



דרכים בפרשה

מטות- מסעי

ויסעו בני ישראל מרעמסס ויחנו בסכת

And the Bnai Yisroel traveled from Rameses and encamped in Succos. (33:5)

The *minhag* is to read the pesukim that relate the travels of Bnai Yisroel with a special tune that is different from the normal *trop*, thus demonstrating that we are singing a song. Another notable time that we change the trop in this same manner is for the great song of **אז יסיר**.

Rav Avigdor Miller z"l wonders why we are singing over here. The reason for singing the **אז יסיר** is easily understood, as we had just witnessed the great miracle of *Kriyas Yam Suf*, the splitting of the sea. Furthermore, we were just delivered from the hands of our oppressors, the Egyptians. On the other hand, in our parsha, we do not find anything more occurring to prompt the song other than, **ויסעו - ויחנו**, and they traveled from one place, and they encamped in another place, and so on and so forth. There is nothing unusual about their travels, and yet, the *minhag* is to sing.

Usually, we tend to thank HaShem when something happens. If danger has been avoided or perhaps when one comes home from the hospital, we say "thank you HaShem", perhaps even singing it with that catchy *niggun*. When *parnassah* is tough and that check comes in on the first of the month, again, "thank you HaShem". But what about the fact that we can walk and talk, and have a roof over our heads (even if it leaks a bit, it's still a roof, and it is still over our heads)? Doesn't that deserve singing that song of thank you? Didn't we all at one point hear that the word for a wealthy person, **עשיר**, is also the *roshei taivos* (acronym) of **עיניים שיניים ידיים רגליים**?

The message of our parsha is that, yes, we were just travelling, but you know what? No one died and no one got hurt. The things that we take for granted are also an amazing *chessed* of HaShem. Things are going regular? For that we also must say thank you, as the saying goes, "No news is good news". Shouldn't we thank HaShem for the good news of "no news"?

We say each day in *shemonah esrai*: **מודים אנחנו על נסידך** - We thankfully acknowledge You... **לך** - for Your miracles which are with us daily, **ועל נפלאותך וטובותיך שבכל עת**, and for Your continual wonders and beneficences at every moment. What are these *נפלאות* - wonders that we are referring to? We got up this morning? That is *נפלאותך*! We can talk? That is *נפלאותך*! We have health? We can go to the bathroom? *Mamish* *נפלאותך* (the bracha of Asher yatzer finishes with *לעשות*!)!

Each and every one of our regular functions are the wonders of HaShem which we must forever thank Him for. Therefore, to bring home this point of singing HaShem's praises even for the normal everyday life, we sing in this week's parsha.

Similarly, we find in Parshas Vayeitzei regarding the naming of Yehuda by his mother Leah, **ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר הפעם אודה את ד' על**, *She conceived again, and bore a son and said, "This time let me praise Hashem"; therefore she called his name Yehuda (Bereishis, 29:35).*

Commenting on this *possuk*, the Gemara in Mesechta Brochos (7b) relates that from the very beginning of creation, Leah was the first one to ever say thank you to HaShem.



However, we find very clearly that many before Leah had already said thank you. The *Midrash* tells us that Adam Harishon composed *מזמור שיר טוב להודות*, proclaiming 'לה'. We find that Noach and the Avos brought sacrifices as well. Even more compelling is that Leah waited until her fourth son to say "thank you". If Leah is indeed such a symbol of *hakaras hatov*, should she not have already called her first son Yehuda?

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (118b) relates, "One who says *hallel hagadol* on a daily basis deserves to be excommunicated." But why should someone be punished for constantly thanking HaShem? The Ksav Sofer explains that *hallel* is recognition of HaShem's great miracles. But what of the miracles of nature? What happened to thanking HaShem for each and every breath that we take? There is something terribly wrong with only being able to show gratitude for the big things. It is as if one is denying that the small things come from HaShem as well.

Adam, Noach, and the Avos were constantly showered with big miracles. Their recognition of HaShem's kindness was not a novelty. If Leah would have named her first son Yehuda, this would also not be a *chiddush*. After all, children did not come easily to the Avos. By saying thank you after child number four, she was the very first to thank HaShem for something which appeared to be even on a smaller scale.

I recently heard a *mashul* which brings out this point even more: There was a person that needed to inspect something on the roof of his building. After concluding his job, he made his way back to the exit, only to realize that he did not leave the latch open by the door, and he was now stuck on the roof. Walking calmly to the edge of the roof, at first he called out to all the

passing people on the street, trying to get their attention, but to no avail. Next, he reached into his pocket and found a dollar. With perfect aim, he threw it down, watching it land right in front of someone's feet. The person on the bottom bent down to pick it up with a smile on his lips, thinking how lucky he was, and of course continued on his way without a glance to the top of the building. Next, the man on the roof tried a ten dollar bill, and then a twenty. With no luck, he finally tried a hundred dollar bill assuming that this will for sure cause people to stop and think for a second about where the money was coming from, but to no avail. With no choice left, he found a rock to throw, and of course, this did in fact gain people's attention, with a commotion ensuing, causing everyone to wonder where the rock came from.

Every day, HaShem throws us those twenty, fifty, and hundred dollar bills, asking us to merely glance upward. If we are reading this, it means that we were *zoche* to be from those that were *not* hit by a rock during these last couple of years. Do we really need new variants and more catastrophes *chas v'shalom* to get us to yell from the depths of our heart, "THANK YOU HASHEM FOR SPARING ME AND MY FAMILY"? Why must we wait for the "rocks" to reach us before we look upwards? Why must we wait until there is an illness or some other bad news *rachmana litzlan*? Nothing in this world is random, not the good and not the bad. HaShem desires our attention, and is constantly doing things to gain it. Let us learn the lesson of this week's *shira*, constantly singing HaShem's praises so that there will never again be a need for any more "rock throwing".

מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos,



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