

## Dvar Torah for Parshat Beshalach

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Adut 5:11*

When the Israelites crossed the Reed Sea and sang the Song of the Sea, they did so despite some very real and recent suffering they had undergone. During the ninth plague, Darkness, at least 80 per cent (!) of the Israelites died (Rashi on Exodus 13:18). No family was untouched by the tragedy of losing a family member. Yet, they sang.

*Being Happy in an Unhappy World* was the theme of the Shabbaton that I was privileged to participate in during my recent trip to the United States. The various talks that we had were based on Rebbe Nachman's teaching in *Likutey Moharan II*, Lesson #23, that the greatest level of simcha for which we should strive is the level wherein we can turn *yagon v'anacha* (grief and lamenting) into *sasson v'simcha* (joy and gladness).

When, the following Shabbat, this topic was being discussed at the theme at the home of friends, the following question was posed to me: How can we be happy in the face of tragedy? The question was raised in the aftermath of a tragedy—a middle-aged man who was active in teaching Torah, the grandson of a well-known rabbi, died in a car accident. Last week, here in the Jerusalem area, there were two similar tragedies: A father and his young daughter were killed in a car accident a day after the family had moved into their new home; in a car accident Shabbat eve, a father and child were killed, with the mother and another child in critical condition.

Four Sages, Rabban Gamliel, Rebbe Elazar ben Azaryah, Rebbe Yehoshua and Rebbe Akiva, once came to the Temple Mount. They saw a fox exit from the ruins of the Holy of Holies. Rabban Gamliel, Rebbe Elazar ben Azaryah and Rebbe Yehoshua began to cry. Rebbe Akiva chuckled. "Why are you laughing?!" they asked. "Why are you crying?" Rebbe Akiva responded.

"Foxes run around in the spot of which it is said, 'The unauthorized [person] who approaches shall be put to death' (Numbers 1:51) and we shouldn't cry?!" "For that same reason I chuckle," said Rebbe Akiva. He continued:

"I [God] will bring reliable witnesses to testify on my behalf, Uriah the Priest and Zekhariah son of Yiverekhyahu" (Isaiah 8:2). How can Uriah and Zekhariah be mentioned together? The former lived in the era of the First Temple, the latter in the era of the Second Temple? [Namely, more than 100 years apart.] Scripture is conditioning the prophecy of Zekhariah on that of Uriah.

"Uriah prophesied, "Therefore, because of you, Zion will be a plowed field, Jerusalem heaps of stones and the Temple Mount a shrine in the woods" (Micah 13:3). Zekhariah prophesied, "There will yet come a day when old men and old women will sit in the squares of Jerusalem" (Zekhariah 8:4). Until the prophecy of Uriah was fulfilled I was afraid that perhaps Zekhariah's would not be. Now that Uriah's has been fulfilled, it is certain that Zekhariah's will be fulfilled."

(Makot 24b)

Even as we stare at the rubble of the Temple Mount, the location of our greatest and deepest connection with the Creator, with our hearts torn and silenced, we can be overwhelmed by a new level of grief and brought to fresh tears. Yet, that same rubble, that new level of grief, can be seen as a reason to rejoice—something good, something greater than has ever been known, will come to be.

None of the aforementioned Sages lived to witness the fulfillment of Zekhariah's prophecy. None of them knew that they would. Yet, they told Rebbe Akiva, "You have comforted us."

Our eyes may be attacked by shattered glass, twisted metal and destroyed bodies. Our guts may be ripped out through our eye sockets by bullet shells, blood and a multi-generational funeral. "When a person sees the length of his soul's exile and the depth of its destruction, and cannot envision if and when his soul will be redeemed—just as the redemption of the Jewish people is totally concealed—he must remember that God is with him—and us—even now, when we are lodged in Hell.

"And just as we have destroyed we can fix [cf. *Likutey MoHaran* II, Lesson #112]. The time will come when we will return to God, not only as a people, but as individuals as well. We must therefore always remember the two reliable witnesses" (*Likutey Halakhot, Adut* 5:11).

*agutn Shabbos!*  
*Shabbat Shalom!*

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