

**ASTROLOGY EXPOSED:
THE POSITION OF THE
ASTROLOGERS LED EGYPT
TO THIS FINAL "POSITION".**

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Weekly Parsha

Beshalach

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"Hashem told Moshe that his prayers were not needed. This is a reflection on Moshe's unique nature. He participated in a perpetual relationship with

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DON'T FOLLOW THE LEADER

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

"And the astrologers could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the astrologers and all of Egypt." (Exodus 9:11)

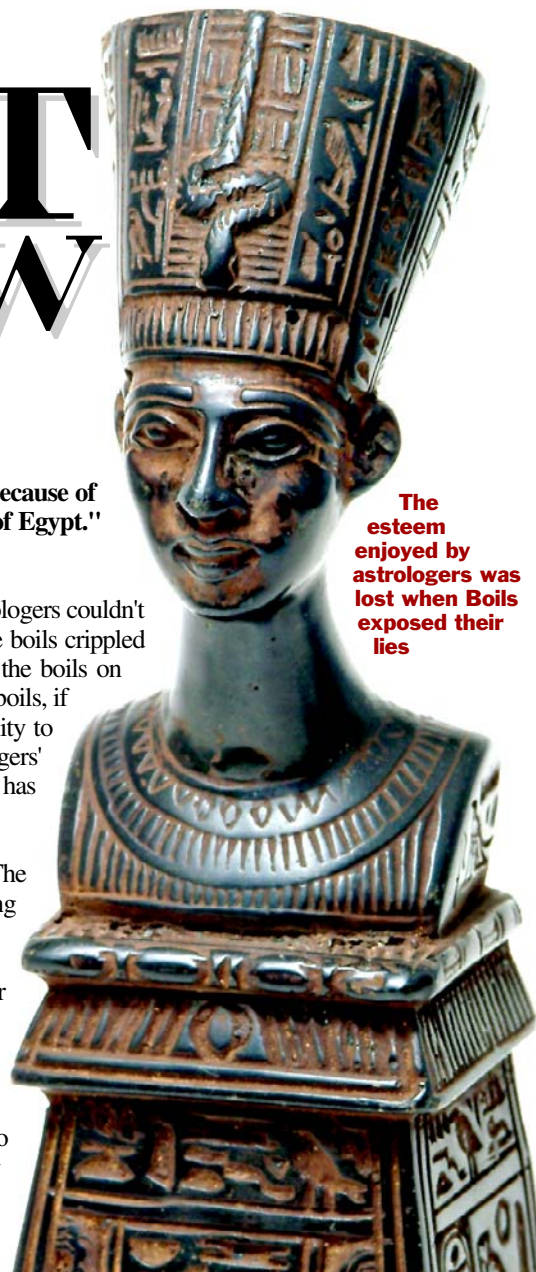
What is problematic with that statement? It says the astrologers couldn't stand before Moses. Now I wonder: if the issue is that the boils crippled them – which itself sounds odd – of what relevance are the boils on "other" Egyptians? Why mention that "all Egyptians" had boils, if the verse's message concerns only the "astrologers" inability to stand? Furthermore, of what significance is the astrologers' inability to stand before Moses? Let them sit! But "stand" has another meaning...

I believe we are being taught many lessons here. The primary lesson is not concerning the posture of lying mystics...this adds no great wisdom to God's Torah. The real lesson must address the basic theme of the Ten Plagues, as the plague of boils was delivered together with the other nine.

Standing also means to "present" one's self...to appear before others. The astrologers attempted to reproduce the plagues, only to expose their inability to do so. This is significant, since God records their feeble attempts. So significant is this point, that it appears from the very few words concerning boils, that the objective of this plague

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Man vs. Ideas



The esteem enjoyed by astrologers was lost when Boils exposed their lies

(Beshalach cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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Hashem. He did not need to seek some higher spiritual plane in order to participate in this miracle.[1] And Moshe extended his hand over the sea. And Hashem drove back the waters with a powerful east wind the entire night. And it made the seabed into dry land. And the waters were divided.” (Shemot 14:27)

Bnai Yisrael flee from Egypt. The people arrive at the shores of the Reed Sea. The sea stands before the nation. The Egyptians are directly behind them. Bnai Yisrael is trapped. The Creator performs one of His greatest miracles. He splits the Reed Sea. Bnai Yisrael enter the sea. They travel across the sea over its dry seabed. The Egyptians enter the sea in pursuit of their escaped slaves. The sea closes upon the Egyptians and they are drowned.

The Torah provides some interesting details regarding this miracle. Generally, we imagine that Moshe extended his hand over the water and suddenly the waters separated and dry land was revealed. Our passage provides a somewhat different description of these events.

According

to our pasuk, the sea did not immediately split in response to Moshe's command. Moshe extended his hand over the water and a mighty wind arose. The wind blew the entire night. What was the function of this wind? Why did Hashem require this wind? Why did He not immediately split the waters.

We must begin our discussion of these questions with the comments of Nachmanides. He explains that the wind was part of an elaborate deception. The Almighty had brought the Egyptians to the Reed Sea. Here, they were to be destroyed. However, what was to induce the Egyptians to enter the sea? After all, if the Almighty had split the sea in order to save Bnai Yisrael, it was not likely He would allow the Egyptians to follow them. What would the point be of a miracle that failed to save Bnai Yisrael? Certainly, the Egyptians would realize that Hashem would not prolong His miracle for their benefit!

Nachmanides explains that the wind was part of a ruse. The Egyptians believed that the wind had split the sea. Bnai Yisrael were escaping

into the sea as the result of remarkable good fortune. They just happened to reach the sea at the onset of a tremendous storm. The storm cleaved open the waters. The Egyptians felt that they too could take advantage of this opportunity. The wind would continue to drive the waters apart. They could enter the sea and overtake Bnai Yisrael. The deception worked. The Egyptians were lured into the trap!

Of course, the Egyptians were mistaken in their interpretations of the phenomenon. They were not witnessing an unusual meteorological occurrence. They were seeing a miracle. They entered the sea and the Almighty brought the waters crashing down upon them.[2]

Rashbam adopts a completely opposite approach to explaining this wind. He contends that the wind actually split the water. The Creator performed this miracle through the vehicle of natural forces. Rashbam adds some detail. He explains that the wind had two

functions. First, it caused the water to back up. Once the water backed up, the seafloor was revealed. Second, it dried the seafloor and created a



passable path across the seabed.[3] Ibn Ezra adds that the wind continued to blow as Bnai Yisrael crossed the sea. Only the power of the wind prevented the water from rushing in on Bnai Yisrael.[4]

In short, we are faced with two approaches for explaining this wind. Nachmanides maintains that the wind was not a factor in splitting the sea. The wind was merely part of a ruse designed to lure the Egyptians into the sea. Rashbam and others disagree. They insist that the miracle of the sea splitting was brought about through this wind. The wind split the sea, dried the seabed, and held the waters apart for Bnai Yisrael.

This raises an interesting question. We can understand the position of Nachmanides. The Almighty is the Creator of the universe. He formed the seas and established the boundaries between the oceans and the continents. Obviously, He can alter these boundaries. If He wishes to create dry land in the midst of the sea, He can. He is omnipotent. He does not need any wind to assist Him.

The position of Rashbam is more difficult to

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understand. It seems as if the Rashbam is limiting the Almighty. He seems to deny his omnipotence. Why does the Hashem need a wind to do His bidding?

The answer to this question is very important. It provides an insight into the Torah's understanding of the natural world. The answer also indicates the Torah's attitude toward scientific knowledge.

We all realize that we are required to observe the Torah. Observant Jews might dicker over the specifics of observance. However, we would agree that the Almighty revealed the Torah with the intention that we observe its commandments. The reason for observance is obvious. The commandments are an expression of the will of Hashem. As His servants, we must submit to His will.

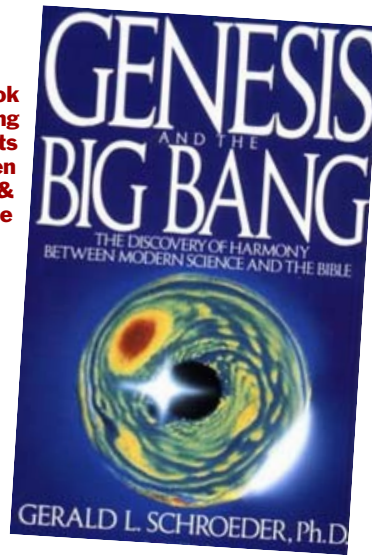
However, it must be noted that the mitzvot of the Torah are not the only laws that Hashem created. In addition to the mitzvot, He created the laws of nature. These are the laws that govern the movement of the galaxies and the behavior of the smallest subatomic particle. Just as the Torah's mitzvot are an expression of His will, so too the laws of nature are a manifestation of the Divine. It is reasonable for the Creator to expect that these natural laws should be observed.

Now, we can understand Rashbam's position. Rashbam does not deny the Almighty's omnipotence. He is not positing that the Creator needs a wind to split the sea. He is asserting that a perfect Creator would not disregard His own laws. He would not capriciously suspend or violate the laws He had established.

The Rashbam is also providing us with an important perspective on scientific knowledge. In order to understand this perspective, let us ask a question. What is religion's attitude towards science? The answer is that science and religion have often contended with one another. Many religions have resisted science. What is the reason for this conflict?

There are many factors that have contributed to this contentious relationship. We will consider two of these. First, religion is often steeped in the mystical. For some, religion provides an explanation for the inexplicable. Religion begins where science ends. In other words, religion provides answers to the questions science cannot. In such a relationship, the advancement of science must reduce the significance of religion. As science expands our knowledge of the universe, the realm of religion is reduced. Mysteries that were once explained through some mystical truth are interpreted by a set of scientific principles. The

One book addressing conflicts between religion & science



realm of the mystical is reduced, and the danger arises that religion will become trivial.

There is a second issue. In some religions, doctrine may seem to contradict science. Religious doctrine is regarded as a revealed or, at least, inspired truth. It is not subject to challenge. Therefore, any conflict with science must be eliminated.

When these conflicts arise, these religions must respond. There are a number of responses. At the extreme, these perceived threats could lead to outright suppression of science. More commonly, these challenges lead to the disparagement of science and a marginalizing of its importance.

It is noteworthy that many of our greatest Torah Sages possessed extensive knowledge of science. Apparently, these Sages did not perceive any conflict between their religious outlook and scientific knowledge. The attitude of these Sages suggests that science and Torah can peacefully coexist. What is the basis for this coexistence?

Rashbam's explanation of our pasuk provides a response. It is clear that Rashbam regarded the laws of the universe as a manifestation of the Creator's will. They are an expression of His infinite wisdom. Even the Almighty will not flippantly disregard these laws. This implies that these laws deserve our respect.

This attitude eliminates the conflict between science and religion. The discoveries of science are not viewed as a threat to religion. On the contrary, these insights are an inspiration to the Torah scholar. They provide awesome testimony to the infinite wisdom of the Creator. The expansion of scientific knowledge does not diminish the significance of the Torah. This newfound knowledge gives us a greater appre-

ciation of the Almighty. These insights are a source of inspiration in our service to Hashem through the performance of His mitzvot.

It is important to note that we are not suggesting that the study of science is as important as the study of Torah. This is a completely different issue. Even within a single science, there is a proper order for its study. For example, in mathematics the study of algebra precedes that of calculus. In addition, some sciences are more easily understood and more suitable for general study. And of course, practical considerations can suggest that one science be given priority over another. All of these issues and others must be discussed in order to determine the relative merit of Torah study as compared to the study of science. Nonetheless, it is clear from the comments of Rashbam that scientific knowledge deserves our respect.

“Through the window she looks forth and cries. The mother of Sisera peers through the lattice. “Why is his chariot delayed in coming? Why are the wheels of his chariot late?” (Shoftim 5:28 - Haftarat Beshalach)

Devorah the prophetess describes the pain of Sisera's mother. She awaits the return of her son from battle with Bnai Yisrael. He is late. She senses he will not come home. Her ministers comfort her. They assure her that Sisera has defeated the Jews. He is delayed collecting spoils. But Sisera will never return. The army of Bnai Yisrael, inspired by Devorah, has defeated Sisera. Yael has killed him.

Why does Devorah describe the anguish of the mother of Sisera? Should we feel pity for the mother of this wicked man? Does Sisera's mother deserve our sympathy?

Sisera's army was not merely defeated. These enemies of Bnai Yisrael were devastated. Sisera's mother and her nation awaited the outcome of the battle. But no news came. There were no refugees from the war. No one escaped to bring news of the outcome.

The tears of Sisera's mother represent the totality of the defeat of Bnai Yisrael's enemies. Devorah, for this reason, included this image in her praise to Hashem. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 103.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 14:21.

[3] Rabbaynu Shemuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer Shemot 14:21.

[4] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 14:21.

was precisely to disarm their claims to superiority through astrology and magic. Torah verses are selective in their messages, not merely recounting every single historical occurrence. Our verse means to teach that boils purposefully targeted the astrologers.

"And the astrologers could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the astrologers and all of Egypt." This refers not to posture, but to their ability to sustain their dignity...they could not "appear" before Moses who outperformed them. They were ashamed. But why were they any more ashamed during the plague of boils? The answer is the second part of the verse: "...for the boils were on the astrologers and all of Egypt". Here, God hints to us...

Let the Words Talk

What might we derive from this latter half of the verse? These words appear to make a comparison. Both, the astrologers and the Egyptians possessed boils. We must now ask this: what about this comparison prevented the astrologers from appearing before Moses? Why was their "equal" status with all other Egyptians an embarrassment to them? We see the answer quite readily! It was the very equality of their condition to that of all other Egyptians that disarmed their claims to greatness. They were no better! They could not defend themselves from boils. What type of powerful astrologer allows painful blisters to afflict them over days? It is the liar who allows this to happen, since in fact, he has no more defense from boils than any other Egyptian.

It was this diminution of status that was their embarrassment, and why they could not "appear" before Moses.

How God Teaches Us

As a wise Rabbi said, as I have quoted numerous times, the Torah's words are carefully selected. Our verse is just one example of hundreds of thousands. With His meticulously crafted texts, God provides us with just enough information to discern a problem, and that hint being the very opening to the answer. "Its answer is by its side" is a Rabbinic statement describing this very phenomenon.

Knowledge is endless, but written words are limited. How then can God direct all generations to continuously uncover new truths? If knowledge was limited to the written word, when we concluded any text, we would have nothing more to gain. This is only true of human works. But Divinely inspired works are different. The Torah's and Rabbis' "apparent" inconsistencies, exaggerations and contradictions force the mind into the world of induction and deduction, and other



forms of reasoning. Wisdom has a design. It has layers and curtains...where truths are only unveiled with the method of questioning.

We must appreciate the "Chocmas haKasuv", the "wisdom of the written words", and search for God's intended teaching by listening to the words with a great deal of sensitivity and awe. "For God gives wisdom, from His lips [come] knowledge and understanding". (Proverbs 2:6) This verse teaches two matters: 1) to be cognizant that God is the "source" of all wisdom, and 2) that His "lips" offer an additional benefit. "Lips" refer to the written word - that which has been articulated. These articulations or Pasukim can reveal great insights if we spend the necessary time considering the problems in each verse.

God's messages embedded in the Ten Plagues are numerous. Clearly, the act of unveiling the astrologers' lies through boils was precise. For only with a plague that attacks the "body" would all others derive the lesson that one person is equal to another. This explains our previous question why boils caused the astrologers' shame, as opposed to any other plague. For it was boils alone that made a comparison between all Egyptians, exposing the astrologers as no different. The very fact that God chose to include this comparison as the exclusive effect of this plague, indicates the very purpose of this plague.

But why was the demotion of astrologers so essential that a separate plague was required to address it?

Leaders: Don't Deify Them

From their inability to reproduce the Plague of Lice and from their silence regarding all subsequent plagues, we realize God's primary lesson is, as He said, "There is none like Me in all the land". God wished to educate the Egyptians away from idolatry and astrology. And He did so by showing His exclusive reign over the universe and all of its laws.

We must then ask what more was achieved when demoting the astrologers' status via boils. We already know that astrology is false, since from the Plague of Lice and onwards, the astrolo-

gers could not reproduce any miracle brought by Moses. What more was added in boils?

The verse says the astrologers could not stand before Moses. Again, we see a comparison: the astrologers are contrasted against Moses. I believe this lesson is to force us to consider what we must value, and what we must disregard.

Although in a much higher social status than Moses, the astrologers realized their lowly state. It matters none that they were in positions of power, and that Moses and his people were slaves.

Roles must play no role.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians – as well as all other human beings – attribute more credence to a person in a higher status, simply because he or she possesses that status. Even the empowered person dupes himself into accepting his "greater" abilities. The lesson here is to ignore reputations, and view one's actions or ideas alone. The Torah says "do not fear man", and "do not respect the rich or the poor". In all cases, human emotions of favoritism will lead to corruption, not God's justice.

Moses was unaffected by the boils that reached the astrologers. This directed the Egyptians to the realization that although in high office, a person can be a fake. It is clear from all civilizations, that man enjoys subjugation to a director – people want a leader. But we must be so careful and accept as a leader, only he who is guided by reason and Torah truths. We must be sensitive to this human frailty of insecurity and the desire for a father figure. We are to abandon that need, and mature into intelligent people. In no way should we respect a leader's words or actions alone: they must pass the litmus test of reason and Torah. The leader too must not fall prey to seeking popularity. That must not be his objective. He must lead only with the desire to educate others towards a life of reason, Torah, and ultimately a love of God...not a love of himself. Rabbi Reuven Mann once mentioned the Talmudic portion that says "Any leader whose subjects like him, is doing a poor job". This means, that a true leader admonishes his followers and risks losing his post. He cares more for truth, than for money or fame.

Summary

We conclude that the Torah teaches in a very subtle style. It takes time to master this style, but it can afford us great insights. We learn that every plague offered deeper lessons than meet the eye. And we learn that we are not to follow the leader, but we must use reason to determine truths. Moses, although of a slave population, spoke truth, while the astrologers attested to their lies by their inability to stand before him.

Don't follow the leader. Follow the truth. ■

Weekly Parsha



the Red Sea

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Parshas Bishalach commences with the Jews' journey immediately following their Egyptian exodus, (Exod. 13:17) "God did not guide them via the path of the land of the Philistines, as it was near, lest the people repent when they see war and return to Egypt." As Maimonides teaches in his great work, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Book III. Chap. 32), God's initial plan was not to lead the Jews towards the Red Sea, but towards the Philistines. A separate consideration demanded this route be avoided. But I ask, why would the Jews return to the very place they were now fleeing? Nonetheless, we are taught to prevent the Jews' return to Egypt, God circumvented their route.

We then read that God clearly orchestrated events to make the Jews appear as easy prey for Pharaoh, enticing him to recapture his fled slaves. God told Moses to encamp by the sea. What was the purpose? (Exod. 4:3) "And Pharaoh will say about the Children of Israel that they are confused in the land, the desert has closed around them." The purpose of traveling not by way of the Philistines, but towards the Red Sea now appears to have a different objective: to lure Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, ultimately to be drowned. But it does not

appear this was the plan from the outset. Had it been, God would not have taught of His consideration regarding the Philistines. That nation's war would not have entered into the equation.

The ultimate purpose in the death of Pharaoh and his army is stated in Exodus 14:4, "And I will strengthen Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them, and I will gain honor through Pharaoh and his entire army, and Egypt will know that I am God..." God sought to gain honor by leading the Jews to the Red Sea, luring in Pharaoh, and creating the miraculous partition of waters. We are confused; did God lead the Jews to the Red Sea to circumvent the Philistines, or to lure Egypt to their death and gain honor? Furthermore, why does God seek to "gain honor" for Himself?

Upon their arrival at the Red Sea, the Jews soon see Pharaoh and his army in pursuit. Moses prays to God, and God responds, "Why do you cry unto me?" This is a surprising response. A basic principle in Judaism is the beseeching of God's help when in need, and the Jews most certainly were. So why does God seem to oppose such a principle at this specific juncture?

Another question apropos of this section is what the goal was of the Ten Plagues, in contrast to the parting of the Red Sea? If the Red Sea parting was merely to save the Jews and kill Pharaoh and his army, God could have easily spared this miracle and wiped out the Egyptians during one of the Ten Plagues. God prefers fewer miracles; this is why there is 'nature'. Our question suggests that the destruction of Pharaoh and his army had a different objective, other than the simple destruction of the Egyptians. What was that objective?

There is also an interesting Rashi, which states a metaphor taken from *Medrash Tanchumah*. Rashi cites that when the Jews "lifted their eyes and saw the Egyptian army traveling after them, they saw the 'officer of Egypt' traveling from heaven to strengthen Egypt." (Exod. 14:10) What is the meaning of this metaphor?

Looking deeper into the actual miracle of the Red Sea splitting (Exodus 14:28-29) we read, "And the waters returned and they covered the chariots and the horsemen and the entire army of Pharaoh coming after him in the sea, and there was not left of them even one. And the Children of Israel traveled on dry land in the midst of the sea and the water was to them walls on their right and on their left." Ibn Ezra states that Pharaoh and his army were being drowned, simultaneously as the Jews crossed through on dry land. This is derived from the Torah first stating that Pharaoh was drowned, followed by a statement that the Jews traveled on dry land. Although one section of the sea turbulently tossed and submerged the Egyptian army, "...and God churned Egypt in the midst of the sea", the adjoining section contained waters parted into two calm walls on either side of the Jews, bearing the dry seabed. Ibn Ezra calls this a "wonder inside a wonder".

We must ask why God deemed it essential to combine salvation and destruction in one fell swoop. God could have exited the Jews completely, prior to allowing the Egyptians entrance into the sea. What is learned from God's planned simultaneity of Jewish salvation with Egyptian destruction?

Now we must ask an unavoidable and basic question which Moses pondered: why were the Jews subjected to Egyptian bondage? To recap, Moses once saved the life of a Jew, beaten by

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an Egyptian. Moses carefully investigated the scene, he saw no one present, and killed the Egyptian taskmaster and buried him in the sand. The next day, Moses sought to settle an argument between the infamous, rebellious duo, Dathan and Aviram. They responded to Moses, "will you kill us as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses feared the matter was known. But how was this matter made public? The Torah described the scene just before Moses killed the taskmaster (Exod. 2:12), "And he turned this way and that way, and there was no man (present)..." So if there was clearly no one present, who informed on Moses? A Rabbi once taught there is only one possible answer; the Jew who Moses saved was there, he turned in Moses. We are astounded that one, whose life was saved, would inform on his savior. What causes such unappreciative behavior? The Torah's literal words describing Moses' astonishment are "(Moses said) therefore the matter is known", referring to the disclosure of Moses' murder of the Egyptian. Rashi quotes a Medrash on the words "the matter was known", paraphrasing Moses' own thoughts, (Rashi on Exod. 2:14) "The matter has been made known to me on which I used to ponder; 'What is the sin of the Jews from all the seventy nations that they should be subjugated to back-breaking labor? But now I see they are fit for this.'"

Moses now understood why the Jews were deserving of Egyptian bondage. This ungrateful Jew's backstabbing act answered Moses' question. But this ungrateful nature is not its own trait, but a result of another trait: The act of informing on Moses displays an inability to question Egyptian authority; "Even if my brother Jew saves me, Egypt is still the authority who I must respect". It wasn't aggression against Moses, but an unconditional allegiance to Egypt. The Jews' minds were emotionally crippled by their decades as slaves. The famous Patty Hearst case teaches us of the Stockholm Syndrome, where victims sympathize with their captors. Israel too sympathized with Egypt. Such identification would cause one to inform on his own friend, even on his own savior Moses. Moses witnessed this corrupt character trait firsthand and realized that Israel justly received the Egyptian bondage as a response. But how does the punishment fit the crime? (You may ask that this is reverse reasoning, as this ungrateful nature came subsequent to bondage, not before. But I answer that Moses too knew this, yet Moses saw something in this ungrateful act which he knew predated Egyptian bondage, answering Moses' question why

Israel deserved this punishment.) So what was Moses' understanding of the justice behind Israel's bondage? Seeing that the Jew informed on him even after saving his life, Moses said, "the matter is known", meaning, I understand why the Jews deserve bondage.

In approaching an answer, I feel our very first question highlights the central issue - the cause for the splitting of the Red Sea. The two reasons given for God redirecting the Jews' journey are not mutually exclusive. The latter, drowning of Pharaoh and God's gaining honor is in fact a response to the former: the Jews' security in Egypt fostered by their extended stay. I suggest the following answer: God did in fact wish to take the Jews directly to Sinai. This is His response to Moses' question as to the merit of the Jews' salvation - "they are to serve Me on this mountain". Meaning, their merit of this Exodus is their future Torah acceptance at Sinai and their subsequent adherence. But due to a peripheral concern of the Philistines, a new route was required. And not just a route on the ground, but also a route that also addressed the underlying inclination towards an Egyptian return. God initially wanted only to bring Israel to Sinai. But now He sought to address the Jews' draw towards Egypt. God wanted to drown Pharaoh and his army to respond to the Jews' current mentality: the Jews preferred Egyptian bondage to warring with the Philistines to maintain freedom. This was unacceptable to God. God enacted the miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea, for many objectives, but primarily to remove the security Egypt afforded these former slaves. Destruction of the Egyptian empire was a necessary step in Israel's development.

This answers why God responded to Moses' prayer when the Egyptian army drew near, "Why do you cry unto Me?" In other words, God was telling Moses that prayer is inappropriate right now. Why? Because the very act of traveling to the Red Sea was in fact the solution for what Moses prayed - the destruction of Egypt. God was informing Moses that what you pray for is already in the works, and therefore your prayer is unnecessary.

Egypt's destruction was not an end in itself. It had a greater goal - to replace Egypt's authoritative role with the True Authority - God. This dual 'motive' is displayed in a specific formulation of the Red Sea miracle. Moses tells the Jews "as you see Egypt today, you will never again see them. God will war for you, and you

will be silent." There are two ideas here. The first is the termination of the Egyptians. The Jews had to be rid of the Egyptian 'crutch'. Seeing them dead on the seashore emancipated them psychologically: there were no more Egyptian taskmasters to direct their lives. The phenomena of a slave can be created by nature, or nurture. In Egypt, the Jews were nurtured into a slave mentality, a dependency on a dominating authority. This mind set actually affords some psychological comfort, despite physical pain. When one prefers slavery, he in other words prefers not to make decisions, and relies heavily on a leader. Perhaps for this reason, the very first laws given (in Parshas Mishpatim) address slavery. They outline this institution as a simple, monetary reality. One has no money, so he pays his debt via servitude. But in no way is human respect compromised when he is a slave. The master must give his slave his only pillow and suffer a loss of comfort himself to accommodate another human. The slave remains equal to the master in all areas and deserves respect as any other man. Slavery is simply an institution under the heading of monetary laws. This teaches the Jews that the slavery they experienced is not a way of life, but a temporarily state. The fact that God does not prefer slavery for man is His statement that "you are servants to Me and not to man." The Torah law of boring a slave's ear physically brands him of his corruption in not "listening" to God's command on Sinai, "servants to Me are you, and not servants to servants (man)". (Rashi on Exod. 21:6)

The second idea derived from "God will war for you, and you will be silent", is that God alone delivers salvation. Your "silence" means God alone will bring salvation. There cannot be another cause sharing God's role as the "Go'ale Yisrael" - the Redeemer of the Jews is God alone. Why is this necessary? This underlines the primary concept of the miracle of the sea. The goal was to instill in the Children of Israel an appreciation for God, and an acceptance of His authority. This authority would remain compromised, had Egypt survived. Respecting God's exclusive authority is also a prerequisite for the Jews' impending acceptance of the Torah on Sinai. For this reason, many of God's commands are "remembrances of the Exodus" for the goal of engendering appreciation for the Creator's kindness. When man's relationship with God is based on appreciation for Him - as guided by the commands - man is thereby reminded that God desires the good for him. As man acts to fulfill his Torah obligations, he will

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The circumvention from Philistine to the Red Sea was to avoid an inevitable return to Egypt, and to also correct that very impulse by the Jews witnessing God's triumph over Egypt, simultaneously instilling tremendous appreciation for God.

not view them as inexplicable burdens, but he will seek to understand God's intended perfection in each command. Man will then arrive at his true purpose, and find the most fulfillment in his life. Man will be guided in all areas by Divine, rational and pleasing laws which conform perfectly to man's mind. All conflicts will be removed.

The males and females of the Children of Israel verbalized identical, prophetic responses to God's triumph, "God is greatly exalted, the horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea". God's objective of not only eliminating Egypt's authority, but gaining honor for Himself was achieved. This identical song of praise (Az Yashir) of both the male and female Jews displayed the newly instilled appreciation for their victorious God. The destruction of the Egyptians and the acceptance of God were the two primary issues that were addressed successfully. This explains why the Jewish salvation and the Egyptian destruction happened simultaneously. They formed one goal. Had God desired simple destruction of the Egyptians as its own ends, He could have done so in Egypt. But it was only in response to the Jew's overestimation of Egypt, that God destroyed them in the Red Sea, together with the Jewish salvation. The death of the Egyptians was a means for the acceptance of God, not obscured by any other master. Subsequent to the parting of the sea, the Jews in fact attested to God's success in His plan, as it is said, "and they believed in God and in Moses His servant."

Additionally, God's desire that the Jews glorify Him, is not "for" God. Nothing man can do may benefit God, nor does God share man's nature of "need", as in needing to gain honor for Himself. All that God does is to benefit man. This is most clearly witnessed in the great holiday of Passover, where the Creator of the universe educates man (both Jew and Egyptian) with the hopes of their conformity with reality, with monotheism. Only after the Egyptians displayed disobedience and ignored the fundamentals taught through the Ten Plagues, did God have no recourse but to destroy them. God then continued His acts of mercy on man, and delivered the Jews to freedom so they could accept the Torah.

How do we explain the Medrash regarding the "officer of Egypt"? It now fits precisely with our theory: The Jews felt unconditionally

bound to Egypt as inferiors. At the shores, they did not actually see any "officer of Egypt traveling from heaven." This metaphor means they looked at Egypt as invincible, as if some heavenly force defended Egypt over which they could not prevail. This is the meaning of the Medrash. It is a metaphor for Israel's vanquished state of mind.

In summary, the plagues of Egypt served to spread fame of God, "And you will speak of My name throughout the land." The splitting of the Red Sea had a different purpose, "And I will gain honor through Pharaoh and his entire army." The honor God acquired is for the good of Israel, not just Egypt. The Jews will view God, as One who is incomparable, the true Creator, and the One who take notice of man and mages his affairs. (Ramban, Exod. 13:16) The Red Sea miracle was executed as a response to the crippled mentality of the Jews, as God stated, "...lest they repent when they see war and return to Egypt." The circumvention from Philistine to the Red Sea was to avoid an inevitable return to Egypt, and to also correct that very impulse by the Jews witnessing God's triumph over Egypt, simultaneously instilling tremendous appreciation for God. In one act, the corruption in Israel was removed and a new faith in God was born, "and they believed in God and in Moses His servant." This simultaneous termination of Egypt and salvation for themselves was reiterated twice in the Az Yashir song, "God is greatly exalted, the horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea". This response displayed how effected the Jews were by God's miraculous wonders and salvation.

In all honesty, the Jews do revert to "fond" recollections of Egypt not too long after these events, and in the Book of Numbers. However, we cannot judge any acts of God's as failures, if His subjects subsequently err. God's method - and perfection - is to offer man the best solution at a given time. This is a tremendous kindness of God. Man has free will and can revert back to his primitive state even after God steps in to assist him. This human reversion in no way diminishes from God's perfect actions. Our appreciation of His wisdom and His precision in His divine actions remains firm. All of God's actions displaying His perfection and honor are not for Him, as He does not need a mortal's praises. He does it for us, so we may learn new truths and perfect ourselves in our one chance here on Earth. ■

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Kidney Needed

(Reprinted from an email list)

I am writing to appeal to all of you to help me with the following two items. My dad is in desperate need of a kidney transplant and I need everyone's help. One please keep Ephraim be Esther in your tfillot and if you say thillim please keep him in mind. The next item is harder and I am asking your help to post in shul or community email message boards. He needs a kidney donor with type A or O blood for a transplant. If you know of anyone who wants to donate a kidney or have any information at all that could help please contact me asap. The recipient will pay all expenses and lost wages associated with the donation. Please distribute this information as word of mouth is the best networking. I can be reached 24 hours a day by email or at any of the numbers below. Tizku lmitsvos.

-Marc Hoschander

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