

Ephraim's Escape: Parshat Bo

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

In the Covenant Between the Halves, Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years. Yet the Torah records that "it was at the end of four hundred and thirty years..." Further, according to Mesoratic calculations, the enslavement lasted 210 years. How can we reconcile this?

Rashi explains that the time from the prophecy to the exodus totaled 430 years. However, the actual onset of the prophecy would begin only with the birth of Yitzchak, through whom the prophecy would be actualized, 30 years later. That term was 400 years. The duration of the sojourn in Egypt was only 210 years. Due to the confusion in interpreting the prophecy, part of the Tribe of Ephraim believed the 400 years should be calculated from the prophecy itself and they escaped 30 years before the end of the enslavement. The Philistines killed many of them, and their bones lay in the valley. These are the bones Yechezkel famously prophesied grew flesh and were resurrected.

Nevertheless, the simple reading of the text puts *Bnei Yisroel* in Egypt for 400 years. Why did Hashem redeem them after only 210 years? Our commentators explain that the servitude was so intense that the work normally accomplished in 400 years was completed in 210 years. *Pirkei d'Reb Eliezer* explains that the servitude was mandated

only for the days, but the Egyptians made them also work at nights, thereby almost halving the preordained years of servitude.

The Egyptian exile's purpose was meant to sensitize *Bnei Yisroel* to the stranger among them. By doubling the pain and the workload, Hashem telescoped the time needed so that He could redeem us after only 210 years, writes *Rabbi Mordechai Ezrachi*.

The *Shvilei Pinchas* based on the Shelah Hakodosh, notes that in fact the countdown of 400 years began with the revelation to Avraham Avinu. Thirty years were added as a punishment for the thirty years Yosef suffered after his brothers sold him to Egypt. The lesson *Bnei Yisroel* was meant to learn was that we are one united people who do not abandon each other.

Ephraim felt that since they were not involved in the sale of Yosef, they needn't wait the extra 30 years in servitude. But Yosef himself, the father of Ephraim, was partially responsible for the enmity of *Mechirat Yosef*, having reported negatively on his brothers. Further, the *Bnei Ephraim* were separating themselves from their brothers' suffering just as the shevatim had not listened to Yosef's cries when they threw him in the pit. Perhaps most egregiously, they did not take the bones of Yosef as he had commanded. Nor did they wait for the code

words the Redeemer would use, "I have surely remembered." By abandoning their enslaved brothers, the *Bnei Ephraim* showed they hadn't learned to feel that all *Bnei Yisroel* were equal, and they must show kindness to each other. And when they didn't take Yosef's bones with them, they merited not only death, but also the scattering of their bones.

The *Shvilei Pinchas* suggests a positive take that *Bnei Ephraim* were following in the footsteps of Yosef and Yehudah and modeling the path of *Moshiach ben Yosef*. Just as Yosef preceded *Bnei Yisroel* into *Mitzrayim*, and sent *Yehudah Goshnah*, so will *Moshiach ben Yosef* go ahead of *Moshiach ben Yehudah/David*, both equaling 358. However, even though their motives were altruistic, they didn't have permission to separate from the rest of the nation.

Hashem wants humility and teshuvah. But the sense of superiority that the sons of Leah had shown to the sons of the maidservants was now evident in *Bnei Ephraim* and it doomed them. The Gemara says that *Moshiach* will come in a generation that is either completely righteous or guilty. Rabbi Bik explains that each Jew must look toward himself. When all *Bnei Yisroel* accept each other as righteous and see themselves as the imperfect ones, we will bring *Moshiach*, may it be speedily, in our day.

Return of Stolen Property

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Property that was stolen must be returned. If the property is no longer available, the thief must return its monetary value. For example, if someone stole flour and made it into bread, he's obligated to return the monetary value of the flour. This applies only when there's an irreversible change. But if a person stole silver and then made it into a candelabra, he would be obligated to melt the silver down again and return it. Where the owner has given up hope of getting his stolen property back (*yiush*), the thief must still return it. He may not keep the object and give back its monetary value. However, where the item was already turned into something else, the thief is not obligated

to reverse it and may return its monetary value. If a thief stole a beam and built a large building on top of it, he wouldn't be required to destroy the building to return the beam and could return its monetary value. This expresses *chazal's* mercy on a thief and their willingness to make it easier for him to do *teshuvah*. The special *takana* only applies to moveable property and not to land. If someone mistakenly built a building on someone's land, it must be dismantled, even if there will be a severe loss. If a reasonably small area of land was stolen, the building could remain however the thief would have to pay the owner the value of the land. In this case, since one Jew is suffering a small loss and the other one will

suffer a larger loss, *chazal* allowed the *takana* to be applied.

Where the thief sold the stolen property and the owner had already given up hope of getting his property back, then according to the Rosh, the thief could return the monetary value. But if it was sold and only afterwards did the owner give up hope, then according to the Rosh the property itself must be returned. According to the Rambam, it doesn't make a difference when the owner gave up hope. Where there was *yiush* and a change of ownership, only the monetary value must be returned. The Rema rules that if the law of the

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land is that all stolen property must be returned, it must be given back.

If a person buys stolen property unknowingly and its proven afterwards that it was stolen, the current owner is not obligated to return it to the original owner, unless he is reimbursed what he paid for it. This only applies where the buyer didn't know it was stolen property. If someone receives stolen property as a gift, then if the owner hasn't given up hope and can prove his ownership, he would be able to demand his property back. Other poskim argue that even for a gift, the *takana* applies.

If the thief died and his heirs inherit the stolen property, they are obligated to return it. Where there was a price rise from the time the property was stolen, not due to any efforts by the thief, then according to the Shulchan Aruch, any price rise before *yiush* belongs to the owner of the property. Where there's a price rise after *yiush*, the profit belongs to the thief and doesn't have to be returned to the owner. The Rema disagrees and doesn't make a differentiation regarding *yiush*. All profits resulting from a price rise belong to the thief. *Chazal* enacted this halacha as a *takanat hashavim* to help the thief repent and return the item. The *Shach* argues that regarding gold, where there was no actual physical

change to the item, it is returned as is and the extra price rise belongs to the owner.

Where the thief invested in the stolen property so that its value rose, then according to all *poskim* the extra value belongs to the thief and if he returns it the owner, he has to pay him for it. Where a person stole land and invested in it, he would get the lower of the increase in value or his expenses paid back. Where the price of the property fell, the thief would be obligated to return the value of the property at the time of the theft. Where he returns the actual property and there was wear and tear, the thief must pay for the decrease in value.

Tehillim 131

The Humility of the Heroic Simple Jew

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

In Tehillim 131, it seems as if David Hamelech is making a confessional. According to Rashi, David is speaking about himself - My heart was never haughty, it never tried to be a ruler. I didn't have my eyes on high, looking for things way above me. I didn't build great palaces or seek to leave great monuments. Nor did I think I was above the law. I never really wanted this. I wanted to be a shepherd, but You Hashem put me in this place.

When the Aron was returned to *Yerushalayim* and *David Hamelech* went out and danced with the people, Michal reproved him that he was acting like a commoner. He answered, I'd rather be admired by the maids and common people. I don't see myself as an aristocrat but as one of the people. Seforno says that whoever is writing this is using David as an example. But in fact, it describes the Jew in exile who is struggling to understand, not only why he's suffering, but why evildoers seem to be flourishing, why life seems to not make any sense. In spite of all the things he sees around him, he remains faithful and says-You

know Hashem, my heart was never haughty. I never coveted luxuries or an easy life and I didn't try to philosophize when the redemption would come. I lived my life as an *ish tam yoshev ohalim*. I did my duties and kept the *mitzvot* and didn't ask questions.

Ibn Ezra and *Redak* interpret this verse differently. When it says- My heart was not haughty, it means, neither in secret nor on the outside. I followed all the *mitzvot* and didn't try to understand everything, recognizing that not everything is fathomable.

"I swear that I calmed and quieted my soul..." *Shiviti* comes from the root word *shava* which means equilibrium. If I didn't place my soul within a certain measure of peace, neither high nor low. It's also related to the word *l'hashvat* which means to compare. I didn't try to compare myself to anyone. *V'domati* comes from the root word *domem*- I silenced my soul. Rav Hirsh explains- I calmed my soul and compared it so that I would understand that whatever I had is equal to everyone else. I am

not less nor am I better. Moreover, I've accepted my reality. What I cannot change, I have no choice but to accept.

"Like a suckling placed upon its mother..." *Redak* says a *gamul* is a baby that has been weaned and can walk on his own but still remains dependent on his mother. When he sits on his mother's lap it arouses yearning, a memory of comfort, of being so close yet so far. Rav Hirsh explains that even if the baby is no longer nursing, his mother can still hold him close and easily comfort him. Rashi disagrees and says *gamul* means a nursing baby. "*Yisrael* hope to *Hashem* from now until eternity." According to *Redak*, we are yearning for something we once had. According to *Rashi*, we can ask *Hashem* for closeness and get it; it's there for us from now until forever. The *Navi Yeshaya* speaks of the ultimate *geulah* in which *Hashem* is described as a mother. "I lay myself down and I call upon you, come and suckle and you can be comforted in me."