

## PARASHAT “BE’SHALACH”- 2013, 5773

After having agreed to let our people go out of Mitzrayim, and indeed they were on their way, Par’oh again has a change of heart “VA-YECHAZEIK HASHEM ET LEV PAR’OH” (14:8) [HaShem hardens the heart of Par’oh] and he pursues our people with a mighty and well equipped army. Bnei Yisrael feel helpless and terrified when they see the enemy approaching them, and they begin to cry and pray “VA-YITZ’AKU BNEI YISRAEL EL HASHEM” [14:10]. They say to Moshe: “We would rather have worked as slaves in Mitzrayim than to die here in the wilderness” [14:12]. Moshe does the only thing he could- and that is – to pray.

Usually, that works and HaShem listens, but here we find a surprising response. HaShem says “MA TITZ’AK EILAY?” [14:15] [Why do you now pray to me? Speak to the people and order them to march forth –into the sea] [15:15]. What actually transpired here? Ordinarily, Moshe knew the right thing to do, but here there was some kind of misunderstanding.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, Moshe is being given a lesson in semantics; There is a difference between the two expressions of redemption-both relating to being saved- “YE’SHU’AH” and “HATZALAH”. HATZALAH requires no action on the part of the person being saved. YESHUAH, on the other hand, is the process whereby the recipient of being saved participates in helping himself.

While yet being slaves in Mitzrayim the Torah describes how the Jewish people, experienced the process of HATZALAH. The words HaShem used were always VE’HI’TZALTI ET’CHEM [6:6], G-d and G-d alone, says the Ba’al HaGaddah, took us out of Mitzrayim. Just as a newborn is protected by parents, so was the newly born Jewish nation protected by G-d.

But just as a child who grows up is expected to mature, the Jewish people having left Mitzrayim were expected to assume responsibilities. While Moshe thought that process of HATZALAH would be extended into the future, HaShem does not concur- the sea will be split, but you will be saved only if you do your share and try to cross on your own [Rashi 14:15]. As the Jews stand by the sea, the Torah suddenly changes the expression of HATZALAH to that of YESHUAH, as it states VA’YOSHA HA’SHEM [14:30].

The lesson for us is quite clear. Yes, in times of danger to our community we must fast, daven fervently and study Torah diligently, but we must also do everything in our power to help ourselves. We must have a strong army in Israel, and speak up for our rights in the Diaspora. And when that YESHUAH salvation does come to us, we must realize that it was the HATZALAH of HaShem that brought about our salvation. That is the meaning of the pasuk [14:14] “HA’SHEM YILACHEM LACHEM VE’ATEM TACHARISHUN” [HaShem shall make war for you, and you shall remain silent], meaning, do what you can on your own, and when you are victorious, remember- It was HaShem who fought the battle for you. Rabbi Aharon and Libby Ziegler