

Agudas Yisroel Anshei Kielce

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פרשת מטות/מסעי



This week's parsha discusses the sojourns of Klal Yisrael through the desert. It focuses on the many stops that the Jewish nation made, hinting at the ensuing incidents that occurred with each stop.

But one pasuk seems to divert attention from the Yiddin's travels and chooses to focus on a scene occurring miles away. The Torah tells us that "*the Jews journeyed from Ramses on the fifteenth day of the first month and went forth with a Yad Ramah to the eyes of all Egyptians*" (Bamidbar 33:3). The Torah then inserts a seemingly irrelevant detail, one that seems to be insignificant if not anticlimactic in proportion to the great tragedy that befell the Egyptians and the miraculous Exodus of the Yiddin. It reverts to a scene that takes place in Mitzrayim as the Jews were a few days into their escape from Egypt. "*The Egyptians were burying their dead and in their gods Hashem meted justice*" (ibid.v.4).

Isn't that a mere detail in history? Why even mention it? In fact if we were to mention anything, the Torah should write "and the Egyptians were mourning their first born-dead whom Hashem miraculously smote on the prior night."

It seems that the Torah placed this posuk in this place as a significant lesson a part of the lessons of the Exodus.

In the famous work, *A Tzaddik in our Times*, Simcha Raz relates an amazing story about Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the tzadik of Jerusalem: It was mid-May 1948, bombs were raining on central Jerusalem, no street was safe and no home a haven. Yet it was during a bomb attack that Samuel Weingarten, a bank cashier who volunteered for civil defense, spotted the holy sage Rabbi Aryeh Levin, maneuvering his way, dodging craters below and bombs from above, in a desperate effort to get somewhere. His steps were careful and calculated and he strode with confidence with a clear destination in mind.

"Rabbi!" he shouted above the din. "Where are you going? A Jew must guard his soul! They are shooting at us! Get inside a shelter!"

Rabbi Levin was not fazed. "I am on my way to do the greatest mitzvah. There are forty deceased souls in the Bikur Cholim Hospital, with no one to guard them. The only watchmen are the human jackals who cut their finger to remove their jewelry. I am rounding up volunteers to guard them. The bombs will have to find different addresses."

In addition to exacting every detail of how a Yid should live their life, the Torah is also a guidebook to an entire world on what is ethically correct. The foundations set in the Torah of myriad principles found the core of ethical behavior even to the basest of men.

Murder, incest, and other abominable acts are deplored in the Torah. Some are denoted with the words toaivah, abominable, others with depictions of Heavenly retribution,

whether it be the Flood or the destruction of S'dom. Those stories are lessons for civilization. They are standards required for every inhabitant of planet Earth. Those aspects of the Torah serve as a moral compass. They come together with the ethos of kindness and compassion that can be garnered by those who are students of the Torah.

So if we take a step back in time and understand what was going on in the minds of the Egyptians, and what the Torah deems important to mention, perhaps we can garner another moral lesson that may better inspire our generation of proper values.

Imagine! For 210 years the Yiddin were captive in Egypt. Despite miraculous plagues, never heard of or seen before in the history of civilization, the Egyptians held on. They were not letting go!! Not a threat of disaster, nor its execution cracked their resolve nor diminished the Egyptians' desire to maintain their hold on the Jews. Not blood, boils, locust or any other plague, shook their resolve. Even when the Jews finally left, the Egyptians chased after them. But not immediately. The Torah tells us that something else was more important. Something was worth giving the Yiddin an enormous head-start. Something was worth losing the very nation that their first-born gave their lives to keep all for one staid principle. The honor and burial of the dead.

Perhaps the Torah talks to civilization. It tells the world what was important, even to a nation that had no qualms about the indenture of another people. No matter how long it took., no matter the financial ramifications, no matter the loss of power and prestige in giving the Jews a long head-start. It did not matter. Honor the smitten. Bury the dead. And so the Torah tells us that despite the political ramifications that occurred with the Exodus, something else was on Egypt's mind. Maybe the actions of that primitive nation should give the world a perspective about what really matters. If an ancient nation was willing to give up its century-old national pride, the loss of the largest single work-force in history for the honor of the dead, shouldn't every nation give thought about their priorities as well? Shouldn't they keep the honor of those buried instead of a shopping mall, a new roadway, or even the prestigious honor that a place in a museum bestows?

We may not learn many great moral lessons from the Egyptians, but this one we all can. Even if in the war of wits you come in dead last, in the war of morality make sure it's dead first.
Adapted from Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

This week's Kiddush is sponsored by Avraham & Chaya Engel and Danny & Bruria Frances in memory of the yahrzeits their respective parents.

**Mincha/Kabbalas Shabbos:
7:10/8:45pm**

Candle Lighting: 8:44pm

**Shacharis:
8:45am**

Zman Kriyas Shema: 9:32am

Pirkei Avos Shiur: 7:45pm

**Mincha/Shalosh
Seudos: 8:35pm**

Maariv/Motzei Shabbos: 9:52pm

Have a Good Shabbos.