

Ecstatic Emunah: Parshat Beshalach

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

Parshat Beshalach relates the narrative of *Kriat Yam Suf* and the subsequent burst of song praising Hashem for His salvation. At that point, "The nation revered Hashem, and had faith in Hashem..." Yet we find that when Moshe approached *Bnei Yisroel* about their impending salvation, even before the onset of the plagues, the *Torah* says, "The people had faith." What was the difference between the earlier silent belief and this one that inspired *Bnei Yisroel* to sing?

On the simplest level, *Bnei Yisroel's* faith was strengthened with the miracle of their salvation, but now it was also a faith of a higher level. As Rabbi Schwadron says, citing the Rambam, the intellect knows there is a Creator, but the heart refuses to accept this. When the heart and the intellect are in conflict, we rationalize, and the desire of the heart usually wins. To the extent that we can subdue our desire, that's how strong our faith will be in the Supreme Being.

It is for this reason, says The Heart of *Emunah*, that teaching our children about God cannot be limited to imparting knowledge; but must involve experiences that generate love of the Creator that will penetrate the heart and cut through intellectual blockages.

This is the difference between the two believing's. While *Bnei Yisroel* earlier understood intellectually that they were to be redeemed, that realization remained in the mind, never entering their hearts. In fact, as their burdens grew heavier, it became even harder to relate to God and His message. As *Tallelei Chaim* observes, at the splitting of the

Sea, *Bnei Yisroel* experienced not only their own salvation, but also physically saw their oppressors drowning. *Bnei Yisroel* had been taken out of Egypt; now Egypt was taken out of them. Not only were they physically free, but they were also psychologically free. To become true servants of Hashem, we must free ourselves from the entrapments of the world.

The greatest work is letting go of the sense of entitlement and arrogance that we are actually in control. My heart, my desires become stronger than my intellect, and I become a slave to my addictions. We have to be ready to see God's light in every aspect of our lives. That *Bnei Yisroel* continued to fear the Egyptians as they pursued them, showed a lack of faith; *Bnei Yisroel* was ascribing greater power to the Egyptians than to God. That's why the angels recommended that Hashem not save them. When they removed that fear and recognized Hashem as the only Power, their faith became strong enough to proclaim, "This is my God and I will glorify Him."

One may "know" a truth with either the heart or the mind, yet total knowledge is only achieved when the two are fused and knowledge becomes internalized, writes R Weinberg. Our challenge is to live our faith with every fiber of our being, to praise Hashem with every breath we take.

Darchei Mussar brings an analogy from the Alter of Kelm. Picture a man who has never tasted bread. A philosopher approaches him extolling the wonder of bread while a second philosopher proves the opposite. Once the man eats bread and feels satisfied, no

arguments will influence him. It is the physical experience that cements the belief.

Taking it one step further, a disciple once tells his Rebbe that he doesn't believe and then asks the Rebbe if he believes. The Rebbe points to the table and asks his student if he believes that is a table. The disciple answers, "I don't have to believe; I know it's a table." "Just so," respond the Rebbe, "I don't have to 'believe' in God; I know God."

This was the level of palpable faith *Bnei Yisroel* reached at the *Yam Suf*, that they could point, "THIS is my God..." Then they reached an even higher, emotional level, connecting their entire existence with all their senses to this God, writes Rabbi Sternbach. Interestingly, When Hashem led *Bnei Yisroel* through a long, circuitous route out of Egypt, *Bnei Yisroel* didn't complain. Only when they saw the Egyptians in actual pursuit, did their emotions kick in, so that they cried out, notes Rabbi S. Grosbard. First comes *emunah*/faith. *Yirah*/awe, fear, comes with *reiyah*/seeing, the involvement of the senses, and that arouses emotion.

The women had already internalized this emotional, experiential faith. They accompanied themselves with tambourines they had taken out of Egypt, already knowing within the essence of their being that they would need to sing. And in fact, the splitting of *Yam Suf* was all about love, writes the *Netivot Shalom*. In this kind of relationship, the *yirah*/awe inspires *yirah*/fear that somehow we will disappoint our Father Who loves us so.

Return of Stolen Property Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

When a thief steals an item, he's liable for it, even for circumstances that weren't in his control, and he has to return either the property or its monetary value. If the thief returns the item secretly, it would only be considered returned if the owner doesn't know the property was stolen. Where he knows it was stolen, the thief must let him know that he

returned it. If he left it outside and a passerby damages it, the thief is liable. He's not relieved of his responsibility to return the stolen property until the owner picks it up. If a thief stole money from someone and the owner knows of the theft, even if the thief returns the money secretly, it's considered returned, because usually people keep checking their pockets, and we presume people know how

much money is on them.

If a thief doesn't know from whom he stole; for example he takes an umbrella without permission, then if there are a lot of people who claim they are the owner, the halacha says that each of the claimants has to swear on a Sefer Torah that it was their item. And if

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they don't, they cannot claim anything. If Reuven tells Shimon that he owes him money and Shimon denies it with an oath, then he is not obligated to pay Reuven. The *pasuk* says about such a case- "Distance yourself from these evil people." If one is telling the truth, why are both considered evil? The *poskim* explain that when Reuven sees that Shimon is prepared to swear and Reuven knows it isn't the truth, he should be prepared to give up on the money and not let Shimon swear falsely. In our times, people don't swear and *beit din* will not allow it. The accepted practice is that *beit din* will make a compromise. The claimant gives up 1/3 of his claim and only gets 2/3 of the value of the property. This is not only done when *beit din* thinks people are lying, but also where the thief knows he stole and the victims are all claiming they were stolen from. In a case where the thief knows he stole and doesn't know from whom and the victims don't know they were stolen from, no

claim is lodged. Nevertheless, the thief has a moral obligation to pay anyone who he might have possibly stolen from.

If a shopkeeper cheated people with weights and it isn't possible to find the true owners, the *poskim* instituted a special *takana*. The money can be donated to a public cause where there's a good chance the person he stole from will benefit from it and it's considered as if he returned the stolen property. It doesn't mean giving to charity but to a place where everyone will benefit. However, if the thief knows who the owner is, he must *l'chatchila* return the stolen property to him or his heirs. If a son stole from his father, he must return what he has stolen. If the father died, he must return it to the heirs and *poskim* disagree whether the thief gets a portion. Where the thief is the only heir, he should still remove the property from his possession. If a thief stole from a convert who died and left no heirs, the

property becomes ownerless.

Someone who knowingly buys from a thief is considered as if he is helping him sin. If the thief knows that no one will buy, he wouldn't steal. The *poskim* rule that one shouldn't benefit from stolen property and it doesn't make a difference if it is before or after *yiush*. If someone stole wood and fashioned a table from it, one would be allowed to benefit from it as it was transformed. The law of *dina d'malchusei dina* (the law of the land is tantamount to *halacha*) applies if it is between you and the government, not between two Jews. A Jew is obligated to go to *beit din*, who might not necessarily judge like secular law. Taxes are an issue between the person and the government and *dina d'malchusa* would apply. Where the tax collector is a thief and is taking more than he should, the *Sma* rules that you can declare less so that he only takes what he should be taking.

Tehilim 123 The Handmaiden Near her Mistress

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

There are 15 *Shir Hamaalot* in *Tehilim*. The word *maalot* is very much like the word *madreget*- steps going up. *Metzudat David* quoting *Chazal* tell us that the 15 steps corresponded to the 15 steps that went from the *Ezrat Yisrael* to the *Ezrat Nashim*. The *Leviim* would stop at each step and recite or sing a different *Shir Hamaalot*. *Rabbeinu Sadya Gaon* notes that these psalms begin with *Shir Hamaalot* indicating that they were meant be sung in an ever rising musical crescendo. Rav Hirsh suggests that it indicates a song of ascent, going from step to step on a spiritual high and rising to become what we were meant to be.

"Behold, as the eyes of slaves to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a handmaid to the hand of her mistress." Why is the word hand used twice? *Seforno* explains that the

same hand that gives you the handout is the hand that punishes. It also implies a sense of hanging in the balance, not knowing one's status, which Rav Hirsh says, is the apt description of the Jew in exile. *Seforno* explains that *Shir Hamaalot* indicates the step-by-step process from exile to redemption.

Rav Hirsh notes that the master represents the many nations that at one point or another have dominion over us. The mistress is *Knesset Yisrael*. We are either like a slave among masters, like a downtrodden people under the thumb of rulers and despots in the diaspora or like a mistress whose handmaiden (the other nations) are dependent on her. Our purpose in *galut* is not only punitive, but to be a light onto the nations and spread the word of Hashem.

"Our soul is fully sated with the ridicule of the

complacent, the contempt to the valley of doves." The dove is the symbol of *Am Yisrael*. Rashi explains, the Jew who is despised and treated with contempt remains proud to be a dove among the eagles. The word *gai* can mean a valley or chasm of the doves and it is a symbol of *Yerushalayim*. In fact, the valley right outside the walls of *Yerushalayim* is called *gei hinom*- the highs and lows, both are symbols of the ancient city.

Mizmor 124 is a continuation of this theme. "Blessed is Hashem who didn't allow us to become prey to their teeth... our souls are like a bird that escaped from the trap." Doves mate for life and they always come home. *Am Yisrael* and Hashem are compared to a dove. Wherever a Jew ends up, he ultimately comes home.