



ארגון רבני צהר



ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית
המעריך לשירותים רוחניים בתפוצות

Parashat Beshalach

Easy Come Easy Go

-Rabbi Yair Binstock-

Almost anyone would admit that real and material processes, such as those that are robust and long-lasting, take time, thought, patience and wisdom to develop and implement. Nevertheless, we all continuously hear the other side, that which argues that maybe this time, just around the next corner, lays the “big one,” the one that will really, truly knock it out of the park and completely change the picture in one fell swoop.

This power struggle did not begin overnight. On the banks of the Red Sea, immediately following the ten plagues and the subsequent great exodus from Egypt, during which a small and determined nation of slaves broke through the iron curtain and was freed from the bondage of the great Egyptian empire, the Jewish people begin to think that ‘hear, we made it, and not only did we make it, but we made it big!’ The exaltation and extreme joy felt by the people who had just experienced redemption from slavery and were about to enter a new day cannot accurately be put into words. In the words of Rabbi Kook: “the exodus from Egypt will forever remain the spring of all human kind” (Megeid Yerachim). However, this is where things got complicated. This was the moment where instinct demanded that the immediate success be capitalized upon and that the Jewish people must take that one more step and enter the Land of Israel, fight the necessary battles, emerge victorious, build the Temple in Jerusalem and immediately experience the coming of Moshiach. This would appear to have been the logical progression of things. However, this thought process contained a severe mistake, one that had the potential to cause an extreme and immediate collapse, like a house of cards that brings down everything with it save for the air around it.

It is extremely difficult to explain the path that Hashem chose for the Jewish people on their journey from Egypt. Everything could have been so much more simple and swift if only they had travelled directly through Philistine territory. In the event of any problem, mishap or difficulty, Hashem could have performed more miracles, plagues or whatever other intervention was necessary, thus providing an immediate solution.

The Torah itself answers the question of why Hashem did not choose the coastal path as the path of choice, but rather chose to lead the Jews into the Sinai Desert: “Lest the people reconsider when they see war and return to Egypt” (Shemot 16:17). In other words, exposing the Jews at that point in time to war and everything it entails, at such an early stage in their national development, could have instilled trepidation in the recently freed slaves and caused them to choose to return to Egypt. However, the beginning of the verse provides what is perhaps an even more significant clue: “for it was near.” It was simply too close by. Too fast. Too easy. A process which, if not done properly, would end in failure.

The people of Israel, before reaching the Promised Land, needed to undergo a process. Not one that could be experienced in forty seconds, but one that required forty years. They needed to feel the desert, thirst, hardship, battles, etc. in order to properly internalize the scope of their role and the magnitude of their mission. Without the effort and the hardship the people would not have recognized the enormity of the gift they had just received from Hashem: the ability to overcome challenges of historical proportion, the power of a moral nation that arrived in order to win and to bequeath a great truth to the entire world.

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