

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

ומשה נח בן חנה  
אסתר פייגא בת רבקה יוטל  
להפקד בוש"ק

פרשה זה נתנדבה על ידי:  
הרה"ח ר' נחמן יחזקאל שרגא פריינד הי"ו  
הרה"ח ר' יעקב יוחנן פילאפף הי"ו  
להצלחה בכל ענינים

Beshalach 5770

**And it came to pass, when Pharaoh let the people go, that G-d did not lead them through the land of the Philistines, because it was near, for G-d said: Lest the people change their minds when they see war, and go back to Egypt. (Shemos 13:17)**

Which war is the Torah referring to? The Mechilta says, “This is the war of the children of Ephraim...as it says, ‘The children of Ephraim, armed and shooting their bows, turned back on the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of G-d, and in His Torah they refused to walk’ (Tehillim 78:9). They transgressed the End and the Oath... Hashem did not want the Bnei Yisroel to see the Bnei Ephraim’s bones strewn about in Philistia, and go back to Egypt.” According to Shemos Rabbah (20:11), some 300,000 of the Bnei Ephraim were killed, and their bones were still lying in heaps.

The Yalkut Shimoni 227 brings the Mechilta, and the Magen Avraham in his commentary Zayis Raanan explains what Oath the children of Ephraim transgressed: “For the Holy One, blessed is He, adjured them not to leave Egypt before the End, as it is written, ‘I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem...’ (Shir Hashirim 2:7). This was said regarding the final redemption, but it applied equally to the first redemption [from Egypt].”

Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Hakohein of Polnoye (disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, d. 1784) asks: It is true that the children of Ephraim left before the foretold end of exile. But the entire Jewish people, who left 30 years later, also left before the end. The exile was supposed to last 400 years, and they left after only 210 years. Of course, they got around this problem by counting the 400 years from the birth of Yitzchok, but then we could make a similar argument in defense of the children of Ephraim, who counted the 400 years from the Covenant Between the Parts.

Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Hakohein strengthens his question with a quote from the Mechilta on Parshas Bo, also brought in the Yalkut there, 208: Pharaoh arose in the middle of the night and said, “Get up, get out from among my people!” Moshe said, “Are we thieves? We will leave in the morning!” Pharaoh said, “All of Egypt will soon be dead!” Moshe said, “If you want the plague to stop, say ‘You are now in your own possession. You are now the slaves of the Holy One, blessed is He.’” Pharaoh began to shout, “Up till now you were my slaves, but now you are free; you are in your own possession.”

Why did Moshe need to squeeze this statement out of Pharaoh? (And this question can be asked in general on the whole story of the Exodus: why did Hashem need Pharaoh to let the Jews go? Couldn't He have taken them out of Egypt against Pharaoh's will?) The Zayis Raanan answers: "Because it was still before the end of the allotted time for the exile, since 400 years had not yet passed, they were not permitted to go out until Pharaoh gave them permission. Although Pharaoh did not give permission out of his own free will, and the usual law is that if one forces another person to give him a gift, the gift is not valid, here we can apply the words of the Gemara (Bava Basra 48a) that when it comes to a mitzvah, such as a bringing a sacrifice or granting a divorce when one is required to do so, agreement under duress is valid; here also, it is a mitzvah to obey Hashem and therefore Pharaoh's obedience under duress was valid."

We see here clearly that the Exodus took place before the time was up. So why, asks Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Hakohein, did it not constitute a transgression of the Oath? It is true that the Children of Ephraim left against Pharaoh's will, whereas the Israelites had Pharaoh's permission. But evidently, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Hakohein held that Pharaoh's granting permission would absolutely no difference as far as the Oath. The Oath of exile is a contract between the Jewish people and Hashem, and the permission of an earthly power has no effect on it. He answers: We must say that Hashem Himself annulled the oath because He desired to redeem them early. (Tzofnas Paneach, p. 199)

The parsha begins, "It came to pass (ויהי) when Pharaoh let the people go..." The word ויהי contains the word וי – a cry of woe. The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 20:8) comments: "Who cried woe? Moshe cried woe. This can be compared to one who was chosen to lead the king's daughter on her wedding day, and he saw in the stars that he would indeed lead her out of her father's house, but he would not lead her to her wedding canopy in the groom's house. He began to cry. People said to him: Why are you crying? He said to them: I am crying because I have worked hard taking her out and I will not come with her to the wedding canopy. So too, Moshe said: I am crying because I worked hard taking Israel out of Egypt and I will not enter the Holy Land with them."

What does this Midrash mean? Why did Moshe suddenly foresee at this point that he would not be the one to lead the people into Eretz Yisroel? According to the Zayis Raanan, we can explain as follows: From the fact that בשלח פרעה, that it had been necessary for Pharaoh to willingly let the people go, Moshe understood that the full term of exile had not yet elapsed, and therefore the redemption from Egypt would not be a permanent redemption. The Jews would eventually have to spend more time in exile. The verse continues כי קרוב הוא "because it was near" – i.e. this redemption was near and early, before its proper time. Moshe knew that if he led the people into Eretz Yisroel and built the Beis Hamikdash, there would never be another exile. Since there had to be another exile, he concluded he would not enter Eretz Yisroel; that is why he cried.

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 20:11) makes an additional point about the children of Ephraim. Despite the fact that the children of Ephraim sinned and transgressed the Oath, that Hashem never took consolation after their deaths. He took their blood and, so to speak, dipped His garments in it. This is the meaning of Yishaya 63:2: "Why is your garment red?" The Holy One, blessed is He said: I will not be comforted until I take revenge for the death of the children of Ephraim. This is alluded to in the words of Shemos 13:17: "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh let out the people, that G-d did not lead them through the land of the Philistines..." The words ולא נהם ("and He did not lead them") can also be translated "He did not take consolation."

Similarly, in the Song at the Sea the Jews sang, "Trembling has seized the dwellers of Philistia" (Shemos 15:14). Rashi says, "Because they killed the children of Ephraim." They knew that Hashem would punish them for what they had done.



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