

# Be'shalach 5772

## BS"D Parashat Be'shalach

On the third day after the exodus from Egypt, HaShem commanded Moshe to lead the nation in retreat back to Egypt.

Rashi explains that this was done in order to lay a trap for the Egyptians by creating the impression that the Jews were not being led by the all-knowing God, but that they were a confused and motley group of misguided individuals. And this would lead the Egyptian policymakers at ENSA (Egyptian National Security Agency) to conclude that "pay-off" time had arrived to "do unto the Jews that which the Jews had done unto them".

I suggest an additional reason for the retreat.

Electro-convulsive therapy, or its more common name "shock treatment", is used in cases of severe depression to trigger a seizure designed to redress the emotional problems in the brain.

The Jewish people at that time were in a state of deep depression. Just a few days earlier during the plague of darkness, 80% of the nation who had refused to "come on aliya" had died, throwing the survivors into a tragic state of mourning and depression. There were very few Jewish families who escaped the tragedy of that loss.

In addition, the future of the survivors was less than optimistic, with the only projection of their future being the perilous desert with only a limited quantity of matzot and water to satisfy their needs.

In this situation who could blame the poor downtrodden, just-freed slaves for feelings of depression, dejection, desolation, desperation, despondency, gloom, hopelessness,

melancholy, misery, mortification, woefulness and worry?

HaShem, the Master Healer, diagnosed the malady and set into motion shock therapy to treat the sick people of Israel.

Their feelings towards Moshe and Aharon ranged from disbelief to hate. Moshe and Aharon claimed that they were sent by the Almighty, but that had proven false in light of the impossible, suicidal situation into which the two brothers had dragged the nation.

Fear, dread and profound frustration gripped the entire people – enter shock therapy.

The nation was put into the impossible situation of standing before the stormy, surging waters of the Red Sea, while to the rear the Egyptian army was quickly approaching with vengeance in their eyes. The Jewish people saw the angel of death before them, which was equal to the highest surge of electric shock used in near brain-dead psychotics.

At the exact moment in their emotional abyss, HaShem divided the waters of the sea into 12 lanes, one for each tribe, lined with brooks of sweet water, food and condiments.

The shock of being saved from certain death in the most miraculous manner, while seeing the demise of the entire Egyptian army, had the desired therapeutic effect.

Trust in HaShem returned, and with it the optimistic hope for a great future as HaShem's chosen people.

Three thousand years fast forward. The 18th century saw the rise of European and American nationalism. Nationalism has many definitions, but the wide-brush description is a movement to establish and protect a homeland for a specific ethnic group, emphasizing collective identity based on religion, language, a common history and/or culture.

And although it swept the continent as people began to

transfer their allegiances from multi-cultured societies to more exclusive ones, it did little, if nothing, to arouse the desire of our people to return to our ancient homeland.

The only saving grace of potential Jewish nationalism was the 19th century anti-Semitic Dryfus affair, which aroused the yearnings of an assimilated Jew, whose name was Binyamin Zev Herzl. He was rejected by the vast majority of religious leaders who were the victims of a 2000-year state of depression and inaction, waiting for the "great shofar" to be sounded to restore them to our holy land.

Enter the ultimate healer – HaShem – with increasing degrees of electro-convulsive therapy shock treatment.

The Dryfus trial slightly stimulated the Jewish people, but it was insufficient to arouse the leaders from their apathy.

The "juice" was increased with the first World War which produced the Balfour Declaration, that promised the Jews a national homeland on both sides of the Jordan River.

The challenge was picked up by a small segment of our people who came and established settlements on the western side of the Jordan. There were also deeply religious Jews who had come in previous centuries and resided in the four "sacred cities": Yerushalayim, Tsefat, Teveria and Hevron. But the large majority of Jews still remained in the cesspools of the galut.

HaShem increased the power to shock with the advent of the second World War that produced Medinat Yisrael and the ingathering of Jews from over 100 countries.

Yet even that was not sufficient to arouse many religious leaders and their followers to get out from under their mental disabilities and return home.

No one can predict what the next shock will be, or even if there will be one. It is quite possible that HaShem will lose

interest in those who have not yet reacted, and their fate will be to disappear from the stage of Jewish history, just as the 80% of Jews who refused to leave the slavery of their Egyptian galut.

Let us pray that the religious leaders in the galut will be awakened and, in turn, will awaken their followers, because the tragic alternative is too difficult to contemplate.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5772/2012 Nachman Kahana