



Parashat Beshalach 5772 - #220

Ask Rav Aviner: mororly@bezeqint.net

Prepared by Rabbi Mordechai Tzion

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On the Parashah... The Ten Plagues

Question: Couldn't Hashem have redeemed the Nation of Israel with one plague?

Answer: Of course! Our Sages already asked: Why was the world created with ten utterances? Couldn't Hashem have created it with one (Avot 5:1)? Our world is not an expression of the divine ability to act at a single moment, but to act in stages. The Ramchal – Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato - wrote that each day the world gets closer to its perfection. All the worlds that were created previously were made piecemeal, but they all could be exalted. Our world was not created with the full power of the Master of the Universe. Hashem limited His power and revealed Himself in the way humans themselves work: little by little, according to a divine plan which continues to be actualized over time. It is not true that the Master of the Universe needed to bring plague after plague because of the stubbornness of Pharaoh's heart. On the contrary, the Blessed One caused the stubbornness of his heart in order to bring the plagues upon him. "For I have made his heart and the heart of his servants heavy so that I can put My signs in his midst, and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your grandsons" (Shemot 10:1-2). In our days as well, do not despair that the Redemption is progressing slowly, slowly rather than in one fell swoop. This is not divine weakness, G-d forbid, but the greatest strength: for the sake of increasing the sanctification of Hashem's Name.

Rav Aviner on...

Don't Free Terrorists to Gain My Release

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Bo 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

I, a soldier, a fighter in the I.D.F., declare: If I am kidnapped, don't free terrorists to gain my release. And don't negotiate with terrorists on my behalf. As I sign this, my hand is trembling a bit, but this is the right thing to do. I don't want that because of me, other Jews should be hurt. Don't free murderers.

Surrendering to terror begets more and more terror. That's why I'm signing a release card that says: "I, the signatory, a soldier in the I.D.F., hereby declare that if I fall into the captivity of

one of the terror organizations, I ask that terrorists who have hurt Israel's citizens not be freed to gain my release. I am certain that the Israeli government and the I.D.F. will do everything to save me, boldly and creatively."

Murderers – to the prison or to the grave! That's what will preserve the Jewish People.

That's what will deter murderers. Don't free terrorists to gain my release. Don't ask my parents. They can't decide for me. I'm the one who will decide. If I am capable of being a soldier, I am capable of deciding this as well.

I'm not afraid of anything. I saw a female soldier sign a release card too. She isn't afraid either. I take off my hat to her! I'm not saying, "Good for her that she enlisted!" I'm saying, "Good for her that she is not afraid."

When I go to the army, the regular army or reserve duty, I know that it carries a price.

This, too, is part of the price.

I don't need the Talmud, Tractate Gittin, to know that you don't pay exorbitant prices to free captives, whether because of the price the public will have to pay, or because it ruins deterrence. I can see this with my own eyes.

I simply don't want to be freed in exchange for terrorists. I don't want my name linked to that of a little boy, or a little girl, a man or a woman, who will be murdered because of this. I just don't want it! I have principles. I love life and freedom, but I have other principles as well. Please honor my wishes. You don't own me. I am my own person. I agree that the army should work to free me. That's something else. War is war. I don't demand this. I agree to it.

I rely on the army. Every day that I fight, I rely on the I.D.F., so I rely on them in this as well. Remember the kidnapping of Shmuel Rosenwasser in 5730. He was a night watchman in Metulah and was kidnapped by a gang of terrorists from Lebanon. The night after the kidnapping, the State of Israel carried out an operation in the adjacent village in Lebanon, taking nine soldiers and twelve civilians captive, capturing large amounts of weaponry and equipment, and blowing up the power station that fed Lebanese radar.

For a year, Shmuel Rosenwasser was held in captivity in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, and he suffered harsh torture. Fatah demanded the release of 3,500 terrorists. The State of Israel did not surrender, and in the end, Fatah made due with the release of one terrorist.

The mathematical conclusion: 1=1. Yes! 1=1. Shmuel Rosenwasser came home on foot from Lebanon. When he arrived, the Northern Command received him with a bouquet of flowers. He was very excited and he said, "May I please have a cup of water?"

I, too, will request a cup of water...and a bouquet of flowers, if I may.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Missionary literature

Q: What should I do with missionary literature which includes verses, or a Tanach that is bound with the "New Testament"?

A: It is permissible to throw them into the garbage since these verses and books possess no holiness even if they include Hashem's Name. The Rambam writes in Hilchot Yesodei Ha-Torah (6:8) that a Sefer Torah written by a heretic should be burned. I do not recommend burning them – it is a waste of matches. You can throw them directly into the garbage. They are not words of holiness, but words of impurity.

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