

שביעי של פסח

Already in the Pesach Seder we are told to await the Seventh Day of Pesach. We read in the Haggadah how the plagues that were in Egypt were geometrically increased from the numbers that were in Egypt. Four times or five times the number of *Makkos* that were placed against the Egyptians in *Mitzraim* were visited upon the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

If there were 10 plagues in Egypt there were 50 at the Red Sea and each of the plagues had multiple aspects, giving us a total of 200 or even 250 *Makkos* that befell upon the Egyptians at the Red Sea on that Seventh Day of the Exodus.

We will read on that day (Sh'mos Perek 14/Posuk 30):

וַיֹּשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל שַׁפַּת הַיָּם:

On that day Hashem saved Israel from the hand of Egypt and Israel saw Egypt dead on the bank of the river.

And that verse is followed by the unique song sang by Moshe and Israel at their salvation.

We have no doubt that the *Shira –Oz Yoshir* is a vital part of our prayers and of our beliefs.

The Posuk that follows the one above reads:

וַיִּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירָאוּ הָעַם אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה' וּבַמֶּלֶךְ עַבְדּוֹ:

Israel saw the great power that Hashem did against Egypt and the people feared Hashem and they believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant.

Although the pinnacle of the people's belief in Moshe was yet to come – at *Har Sinai*, already here they saw that Moshe was truly the *Eved Hashem*, the servant of G-d.

It was Moshe who, at G-d's command, stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and brought the miracles that commenced immediately.

That is what we will read on the Seventh Day of Pesach (ibid. P'sukim 16, 21):

וְאַתָּה הָרַם אֶת מִטְּךָ וּנְטֵה אֶת יָדְךָ עַל הַיָּם וּבִקְעֵהוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם
בִּיבֻשָׁה:

And You, Moshe, raise your staff and extend your hand over the sea and split it; and B'nei Yisroel will come in the middle of the sea on dry land.

וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַיָּם וַיּוֹלֶךְ ה' אֶת הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קְדָיִם עֲזָה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה וַיִּשָּׁם אֶת הַיָּם
לְחֲרֻבָּה וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם:

Moshe extended his hand over the sea and Hashem caused the sea to move because of a powerful easterly wind the entire night and He made the sea into a dry place and the waters split.

Now, this miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea is quite different than those miracles that Hashem did in Egypt. When it came to the last of the Ten Plagues, when Hashem had decided that the tenth plague would be the final event, it was Hashem Who directly and alone performed the miracle; He did not send an appointee.

That is what we read in the Haggadah Shel Pesach:

אֲנִי וְלֹא מִלֶּאכָר אֲנִי וְלֹא שְׂרָף אֲנִי ה' אֲנִי וְלֹא אֲחֵר.

I Hashem, not an angel; I Hashem and not a *seraf*; I Hashem; I Hashem and no one else.¹

And it is for that reason that we find scant mention of Moshe Rabbenu in the Haggadah. The Exodus was the direct Hand of G-d against the Egyptians and within the vision of Israel.

¹ See the verses in Parshas Bo where the 'I' of Hashem is repeated constantly in connection with His informing Moshe that He will smite the first-born Egyptians.

We read there (Sh'mos Perek 12/Posuk 12):

וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה וְהִכִּיתִי כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם וְעַד בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם
אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי ה':

I Hashem will pass over the Land of Egypt on this night and I Hashem will strike every first-born in the Land of Egypt from man to animal; and against all of the gods of Egypt I Hashem will make judgment; I am Hashem.

After the presence of the direct Hand of G-d in Egypt, Hashem allowed Moshe to take part in the splitting of the Sea. And thus the people now believed in the fact that Moshe's actions were a function of his being the servant of Hashem.

About all of this we have no doubt. We have no doubt of the great miracle involved in saving the people from the Egyptians.

At the same time, though, we wonder. Our source of wonderment, or confusion, is the statement in the Haggadah that seems to minimize to an extent the uniqueness of the salvation of Israel from the hand of the Egyptians.

We all know the words:

והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו. שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותנו והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם.

Hashem's promise to Avraham Ovinu at *Bris Bein HaBsorim* has stood with for our fathers and for us. Because there was not only one person – Par'o who stood up against us but in each and every generation there are those who stand up against us to exterminate us – but Hashem saves us from their hand.

The Haggadah then takes us back to Lovon:

שבקש לעקור את הכל

Lovon intended to uproot everything.

When the *Shevatim* were being born, Lovon wanted to end the history of Israel before it even had a chance to begin.

Maggid, that central part of the Haggadah that teaches about the Exodus, concludes with the events of the Exodus and with a prayer for the future redemption. The events that follow the Exodus, the threats upon Israel, the threats, the persecutions, the destructions and the tragedies are not part of its purview because that is not its subject. But that does not mean that we are aware of the ongoing history of Israel at the Seder.

In *נרצה*, the concluding section of the Seder we have *piyutim* that refer to those persecutions that occurred in later times.

We are not ignorant of our history. We are not unaware of events that we do not mention at the Seder². They are part of our repertoire of prayer and mourning at other times during the year – particularly on *Tish'a B'av* when we recite *Kinnos* that discuss the destructions of the middle ages as well as modern elegies that continue to remind us of the *Shoah* that took place in our own day and age.

And so we may ask, when we rise as the *Shira* is read in Shul on this Seventh Day of Pesach, what are we to remember regarding G-d's miraculous saving of our ancestors? Is the whole point to remember this undoubtable Divine intervention in history when G-d saved us? Is the whole point to remember that Hashem gave Moshe Rabbenu this unique opportunity to showcase him as *Moshe Avdo*, His servant Moshe?

What are we to think at this upcoming Torah reading and our daily recitation of the *Shira* and these verses which precede it?

Chizkuni writes:

² Although the Halacha allows a number of items to be used on Seder Plate together with the roasted meat in order to have the שני תבשילים, the two cooked foods that the Mishnah (Masseches Pesachim Perek 10/Mishnah 3) requires, the prevalent custom is to use a hard-boiled egg that then has been roasted to symbolize the *Korban Chagiga* that was eaten at the Seder prior to the *Korban Pesach*.

Although there are many reasons offered for the choice of the egg, we can certainly think of the reason why a hard-boiled egg is eaten at the *Seuda Mafsefkes*, the 'meal' eaten prior to the fast of Tish'a B'av. Just like the egg is sealed, it has no opening, so is the mouth of the mourner sealed on that day commemorating the gamut of the tragedies that befell Israel throughout the generations. That is a message of the Seder as well as long as we remain in Golus and beyond.

[We will note that as this is being written on this day of his 26th Yartzheit, the well-known opinion of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ZT"l of Boston is that Tish'a B'av should be *the* national day of mourning for Klal Yisroel and that other days that were established, such as *Yom HaShoah v'Hagevura* that is observed a few days after Pesach, should all be subsumed under the all-encompassing day of the 9th of Menachem Av.]

וישע ה' ביום ההוא לקיים מה שנאמר [שם יג³] התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום ואותו יום היתה הישועה שלמה, שמשם והלאה לא ראום.

Hashem saved Israel on that day – This verse comes to fulfil that which Israel was told earlier – ‘Stand straight and see the salvation of Hashem that He will do for you today’. That day was the complete salvation because from then after Israel no longer saw the Egyptians [who died in the sea].

What about all of the suffering inflicted upon our People after that wonderful salvation?

Furthermore, and upon more reflection, we can note that the verse itself raises our question. The Torah writes that Hashem saved Israel on ‘*that day*’. The miraculous salvation of Israel at the Red Sea was a one-time event; it did not make any promise for the future⁴.

³ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם אֲל תִּירָאוּ הַתִּיַצְבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת ה' אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתֶם אֶת מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם לֹא תִסְפוּ לִרְאֹתָם עוֹד עַד עוֹלָם:

Moshe said to the people, ‘Stand straight and see the salvation of Hashem that He will do for you today because that which you saw Egypt today you will no longer see them – forever.’

⁴ Without specifically addressing this phrase as a question, *Or HaChaim HaKodosh* explains:

ביום ההוא. פירוש ביום ההוא היתה התשועה ולא קודם הגם שיצאו ממצרים לא היו בוטחים בעצמן מהם:

On that day – the explanation is that that on that day there was the salvation – but not before. That is because that even though they went out of Egypt they were unsure of themselves [in face of the Egyptians] until that day [when the Egyptians died].

Malbim’s explanation is very similar to that of *Or HaChaim*.

See also the unique explanation of *Chasam Sofer* in ‘Toras Moshe’ to B’reishis Perek 6/Posuk 9 where he learns two approaches to the level of Israel’s merit and being deserving of salvation from the two explanations of the righteousness of Noach, as Rashi writes there.

‘That day’ can be explained, Chasam Sofer writes, as their being uniquely worthy to see the destruction of their enemy. One who is saved, but not uniquely worthy of being saved, would not see their enemies perish. If they were not uniquely worthy,

And as Moshe Rabbenu was already told at the time of his appointment to serve as the emissary of HaKodosh Boruch Hu to Par'o and to Israel, the events of slavery and persecution in Egypt from which Israel was to be saved was not expected to be the final trial that our people would undergo.

Hashem told Moshe Rabbenu at that time, at the place of the *sneh* –the Burning Bush (Sh'mos Perek 3/P'sukim 13-15):

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים...לֵקִים הַנְּהָ אֲנֹכִי בֹא אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם אֲנִי...לֵקִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרוּ לִי מַה שְּׁמוֹ מָה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי...לֵקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֱהִי אֲשֶׁר אֱהִי וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱהִי שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם: וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֲנִי...לֵקִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֲנִי...לֵקִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֲנִי...לֵקִי אֲבִרְהָם אֲנִי...לֵקִי יִצְחָק וְאֲנִי...לֵקִי יַעֲקֹב שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֹלָם וְזֶה זְכוֹרִי לְדֹר דָּר:

Moshe said to G-d, 'Behold I come to B'nei Yisroel and I will say to them, "The G-d of your fathers sent me to you and they will say, 'What is His Name?; what shall I say to them?'

G-d said to Moshe, 'I will be that Who I will be'; and He said, 'So you shall say to B'nei Yisroel the G-d Who is "I will be' sent me to you". G-d said additionally to Moshe, 'So you shall say to B'nei Yisroel, "Hashem the G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak and the G-d of Yaakov

it would be sufficient that they would be saved; they would not deserve to see their enemies die. [Of course, the prime examples of this principle are Lot and his wife who were told not to look back at the destruction of Sedom and Amora because they were particularly unworthy.]

Those who said that the Torah speaks about the exceptional righteousness of Noach, explain that the *צוהר*, light in the Ark was a window and thus Noach saw the destruction of the wicked because he was uniquely worthy.

Those who said that the Torah speaks about only the relative righteousness of Noach explain that the *צוהר* was shiny jewel that gave light, but that there was no window in the Ark; Noach did not deserve to see the death of the wicked. He was not sufficiently righteous.

Israel was saved on 'that day', Chasam Sofer explains, when they saw the Egyptian dead because of 'that day' they were uniquely deserving and worthy.

sent me to you”; that is My Name forever; that is My remembrance for each and every generation.

Rashi writes:

אהיה אשר אהיה - אהיה עמם בצרה זו אשר אהיה עמם בשעבוד שאר מלכיות. אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם, מה אני מזכיר להם צרה אחרת דיים בצרה זו. אמר לו יפה אמרת, כה תאמר וגו':

I will be Who I will be – I Hashem will be with them in this trouble and I Hashem will be with them in their servitude to other reigns. Moshe said before Him, ‘Master of the Universe, why should I mention to them other troubles, this one is sufficient.’ Hashem said, ‘You spoke well. You shall say to them [I will be with them for this trouble and do not intimate to other troubles].’

Thus, it was known to Moshe Rabbenu at least, long before the Exodus and the salvation at the Red Sea, that the history of Israel’s suffering would not come to an end at there.

What understanding can we achieve?

In Midrash Sechel Tov to Parshas B’shalach (Parshata 15/2), we read how Chazal related to an early verse in the Shira. The Posuk there (Sh’mos Perek 15/Posuk 2) reads:

עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת קָה וַיְהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֶנְהוּ אֵל... לִקֵּי אָבִי וְאֶרְמְמָנָהוּ:

G-d is my strength and my song and He became my salvation; this is my G-d and I will praise Him, the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.

The Midrash writes:

וזמרת י...ה. וזמרה שהייתי מקלס לפניו, לפיכך ויהי לי לישועה לשעבר, כדכתיב ויושע ה' את ישראל ביום ההוא, ומעתה יהי לי לישועה בכל דור ודור, יהי לי לישועה לעתיד, כדכתיב ישראל נושע בה' תשועת עולמים (ישעי' מה/יז⁵):

⁵ The entire verse reads:

יִשְׂרָאֵל נוֹשָׁע בַּה' תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים לֹא תִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא תִקְלְמוּ עַד עוֹלָמֵי עַד:
Israel is saved by G-d with an eternal salvation; they will not be embarrassed and will not be shamed forever and ever.

G-d is my song – He is my song that I said praises before Him. Therefore He was my salvation in the past, as it is written, ‘Hashem saved Israel on that day’. From now on, He will be a salvation for me in each and every generation. He will be my salvation in the future as it is written, ‘Israel is saved by G-d with an everlasting salvation⁶.

The salvation of the Red Sea is an indication that when necessary there will be future salvation in the future.

And what is the mechanism by which we can be assured that Hashem will redeem us in the future as He has done in the past? Perhaps the following Midrash will give us a perspective.

We read in the Midrash Tanchuma to Parshas Acharei Mos (Parshata 18), the upcoming Parshas Hashavua. The Midrash writes:

אמר רבי מאיר ויושע ה' ביום ההוא , ויושע כתיב כביכול כשישראל נגאלין הוא נגאל.

Rabi Meir said, ‘Hashem saved Israel on that day’. It is written *va’yi’vo’sha*. As it were, when Israel is redeemed, He is redeemed.

The Midrash teaches that the letter *vov* in the word *va’yo’sha* is superfluous. The Torah often foregoes writing the letter *vov* when it serves as a vowel. However, when the letter *vov* serves as a consonant, it cannot be foregone.

Therefore, when the word *ויושע* is written *מלא*, with the letter *vov*, that could indicate that the letter *vov* is not serving as a vowel in this word but as a consonant and thus would be read *va’yivosha* – ‘and He was saved’ in the passive *nifal* verb structure, referring to G-d being saved, as it were, in addition to the *p’shat* of *vayosha* with an active meaning that He, Hashem, saved Israel.

⁶ It seems that the Midrash translates the say word, *ויהי*, in two ways.

The first way is the obvious translation – *He was*. Hashem was my salvation in the past. The letter *vov* used as a prefix here is the standard *vov ha’hi’puch* – the ‘reversal’ letter *vov* which changes the tense of the verse – in this case from future tense to past tense.

The second way that the Midrash interprets *ויהי* seems to be that the prefix *vov* is a conjunction – meaning ‘and’. Thus, the translation of *ויהי* in this context would be, ‘And – He will be’.

The Midrash is emphasized and elucidated by the Or HaChaim HaKodosh to Parshas V'zos HaBracha at the conclusion of the Torah.

The Posuk reads (D'vorim Perek 33/Posuk 29) reads:

אֲשֶׁרֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי כְמוֹךָ עִם נוֹשַׁע בְּה' מִגֵּן עֶזְרֶךָ וְאֲשֶׁר חָרַב גְּאוֹתְךָ וַיִּכְחָשׁוּ אֵיבֶיךָ לָךְ
וְאַתָּה עַל בְּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִדְרָךְ:

Happy are you, Israel, who is like you? You are a people saved by G-d. He is the shield of your help and the sword of your pride; your enemies will become weak before you and you will trample on their altars.

Or HaChaim notes that the word נושע is written in the *nifal* word structure. Why doesn't the verse say 'Hashem will save them' – in active speech instead of speech that is passive?

He writes:

עוד ירצה באומרו נושע בה' פירוש שהמלך נושע בתשועתו, כאומרו (לעיל ל/ג) ושב
ה' את שבותך ואמרו ז"ל (מגילה כט א) והשיב לא נאמר אלא ושב אשריו וכו', והוא
אומרו אשריך כי כמוך שאתה עם נושע עם ה' שהוא מגן עזרך, ואשר הוא חרב
גבהותך שאין חרב גדולה כחרב לה' בשולפו אותה מתערה:

Additionally the verse means when it says, 'saved by G-d' that the explanation is that the King is saved together with the salvation of the people. This is in consonance with the earlier verse [in Parshas Nitzavim] that reads, "Hashem will return with your return".

Chazal said in Masseches Megillah: The verse does not say that Hashem will return Israel but that 'He will return'. Happy is Israel etc.

And here it says, 'You are happy' because just like you are saved by Hashem Who is your shield Who helps you and He is the sword of your great height⁷. There is no sword greater than the sword of Hashem when He removes it from its scabbard.

The verse in Parshas Nitzavim to which Or HaChaim refers reads:

⁷ Or HaChaim is explaining that the greatness of Israel that is implied by the word גבוהותך refers to the heights that Israel attains – גבוהותך.

וְשָׁב ה' אִלֵּינוּ... לְקִיּוֹם אֶת שְׁבוּתֵךְ וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצֵךְ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפְצַרְתָּ ה'
אִלֵּינוּ... לְקִיּוֹם שְׁמֵךְ:

Hashem your G-d will return with your returnees and He will have mercy on you and He will return and gather you from all of the nations that Hashem your G-d dispersed you there.

Rashi, based on the Gemara that Or HaChaim cited, writes:

וְשָׁב ה' אִלֵּינוּ... לְקִיּוֹם אֶת שְׁבוּתֵךְ - הִיָּה לוֹ לְכַתּוּב וְהִשִּׁיב אֶת שְׁבוּתֵךְ, רַבּוּתֵנוּ לְמַדּוֹ מִכֵּאֵן שֶׁהִשְׁכִּינָה כְּבִיכּוֹל שְׂרוּיָה עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּצַרַת גְּלוּתָם, וְכִשְׁנִגְאֵלִין הַכְּתִיב גְּאוּלָּה לְעַצְמוֹ, שֶׁהוּא יִשׁוּב עִמָּהֶם.

Hashem will return with your returnees – The verse should have written ‘Hashem will return [bring back] your returnees, [why did it write ‘He will return *with*’]? Chazal learned from here that, as it were, the Shechinah is with Israel in the troubles of their exile. When Israel is redeemed, Hashem dictated redemption for Himself, that He will return with them.

Let us not think that when we celebrate the end of Egyptian rule and servitude over Israel on the Seventh Day of Pesach that we are only marking an exceptional historical moment, some ancient event. Let us not think that our study of the Crossing of the Red Sea is only to tell and retell the many miracles that G-d did for us on that day 3301 years ago. Let us not think that we fulfill our obligation of thanks to G-d when we remember the 50 plagues or the 200 plagues or the 250 plagues that smote Egypt on that day.

All of that definitely must be remembered as we remember all of G-d’s direct intervention for our salvation for which we give thanks on that day and every day.

But, if that is all that we will remember then we have not yet fulfilled our obligation.

At the end of Maggid when we say:

אֲשֶׁר גָּאֵלְנוּ וְגָאֵל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ... כֵּן יִגָּאֵל

G-d redeemed us and our fathers – so should He redeem us.

So, too, as we recite the Shira, on the Seventh Day of Pesach and in our daily davening, we must remember, together with G-d’s past miracles, that He remains with us – including in the Golus when we suffer from *Hester Ponim* – even if we do

not merit to see His 'strong hand and outstretched arm' - He is there. His hand has not weakened, and the span of His arm has not lessened.

As we sang at the Red Sea, may we again sing His praises at the Geula Shleima that we so desire this Pesach and throughout the year.

Chag Sameach

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock