

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Beshalach	8 Feb. 2020	13 Shevat 5780	Exod. 13:17-17:16	Jdg. 4:4-5:31	Matt. 14:22-33

It is written (13:19), “And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him.” As explained before, only Moshe remembered to take “the bones of Yosef” as the Yisraelites left Mitzrayim instead of loading silver and gold onto his donkeys, and for this he was rewarded later as Hashem personally attended to Moshe’s remains.¹ The Midrash² states that because Moshe forfeited wealth to attend to Yosef’s bones, Hashem compensated him with the shavings of precious stone from carving the second Tablets (Exod. Ch. 34)

It is written (13:21), “And YHWH went before them by day in a column of cloud to lead the ways, and by night in a column of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.” Or HaChaim explains that since the Yisraelites were traveling during the hot season, Hashem shielded them with a pillar of cloud so the sun would not harm them. It was for this reason that the pillar of cloud served Yisrael only by day but not by night when there is no sun as the verse states “by day in a column of cloud.”

However, there was additional cloud that went in front of them which performed two tasks. First, it was to straighten out the uneven ground on the road by leveling the raised areas and filling in the sunken areas (Num. 10:34). Second, it showed them the way that they were to travel (Deut. 1:33).

It is written (14:2), “Speak to the children of Yisrael, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth...” The purpose of heading back to Pi Hahiroth which is the city Pisom in Mitzrayim, was to fool Pharaoh into thinking that the Yisraelites had become lost in the wilderness. This would encourage him to pursue them, that would lead to his destruction. Why did Hashem need to act with trickery, Heaven forbid, in this matter? Since He could have done whatever He wished to manipulate Pharaoh’s heart and compel him to pursue them.

When we think about the trait of the Creator, He desires above all to preserve Yisrael’s righteousness. If Hashem had sent Pharaoh in pursuit of Yisrael, the people would have become frightened, and might have rebelled. Thus, Hashem acted with wisdom to ensure that they would not stumble into sin and anger the Creator which they did later (vv. 11-12). Hashem did not need to fool Pharaoh. He commanded them to turn back so they would be forewarned about what He was planning, so they would not become frightened and blaspheme against Hashem.

However, the contriteness of us, made no logical sense to return to a place that just escaped from Mitzrayim. If we thought a little more, clearly, this was done with another purposes in mind. Hashem expected the Yisraelites to deduce that the point was to lure Pharaoh to his destruction. Knowing this, they would cease to be frightened, and might even welcome the pursuit.

It is written (14:5), “And it was reported to the sovereign of Mitzrayim that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people. And they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Yisrael go from serving us?” There are several problems with this verse. First, “the people fled,” which implies that they left without permission, but in fact left with Pharaoh’s permission. Second, what does it mean “the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people”? It implies that they were happy about letting the Yisraelites go, but now they regretted doing so? Third, what does it mean

¹ Sotah 9b

² Shemos Rabbah 41:2

by saying, “Why have we done this, that we have let Yisrael go from serving us?” Why would a person reproach himself for having done something that he was forced to do?

A key to answer these questions lie in “the people” which in Hebrew is **הָעָם** (*ha-'am*). In earlier verse, it was explained that “the people” was known as “mixed multitude” (*eirev rav*) who left Mitzrayim with the Yisraelites that Pharaoh sent. It was Pharaoh’s original intent to use “the people” to bring back the Yisraelites back to Mitzrayim as he thought that the Yisraelites would return after three days in the wilderness. Therefore, he sent the *eirev rav* with them make sure that they would return. But, now it is *eirev rav* that refuse to return to Mitzrayim and “fled,” not Yisrael, from Pharaoh and gone their way, refusing to return to Mitzrayim.

As for “change of heart,” means they had a “change of heart” of sending the *eirev rav*, not Yisrael. Pharaoh sent the *eirev rav* by his own choice, and not regretted having done so since they had fled. Initially, the act of sending *eirev rav* was done willingly. Thus, it makes perfect sense to say “change of heart.”

Lastly, while the verse seems to apply to the Yisraelites, the deeper meaning shows, by following two answers above, that Pharaoh regretted by sending *eirev rav*, which they did by choice and said “Why have we done this?” The sages said³ that Pharaoh wrote the Yisraelites a bill of emancipation that they were no longer slaves. Thus, although Mitzrim might have thought that the Yisraelites would return to Mitzrayim and won’t be exploited as slaves, and because of this, the labor required by the king would again fall upon “the people,” that is *eirev rav*. Once Pharaoh realized that he would be burdened with labor, he berated himself for not having realized that the *eirev rav* would try to escape as freeing the Yisraelites would cause *eirev rav* to flee.

It is written (14:31), “And Yisrael saw the great work which YHWH did upon the Mitzrim, and the people feared YHWH; and they believed in YHWH, and in His servant Moshe.” After they saw Pharaoh’s army destroyed and the deliverance Hashem gave them through Moses, they fully placed their faith in Hashem, and in His servant Moshe.

“They feared YHWH,” means that they understood that He punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous. “They believed in YHWH,” meaning they had faith in His saving power. It also says that they believed “in His servant Moshe,” meaning that they now had faith in Moshe as the agent sent by Hashem.

To believe in Hashem is one thing, but to believe in Moshe requires believing in Hashem as He revealed Himself through the Torah of Moshe. Many people believe in Hashem, but not so many believe the Torah. Not many people believe in Hashem as He is revealed through Moshe. This is why the sages said, “One who believes in Moshe believes in Hashem.”

Yeshua made a similar statement to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in Elohim, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). Meaning, just as they placed their faith in Hashem, they need also to place their faith in Him as Hashem’s agent of salvation. Just as Yisrael believed in Moshe, the disciples needed to believe in Yeshua.

³ Yalkut Shimoni, Shemos 208