



To Rely or Not Rely on Miracles? That is the Question

Our rabbis taught us not to rely on miracles; rather, we should make the required effort to turn adversity into fulfillment. But how do we know the correct response, especially when Pharaoh's highly organized and heavily equipped army is chasing us with all the might it can muster? Moreover, our backs are to the Sea, and we are frozen with fear!

Indeed, the Talmud Yerushalmi describes (no less than) four responses to the panic that ensued when the people saw doom staring them in their eyes. One group said: Let us drown in the Sea, the second band argued for returning to Egypt, a third faction opted to fight, and the last consortium chose to pray to Hashem.

However, following the Torah narrative, *all* the people cried out to Hashem in the traditional pattern established by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov (Rashi on Shemot 14:10). And for sure, when the people wept and wailed when their burden became unbearable, Hashem heard their cry.

So, why now did Hashem admonish

Moshe and ask why he, too, was crying out to Him – and why did He further command Moshe to continue journeying [towards the Sea]?

Perhaps the answer lies in Moshe's call to the people prior to Hashem's reprimand. For Moshe had proclaimed to the terrified people: "Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of Hashem...Hashem shall make war for you, and *you* shall remain silent!" (ibid 14:13).

It appears that God is here "The Master of War" (ibid 15:3): For when it comes to physical survival, Hashem enters the picture, as in the Purim story – whether publicly or behind the scenes. Notably, however, following the Egyptian demise, the people would then have to take the initiative and demonstrate their belief in Hashem's providence by taking that first step into the water.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe is quick to point out that, later, Hashem's response to the *Amaleki* threat was totally different: The people *should go to war!* For that enemy's sole objective was to destroy the people's *spiritual* fervor before receiving the Torah at Sinai.

We see that when it comes to preserving Torah, there isn't even time to bewail the facts and to wail. Instead, like the Macca-bees, we should take immediate action to fight for our beliefs, our heritage, and our traditions – and not rely on miracles! ■

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