnight" came, God comes and says "these are my firstborn, I will go down to save them".

This is because of the total love that God loves Israel, a love not dependent on anything. This is what God says to Moshe; "Sometimes you should pray for forty days, sometimes just five words, sometimes don't pray at all, in order to show that I don't save you because of your prayers, but because I love you".

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev explains the pasuk

וַיִּסַּע מִלֶּאךָ הַמַּלְאָכִים הַהֵלֵךְ לִפְנֵי מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ
מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם...⁶

And the angel that went before the camp of Israel moved behind it

That there are times for the pure angels to be in the highest strata of heaven, but when God shows his love of Israel, they move back and Israel take their place – even the Jew who at this special time misses the seder and has a drink with an Egyptian. If this is how God loves each Jew, shouldn't we too?

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⁶ שמות י"ד, י"ט.