



Complain Complain Complain

By Akiva Greengart ('25)

Parashat BeShalach opens up by saying *וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרָעָה* (Shemot 13:17). When Paroh let the Jews go, Hashem didn't send them towards the Pelishtim. This poses a question, shouldn't Bnei Yisrael be able to defeat the Pelishtim? If they were able to defeat Sichon and Og, two giants, why wouldn't they be able to defeat the Pelishtim?

Later in the Parashah, Bnei Yisrael cries out to Moshe saying, *הַמִּבְלִי אֵי-יִקְבְּרוּם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לְמוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר*, *מֵה-זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם* (Shemot 14:11)? Is the reason you are taking us out of Egypt because of the lack of graves in Egypt? Why are you taking us out!? Bnei Yisrael is worried that they are going to die, yet Moshe Rabbeinu's response does not seem to help. He says to them that they will never see the Egyptians ever again. If Bnei Yisrael are dead, of course they won't see the Egyptians ever again!

After Bnei Yisrael cross the Yam Suf, they complain some more. This time they want water. Hashem provides them with water and then explains to them His abilities. However, Hashem uses an obscure term. He says to them, *כָּל-הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר-שִׁמְתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא-אֲשִׁים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה*, *רַפָּאָה* (Shemot: 15:26). All of the diseases that I put upon Mitzrayim, I won't put upon you for I am Hashem your healer. Healer?! Wouldn't it have made more sense to say *מוֹשִׁיעַךָ*, your G-d or *מוֹשִׁיעַךָ*, your Savior? In fact, this is the only time in the Torah that Hashem is referred to as a

healer. Hashem saved them from Mitzrayim, he didn't heal them!

The answer is that Hashem did heal them. Bnei Yisrael is not suffering physically, they are suffering mentally. Hashem uses the word heal because healing happens gradually. After going through such mental hardship, Bnei Yisrael naturally will not be fine right away, it takes time. Trauma can't be overcome so quickly and that is why the term 'healer' is used.

This also explains Moshe Rabbeinu's response to Bnei Yisrael thinking they will die. If they were worried about the Egyptians physically hurting them, Moshe's response would make no sense. Obviously you won't see the Egyptians again if you are dead. Rather, Moshe is responding to their psychological challenges. Bnei Yisrael is fearful of the Mitzrim, after all the stress the Egyptians put on them. Moshe is saying that this chapter is over, they don't have to be worried anymore. They will never be in a horrific situation like that again. No longer will they be slaves.

Lastly, the idea of trauma explains why they chose to avoid the Pelishtim. In fact, it is explicit in the text: *פְּוִי-יִנָּחֵם הַעַם בְּרֹאֲתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרַיִם* (Shemot 13:17). The people may have a change of heart and want to return to Egypt after seeing the war. Nowhere does it mention Bnei Yisrael's inability to defeat them. In fact, Bnei Yisrael probably could beat them. However, they are not in the right mental state to wage war. The mere sight of war would have them running back to Egypt.

There is much to learn from how Bnei Yisrael is treated. After people endure trauma, it takes time to heal. We need to be aware and treat these people with compassion. Physical healing may not take so long, but psychological healing does.

This issue is dedicated by Donna Hoenig and family to commemorate the thirteenth Yahrzeit of her beloved father, Jack Scharf, Ya'akov Koppel ben Moshe V'Chaya Yita.

Causing Comfort

By Eitan Barenholtz ('23)

In Parashat BeShalach, some of the details of Bnei Yisrael's exodus from Mitzrayim come across as quite unsettling. First off, the Pasuk states "וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-עֲצָמוֹת" "And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him" (Shemot 13:19). Why does Moshe Rabbeinu, the leader of a nation in its becoming, carry the bones of Yosef *himself*? Second, every time we say Hallel, we mention the phrase "הַיָּם רָאָה וַיִּנָּס", "the sea saw and fled" (Tehillim 114:3), but what did the sea see? Third, Bnei Yisrael were complaining about food and stated that they would rather be subjugated as slaves in Mitzrayim than remain in the desert. Yet, Hashem was never angered. In fact, in one instance, He even gave Bnei Yisrael new Mitzvot (Rashi to Shemot 15:25). What caused Hashem to express such patience towards Bnei Yisrael's disrespect?

The Kli Yakar addresses the first question with a magnificent idea: Moshe Rabbeinu busied himself with an important Mitzvah while Bnei Yisrael emptied Mitzrayim's coffers. Yet, surely not everyone was too obsessed with money to help Moshe Rabbeinu. There must be another reason.

Moshe Rabbeinu was separated from the rest of Bnei Yisrael because he spent most of his life outside of Mitzrayim—he left as a young adult and returned when he was eighty. When Makkat Bechorot hit the Egyptians, Bnei Yisrael must have been traumatized. Although they were persecuted and enslaved in Mitzrayim, it was still their home. To see your home decimated and tragedy-stricken by the firstborns' deaths would leave lasting nightmares. Moshe Rabbeinu was the singular person who did not grow up in Mitzrayim, so he could carry Yosef's bones without trauma.

In fact, it is possible that Kriyat Yam Suf occurred only because of Bnei Yisrael's ingrained aversion to death. In the titular Pasuk, the Torah states "וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרָעָה" "אֶת-הָעַם וְלֹא-יָנַחַם אֱלֹהִים דְּרַף אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים" "When Paroh ejected the nation, Hashem did not lead them through the land of the Pilishtim, although it was closer, because Hashem said that the nation might reconsider when they see war

and return to Mitzrayim" (ibid. 13:17). At the prospect of war, Bnei Yisrael would balk and return to their life of slavery in Mitzrayim because that was better than facing the possibility of death in combat.

Alternatively, the words "נָחַם" and "יָנַחַם" in this Pasuk, which Rashi translated as "guided," could mean "comforting," as one does with a mourner. Therefore, the original questions can be answered by explaining that Hashem was trying to comfort Bnei Yisrael.

When the sea saw and fled, the Midrash explained that it refused to move until it saw the coffin of Yosef HaTzaddik. The bones, the epitome of death, serve a positive purpose to save Bnei Yisrael by splitting the sea. Additionally, when Bnei Yisrael complain, and Hashem repeatedly yields to their demands for food, we see flavors of Aveilut, or mourning. In Hilchot Avel 4:9, Rambam writes that it is not allowed for a mourner to eat their own food on the first day of mourning; instead, the community must feed them. Here too, Hashem decides to give Bnei Yisrael water (ibid. 25:25), Manna (ibid. 16:4), and meat (ibid. 16:12), instead of reprimanding the nation.

The Manna serves another purpose on top of satiating the nation's appetite: it helped Bnei Yisrael move on. The Manna is described as "כְּצִנְעֵי גֵד לְבָן", "like coriander seed" (ibid. 16:31). With the ability to create a plant full of life, a seed comforted Bnei Yisrael with the beauty of creation to counter the death plaguing of their past, and, led by the pillar of fire, helped them look towards a brighter future.

Tamim Tihyeh Im Hashem Elokecha

By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

While brief, Devarim 18:13's teaching of *Tamim Tihyeh Im Hashem Elokecha* yields many rich interpretations with many significant contemporary applications. The primary question is how to interpret the word Tamim.

Approach #1 - Onkelos and Chizkuni

Onkelos translates Tamim as "Shelim," complete, or fully devoted to Hashem. Chizkuni explains that the Shomronim (Samaritans) exemplify failure to observe this Mitzvah. We first hear about this group (whom

Chazal call Kutim) in Sefer Melachim II Perek 17, when the Assyrians resettled them in Northern Israel. These people were not fully devoted to Hashem even after their conversion to Judaism. Instead, they served Hashem and other gods and exhibited the behavior our Pasuk teaches us to avoid.

A shocking modern-day example of such drastic inconsistency appeared in a blog published by the Times of Israel. The writer presented his view of Modern Orthodoxy. He described it as, "I keep kosher, but when I'm in a rush at work, I'll grab a non-kosher snack. I observe Shabbat, but I'll miss Mincha." The author is a modern-day version of the Shomronim.

Tamim Tihyeh Im Hashem Elokecha teaches that a Jew must be "all-in." A spouse would reject a partner who is not fully invested in the marriage. Likewise, we would never tolerate an employee who is not fully devoted to his job. Even a coach in any sport would not accept a player's intermittent commitment to his team. Hashem similarly rightly rejects anything less than a full commitment.

Approach #2 - Rashi

Rashi summons us to look at the broader context, the *Davar HaLamed Meilnyano*. The context is admonitions to avoid involvement with *Ov, Yidoni, Kishuf, Onein, and Nichush*. These are all magicians/witches who claim to reveal the future.

Rashi explains that instead of consulting such people, we should "fully walk with Hashem and rely on Hashem instead of searching for the future. We are bidden to accept from Hashem whatever occurs to us wholeheartedly." For Rashi, *Tamim Tihyeh Im Hashem Elokecha* is the opposite of forbidden magic and witchcraft.

It is natural for us to feel insecure about our future, and it is tempting to seek illicit means to ease our anxiety. However, *Tamim Tihyeh Im Hashem Elokecha* soothes our anxiety by telling us to trust Hashem. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik explains that "fear of Hashem eliminates all other fears and anxieties."

Interestingly, Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe Even HaEzer 4:10) was asked if Rashi's approach applies to genetic testing to determine if one is a carrier for a congenital disease before finding a Shidduch. Rav Feinstein responded that it does not apply because genetic testing does not predict the future; it reveals what already exists.

Approach #3 - Ramban

Ramban adds that we should avoid sorcerers and the like and ignore their predictions if we mistakenly hear their insights. Ramban explains that since all is from Hashem, we can overcome negative predictions with His help.

Shaul HaMelech

Interestingly, Shaul HaMelech and Tom Brady demonstrate the importance of rejecting predictions made by so-called experts.

Shaul HaMelech (Shmuel I Perek 28) visited a Baalat Ov who told him he would lose his forthcoming battle with the Peslishtim. Shaul Hamelech proceeded to lose miserably to them.

However, an interesting story about Orde Wingate sheds great light on Shaul's defeat. Wingate was a brilliant military tactician who served as an officer in the British army and was an ardent Christian Zionist who devoted great attention to the Jewish Bible. During the mid-1930s, he was stationed in Eretz Yisrael, where he imparted much of his fighting technique to the Haganah (the Jewish defense organization in Eretz Yisrael at the time). The following occurred during that time:

On top of the Gilboa, looking down on the beautiful patchwork of Jewish cultivated fields and fishponds in the valley below, Wingate suddenly shouted, "Saul was a fool!" "Saul, who?" asked his Jewish companion. "Why King Saul obviously," replied Wingate, "he could have defeated the Philistines when he had his small mobile force behind his enemy the night before the battle, which would end the next day with the ignominious defeat of the Israelites, and the death of Saul and his sons in a disastrous frontal attack." (The Times of Israel)

Shaul HaMelech was an enormously brilliant fighter, as recounted in Shmuel I Perek 14. He could have easily won at Har Gilboa as well. Why did he lose? He failed since he bought into the prediction he would lose! The forecast unnecessarily destroyed him. An "expert" told him he was going to die, so he thought he would die, which led him to his death and our nation to a miserable defeat!

Tom Brady was a sixth-round draft pick in the 2000 National Football League draft. The "experts" predicted he would be, at most, a reserve player.

Nevertheless, Brady defied the predictions and became arguably the best quarterback ever. Brady ignored the negative forecasts and overcame them!

In a far more serious matter, a woman in the Teaneck community was diagnosed with highly advanced uterine cancer. She told her rabbi that her doctor told her that only five percent of patients with this diagnosis live for even five years. Her rabbi told her, in turn, that she should be one of the five percent. Baruch Hashem, she enjoyed five more full years of life with her children and grandchildren. Even expert prediction has limited value.

Approach #4 - Chassidic Approaches

The Chassidic masters had much to say about this Pasuk. Here are two shining examples.

The Sefat Emet develops a new approach to the Pasuk – we are Tamim, whole and complete human beings, only if we are Im Hashem Elokecha, incorporate Hashem in our lives. A person without Hashem will not know happiness. Indeed, Tehillim 105:3 describes the joy of those who seek Hashem, “Yismach Leiv Mevakshei Hashem.”

For Rabi Nachman of Bratzlav, *Tamim Tihiyeh Im Hashem Elokecha* is a monumentally important Mitzvah. Rabi Nachman vigorously espoused Emunah Temimah, pure and simple faith in Hashem. Children do not often ask for DNA evidence for their mother’s identity; they love their mother purely and simply. Rabi Nachman argues that we must love Hashem in the same pure and simple way - *Tamim Tihiyeh Im Hashem Elokecha*, with Tamim meaning simple and pure.

Conclusion - Hashem’s Extraordinarily Rich Torah

How remarkable is Hashem’s extraordinarily rich Torah! A five-word Torah exhortation yields layers of beautiful and meaningful instruction. The many approaches to our Pasuk are not necessarily in conflict. Each reveals another magnificent aspect of Hashem’s intention in this Pasuk. Mah Ahavti Toratecha; how do I love Hashem’s Torah with its infinite meaning!

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