

Parshas BeShalach

Parshas BeShalach opens with *Bnei Yisroel* traveling out of Egypt, approaching the Red Sea on their journey to *Eretz Yisroel*. While they travel, *Pharaoh* has a change of heart about their freedom and pursues them with a large army. As the Egyptian army appears on the horizon, *Bnei Yisroel* panic and cry out to *Hashem*. *Moshe Rabeinu* also cries out to *Hashem* and He responds to *Moshe* by saying, “Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the Jews that they should travel toward the sea.” This rhetorical question is difficult to understand. *Moshe* had ample reason to cry out. The Jewish people were in peril for their lives and their very existence as a people. Shouldn’t their leader cry out to *Hashem*?

The *Midrashim* have multiple explanations of this *possuk* and we will focus on the third explanation that the *Midrash Rabbah* gives (*Parshasa* 21:4). The *Midrash* says that *Hashem* was explaining to *Moshe* that since the Jews had pleaded their case before *Hashem*, their salvation was already assured. *Hashem*, therefore, told *Moshe* that it was unnecessary for him to plead with *Hashem* as well.

The *Midrash* goes on to speak about the great impact of communal *tefila*. *Hashem* crowns himself with the prayers of His people when they daven to Him communally. This underscores the importance and the value of *tefila b’tzibur*, *davening* with a *minyán*. *Hashem* discerns each individual’s pleas and needs even when they are mingled with a group *tefilah*, since the merit of *tefila b’tzibur* is a quality that makes it more potent. Moreover, *tefila* is a great equalizer. *Hashem* considers the sincere *tefila* of a simple person to be equal to the *tefila* of *Moshe Rabeinu*. That is why *Moshe*’s prayer was considered superfluous at the shores of the Red Sea.

Sincere *tefila* is the logical extension of *emuna*, faith. When we turn to *Hashem* in a time of need, we do it because we believe that He alone can help us. Even though the redemption from Egypt was predestined, it still needed the catalyst of *tefilah* to make it unfold. We say this in the *Haggada*, “And we cried out to *Hashem*, to the G-D of our ancestors, and He heard our voices.” The Exodus had been promised to our ancestor *Avrohom*. However, it still would not have happened until we demonstrated that we needed it badly and that we knew it would come from *Hashem*. At the *Yam Suf*, Red Sea, it was a new danger that was threatening us and we needed to pray again. Once this was done, our miraculous salvation was assured.

As we exit the *parshiyos* that describe *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Exodus, this idea is the biggest takeaway. *Hashem* had us experience the helplessness we felt and the dramatic events of the redemption so that we should learn to always rely on Him even when our situation is not so dire. We need to realize that everything comes from Him and He wants our acknowledgement of that through *tefila*.