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לע"נ ר' שלום ב"ר פסח

ומרת חנה בת ר' יעקב.

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בס"ד

לקוטי שיחות חלק י"א בשלח א' - ע' 52-54

PURE PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Is prayer a call to G-d in a moment of desperation, pain and personal darkness or does it express some deeper aspect of our relationship to G-d? Based on the precise wording of Rashi's comment on the prayer of Jewish people at the edge of the Sea of Reeds, this Sicha addresses this question. It then applies its lesson to the ideal we should strive for in our prayers, as well as in other areas of Judaism.

THE MAIN QUESTIONS

- 1) Why must Rashi comment that the Jews prayed? Obviously, at that moment of great danger, as they were pursued by the Egyptians, they would pray!
- 2) If Rashi's intent is to negate the explanation of the Targum and Ramban (S3) – that the Jews complained – Rashi should have explicitly said that they prayed. Why does he only use the euphemism that they embraced “the craft of their Fathers”?
- 3) If there is a need to explain the word *vayitzaku*, Rashi should have done so the first time the word appeared (S5)?
- 4) Why is prayer described as “the craft of Fathers” (which indicates that they were constantly engaged in it), when their actual occupation was shepherds of sheep?
- 5) Why does Rashi give these three specific examples of prayer of the Fathers, when there are either earlier (S6 and S7) or more explicit examples (S9 and S10) of the Fathers engaging in prayer?

THE MAIN EXPLANATION

Rashi is troubled by the exact nature of the Jews' belief in G-d at the Sea of Reeds. If they believed G-d's promises to triumphantly bring them out of Egypt (S11 – S15), prayer was

unnecessary, as G-d would no doubt bring about that miracle. On the other hand, if they lacked faith (and felt that G-d would not help them), what was the point of engaging in prayer?

Rashi therefore explains that the Jews did believe in G-d's promises, and yet they still prayed, for with this prayer they were "adopting the craft of their Fathers".

There are prayers that are a plea to G-d to resolve a desperate situation. This was not the nature of this prayer. This prayer was like the "craft of their Fathers". A craft is something that one is skillfully and constantly engaged in.

Here, the Jews walked in their Fathers' footsteps, turning to G-d, not to extricate them from danger, but because it is a "craft" that a Jew is constantly engaged in. It is part of the ongoing conversation and bond a Jew has with G-d, even in the absence of a desperate need.

[Though the Jews complained at that time that they had been taken out of Egypt (S4), that was either after their initial confident and positive prayer to see the salvation had not been answered or it was a cry of pain and anguish - not a complaint - and they maintained their faith throughout (S16). Alternatively, it was a fringe group who complained, but the majority of Jews retained their full faith in G-d's imminent miracles (fn. 19).]

This explains Rashi's choice of verses that prove that the Fathers engaged in prayer. For each of the Fathers, Rashi chooses a verse that indicates that his prayer was part of his relationship with G-d and not merely a reaction to a difficult situation.

- **Avraham:** Rashi passes over the verses that describe the desire or promise of a specific need (forgiveness of the Jews, the salvation of Sodom, the birth of children and receiving the Land of Israel – S6 – S8), and quotes a verse which simply says that Avraham prayed, without specifying the content of that prayer (end of S8).
- **Yitzchok:** His prayer for children (S9) is not quoted, but rather a verse that says he "went out to pray".
- **Yaacov:** His prayer at the site of the future Bais Hamikdash is noted as an example of his engaging in prayer and not his prayer to be saved from his brother (S10), which was a specific need.

We now also understand why Rashi did not explain the word *vayitzaku* the first time it appears in the Torah (S5), as that was a prayer motivated by the pain of slavery and not an expression of their ongoing relationship with G-d.

THE LESSONS

An artist is not simply a person who creates art. An artist is a person who *lives* his art. It defines him. He is only truly complete when he is able to express his art, especially if it is for no other reason, be it fame or fortune, but because that is who he is.

Prayer was the “craft” and artistry of our Fathers and the major areas of Judaism are the “craft” and artistry of each of their descendants, every Jew alive today.

- **Prayer:** We should engage in prayer to express our relationship with G-d, and not simply to request that He meets our specific, personal needs.
- **Torah:** One should study Torah for its own sake, and not only as a vehicle to know what one should do and what one should not do.
- **Mitzvos:** One should perform Mitzvos, as they are an expression of our true being and attachment and devotion to G-d, and not for any personal or societal benefit.
- **Love of a fellow Jew:** Every Jew is a descendant of the Fathers and has inherited their craftsmanship. We should be willing to approach every Jew and assist them in discovering that their true “craft” and essence is the full embrace of Judaism.

לקוטי שיחות חלק י"א בשלח א' - ע' 52-54

SOURCES

'א סעיף – Se'if Aleph

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| <p><u>שמות יד, י: ופרעה הקריב וישאו בני ישראל את עיניהם והנה מצרים אנסע אחריהם ויראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אל-ה':</u></p> | <p>1 Shemot 14:10 <u>Pharaoh drew near, and the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold! the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.</u></p> |
| <p>רש"י:
<u>ויצעקו - תפשו אומנות אבותם. באברהם הוא אומר (בראשית יט כז) אל המקום אשר עמד שם, ביצחק (שם כד סג) לשוח בשדה, ביעקב (שם כח יא) ויפגע במקום:</u></p> | <p>2 Rashi:
<u>and they cried — they adopted the craft of their fathers. In the case of Abraham it is said, “[And Abraham went] to the place where he had stood in prayer” (Bereishis 19:27). In the case of Isaac: “[He went out] to pray in the field” (Bereishis 24:63). In the case of Jacob: “He prayed to the Omnipresent God” (Bereishis 28:11).</u></p> |
| <p>רמב"ן:
ואונקלוס תרגם בכאן ויצעקו - וצעיקו, עשאו ענין תרעומת, לומר שלא התפללו אבל היו מתרעמים לפניו על שהוציאם ממצרים, כלשון ויצעקו אל פרעה לאמר למה תעשה כה לעבדיך (לעיל ה טו).</p> | <p>3 Ramban
Onkelos translates <i>vayitzaku</i> – as <i>u'tzeeku</i>, they turned it into <u>a matter of complaints</u>, meaning they did not pray, but rather complained before Him for taking them out of Egypt, similar to the phrase, “They complained [<i>vayitzaku</i>] to Pharaoh saying, why have you done this to your servants? (Shemot 5:15).</p> |

שמות יד, יא-יב: ויאמרו אל-משה המבלי
 אינו-קברים במצרים לקחתנו למות במדבר
 מה-זאת עשית לנו להוציאנו ממצרים: הלא-
 זה הדבר אשר דברנו אליך במצרים לאמר
 תדל ממנו ונעבדה את-מצרים כי טוב לנו
 עבד את-מצרים ממתנו במדבר:

4 **Shemot 14:11-12** They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Egypt? Isn't this the thing [about] which we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone, and we will serve the Egyptians', because we would rather serve the Egyptians than die in the desert".

שמות ב, כג: ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת
 מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני-ישראל מן-העבדה
 ויצעקו ותעל שועתם אל-האלקים מן-
 העבדה:

5 **Shemot 2, 23:** Now it came to pass in those many days that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed from the labor, and they cried out, and their cry ascended to God from the labor.

Se'if Bais – סעיף ב'

בראשית יב, ח: ויעתק משם הרה מקדם
 לבית-אל ויט אלה בית-אל מימין והעי מקדם
 ויבן-שם מזבח לה ויקרא בשם ה':

6 **Bereishis 12:8** - And he moved from there to the mountain, east of Beth el, and he pitched his tent; Beth el was to the west and Ai was to the east, and he built an altar there to the Lord, and he called in the name of the Lord.

רש"י: ויבן שם מזבח - נתבא שעתידין בניו
 להכשל שם על עון עקן והתפלל שם עליהם:
 (סעיף ד')

Rashi: and he built an altar there – he prophesized that in the future his descendants would stumble in Achan's sin, so he prayed there for them. (se'if daled)

בראשית פרק יב, ז: ויגא ה' אל-אברם
 ויאמר לזרעך אתן את-הארץ הזאת ויבן שם
 מזבח לה הנראה אליו:

7 **Bereishis 12:7** - And the Lord appeared to Abram, and He said, "To your seed I will give this land," and there he built an altar to the Lord, Who had appeared to him.

רש"י: ויבן שם מזבח - על בשורת הזרע ועל
 בשורת ארץ ישראל:

Rashi: there he built an altar – for the good tidings that he would have children and for the good tidings that he would possess the Land of Israel.

בראשית פרק יח: ויפנו משם האנשים וילכו
 סדמה ולאברהם עזבנו עמד לפני ה': ויגש
 אברהם ויאמר האף תספה צדיק עם-רשע:
 אולי יש חמשים צדיקים בתוך העיר האף
 תספה ולא-תשא למקום למען חמשים
 הצדיקים אשר בקרבה ... ארבעים וחמשה ...
 הארבעים ... שלשים ... בעשרים ... בעבור
 העשרה ...

8 **Bereishis ch. 18** - And the men turned from there and went to Sodom, and Abraham was still standing before the Lord. And Abraham approached and said, "Will You even destroy the righteous with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty righteous men in the midst of the city; will You even destroy and not forgive the place for the sake of the fifty righteous men who are in its midst? ... forty-five ... forty ... thirty ... twenty ... for the sake of the ten ...

בראשית יט, כז: וישכם אברהם בבקר אל-
 המקום אשר-עמד שם את-פני ה':

Bereishis 19:27 - And Abraham arose early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord.

[ברכות ו, ב: תניא אין עמידה אלא תפלה ... מלמד שאברהם אבינו קבע מקום לתפלתו]

[Berachot 6a: We learnt, "standing" is a phrase of prayer ... this teaches that Avraham our Father had a set place for prayer]

בראשית כה, כא: וַיַּעֲתֶר יִצְחָק לַה' לִנְכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הִוא וַיַּעֲתֶר לּוֹ יְהוָה וַתֵּהָר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ:

9 Bereshis 25:21 - And Isaac prayed to the Lord opposite his wife because she was barren, and the Lord accepted his prayer, and Rebecca his wife conceived.

רש"י: ויעתר - הרבה והפציר בתפלה:

Rashi: **prayed** – he prayed much and urgently.

בראשית לב, י' וי"ב: וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶלְקֵי אָבִי אֲבִרְהֶם וְאֶלְקֵי יִצְחָק ה' הָאֵמֵר אֵלַי שׁוּב לְאַרְצְךָ וּלְמִוְלַדְתֶּךָ וְאִיטִיבָה עִמָּךְ ... הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אַחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו כִּי-יִרָא אֶנְכִּי אֹתוֹ פֶּן-יָבֹא וְהִלְכֵנִי אִם עַל-בָּנָיִם:

10 Bereishis 32:10, 12 And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord, Who said to me, 'Return to your land and to your birthplace, and I will do good to you.' ... Now deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him, lest he come and strike me, [and strike] a mother with children.

Se'if Gimmel – סעיף ג'

שמות ג, יז: וְאָמַר אֵלֶיךָ מֵעֵנִי מִצְרַיִם אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַכְּנָעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַפְּרִזִּי וְהַחִטִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי אֶל-אֶרֶץ זְבֹת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ:

11 Shemot 3:17 - And I said, 'I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivvites, and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.'

שמות ו, ח: וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת-יָדִי לַתֵּת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלִיעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לְכֶם מִוְרֶשֶׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה:

12 Shemot 6:8 - I will bring you to the land, concerning which I raised My hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am the Lord.' "

שמות יב, כה: וְהָיָה כִּי-תָבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן יְהוָה לְכֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-הַעֲבֹדָה הַזֹּאת:

13 Shemot 12:25 - And it shall come to pass when you enter the land that the Lord will give you, as He spoke, that you shall observe this service.

שמות יב, כז: רש"י: ויקד העם - על בשורת הגאולה וביאת הארץ ובשורת הבנים שיהיו להם:

14 Shemot 12:27 Rashi – **The nation bowed its head:** for the tidings of the deliverance and coming to the Land, and the tidings of the children who they would have.

שמות יד, ח: וַיִּחְזַק יְהוָה אֶת-לֵב פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרָיִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵצְאוּ בְיַד רַמָּה:

15 Shemot 14:8 - And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and he chased after the children of Israel, and the children of Israel were marching out triumphantly.

שמות יד, טו: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מֵה־
תִּצְעַק אֵלַי דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ:

רש"י: דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו - אין להם
אלא ליסע שאין הים עומד בפניהם, כדאי
זכות אבותיהם והם והאמונה שהאמינו בי
ויצאו, לקרוע להם הים:

16 **Shemot 14:15** - The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel".
Rashi: They only need to travel, for the sea will not stand in their way. Their ancestor's merits and their own merits, and the faith they had in Me and left Egypt will suffice to split the sea for them.