

Be'shalach and Yitro 5773

BS"D Beshalach and Yitro 5773

A synopsis of parshat Beshalach and its haftara might read, "Two gratuitous victories, one difficult battle and two songs of exaltation".

1- The parasha describes the **gratuitous** obliteration of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, followed by Moshe and the Jewish people singing God's praises for His salvation, in "Shirat Hayam" (Song of the Sea).

Gratuitous because we were observers of the victory, not military participants, as HaShem tells Moshe (Shemot 14,14)

HaShem will do battle for you, and you will be silent (passive)

2- The haftara is taken from the book of Shoftim (Judges) and describes the gratuitous annihilation of the army of Yavin, King of the northern city-state of Chatzor, by the roaring waters of the Kidron river, when we were again spectators rather than participants. For this victory, the prophetess, Devora, composed her "Shirat Devora" – Song of Devora.

3- The parasha tells of the first Amalekike war, when the Jewish army – led by Yehoshua Bin Nun – fought and traumatized the enemy but did not destroy them. Here we do not find a song of praise, because Moshe and Yehoshua knew that it was HaShem's plan that at every juncture on our trek along the road of history, we would have to meet Amalek. It will only be well into the future, when we destroy them that we will sing praise to HaShem. Perhaps that is why Shirat Hayam, which begins in the future tense ("az yashir"), which can be understood to mean that after the Egyptian demise in the Sea, Moshe sang to HaShem, but it also means that in future times

Moshe will return to life and again sing over the destruction of Amalek. In fact, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 91b) understands from the future tense of Moshe's song an intimation of *techiyat hamaytim* – resurrection of the dead.

In these very days, the Jewish State is facing cruel and fanatical enemies who correspond to the three enemies in parashat Beshalach and its haftara: Egypt to our south and west, Syria and Hizbollah to our north, paralleling Chatzor the powerful city-state in the north and the anti-Semitic Amalek peoples of Islam and Christianity.

The Jewish army is now ready and poised for all eventualities. At any moment, hundreds of thousands of reserve soldiers can be called up to defeat the enemies of HaShem. However, as it appears today, HaShem is again involved in doing battle for His chosen people, while the warriors of Tzahal are in spectator status.

HaShem will do battle for you, and you will be silent (passive)

In Egypt, the people are at each others' throats, on the verge of civil war. The Islamics (Moslem Brotherhood) vs. the more secular population are sharpening their teeth, and we, with the help of HaShem, will be willing spectators; because both sides of Egyptian society cannot agree on any issue, except for one – hatred of Jews.

In Syria, the entire society is being torn apart in civil war. The two major adversaries of our Medina are Egypt and Syria. They initiated the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, with Jordan a willing participant. The chaos will spread to Jordan and to all our enemies, and not one hair on the head of a holy Jewish soldier will be harmed.

We cannot see the future beyond the next moment, but Amalek's turn will arrive; and Am Yisrael will then complete the

trilogy of songs of praise – Shirat Hayam, Shirat Devora and the future Shir of Moshe Rabbeinu, be'ezrat HaShem.

Part B: The Ten Commandments

In our parasha, the Torah repeats the relationship between Moshe and his father-in-law Yitro thirteen times and once more in the Book of Bamidbar – not a usual occurrence in the Torah whose every letter is significant.

Yitro arrives at the Jewish camp, bringing with him his daughter Tzipora (Moshe's wife) and their two sons, in an act of family reunification as befitting the senior member of the family.

After examining the daily routine of Moshe as chief and indeed the only judge of the nation, Yitro, who was an experienced administrator in the court of Paro in pre-slavery days, presents Moshe with a proposal to establish a judicial system.

In Bamidbar chapter 10, Yitro voices his intention to return to Midyan, despite Moshe's plea that he remain – "And you shall be for us as eyes."

What is really happening in the parasha?

We know Moshe as the lawgiver.

We know Moshe as the prophet who spoke to HaShem "peh el peh" (mouth to mouth) as no other prophet would ever again do.

We know Moshe as "protector of the faith", when he exacted severe punishment from wrongdoers, Jew and Gentile alike.

But what about Moshe the "man", the husband, the father – the man who so loved his people that he refused HaShem's offer to reject the Jewish People and to choose Moshe and his offspring as the legitimate "Chosen Nation"?

I submit:

In parshat Shemot, Moshe Rabbeinu bursts onto the stage of Jewish history from out of “nowhere”.

Moshe is correct in his assessment at the burning bush that the Jewish leadership and people would have no reason to believe that he was sent by HaShem to free them, because he was unknown – a total stranger. On the face of it, Moshe did not go to cheder with the others of his age, nor did he carry on his back 100 kilo stones. Instead, he was firmly entrenched in the palace of Paro, enjoying royal life with the nobility of Egypt.

Furthermore, in the forty years between Moshe’s arrival and his death on Mount Nevo, he continued to remain “unknown”. When appearing before the people, he wore a mask to cover the rays of light which radiated from his face. He moved his tent outside the area of the general camp and even divorced his wife.

Moshe was not your “friendly” pulpit rabbi; but as stated in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 6b) and in contrast to his brother Aharon, he was a man of the law, who opposed compromise among litigants, preferring the strict decisions of halacha.

Yitro, as a former advisor to Paro, was aware of Moshe’s background and education as the Prince of Egypt; which created a royal aloofness from the common people. Yitro knew Moshe very well, as a father knows a son, from the years they had lived together in Midyan.

Yitro believed that to lead the special Jewish nation one could not be aloof, but must be intimately involved with the nation. It was to this end that Yitro journeyed to join Moshe in the Israelite camp in the desert.

One must be involved on the family level to be part of the nation and to feel its pulse, and that is why Yitro brought Moshe’s wife and children to him. The repetitive title of “choten” (father-in-law) emphasizes the close relationship

Yitro sought to develop with the leader of God's Chosen Nation.

His advice to Moshe to establish a judicial system was not meant to distance Moshe from the daily events of life, but just the opposite. The appointment of judges was a show of confidence in the people. Moshe would always remain in the picture as chief judge, but to be the sole judge is to cast doubt on the individual Jew, and in turn exacerbate the feeling of aloofness.

In time, Yitro realized that this was not going to happen. The essence of Moshe as "eved HaShem" (the servant of God) was spirituality. Yitro erred in his assessment that Moshe could be a "man of the people", as required of ordinary leaders. Even in his death, Moshe is alone and his place of burial is unknown to this day.

There never was, nor will ever be again, a leader like Moshe Rabbeinu – a stranger in his lifetime but so much a part of everyone of us today.

This circumstance was distinctly that of Moshe. However, in all subsequent generations, the closeness of the local rabbi to his congregants was crucial in determining their degree of observance and Torah erudition.

We, in Eretz Yisrael today, are living in a time when, as a whole, there exists a great degree of aloofness between the rabbinic leadership and the nation, as a whole. Each rosh yeshiva is ensconced in his private world. The Charaydee representatives in the Knesset are very active in funding for their constituents, but go no further than that.

There are many problems we face due to our laxity in keeping the Torah. Despite the fact that between 70-80% of the population regard themselves as either "dati" (religious) or "mesorati" (traditional), there are still too many who are far from total Torah observance.

The rabbis must come to the people. The majority of the nation is looking for Jewish moral leadership.

This leadership will be composed of rabbis who regard the *medina* not as a mere political entity, but as a stage in the final *geula*.

The time has come to establish a political party whose platform is unashamedly for a Torah state, and which will implement the "Ten Political Commandments":

1- Redefine democracy based on Torah principles, and make Torah the law of the land and will be coercive, as all law is.

2- Implement massive construction in Yehuda, Shomron and the Golan with the aim of settling a million Jews there within ten years. And never forget the Biblical boundaries of God's holy land and our obligation to liberate those lands.

3- A massive effort to bring millions of olim, including the research of the many millions of people who are descendants of the Anusim (Maronos) and the Ten Lost Tribes, for the purpose of uniting them with the Jewish nation

4- All able-bodied men will undergo basic military training, regardless of how many pages of Talmud they know. And all soldiers will be taught the rudiments of Judaism. All female soldiers will be released from military service.

5- Shabbat will be the law of the land. There will be no desecration of the Shabbat in public areas, including non-Jews. Kashrut will be strictly observed as will the limits of modesty – tzniut.

6- Amend the Law of Return that only halachic Jews will be able to attain citizenship and serve in the Knesset (after completing a minimum requirement of Torah studies and general knowledge).

7- An ultimatum will be given to the residents of Gaza, that within 24 hours all weapons are to be deposited in the city stadium. After this time if anything which can be construed as a weapon is found, the entire city will be immediately destroyed.

8- The Gazans are to immediately clear out the area called "Gush Katif" in preparation for its rebuilding, bet kneset by bet kneset, home by home, on an area three times larger than previously.

9- Architectural plans for the Bet Ha'Mikdash to be ready for implementation at the appropriate time.

10- Rav Lau will be dispatched to make a statement to the General Assembly of the UN; that Medinat Yisrael is the realization of God's promise to return His nation to His land, and Israel will establish a United Religions in Yericho, to unite all the gentiles in the world around the seven Noachide laws.

The last election clearly indicates that the people are frustrated and ready to return to Torah values, with many ready to lead an halachic life.

The question is where are the rabbis who are prepared to lead?

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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