

The Storm Before the Calm (2025)

(Parsha Va'Era)

(Please send prayers for a complete and speedy recovery to Menachem Mendel ben Chava)

I'm sure many of us were hoping to see an Entebbe-like rescue of all the hostages. Instead of glory for Israel and Hashem we see surrender humiliation and fear as murderers that should have been killed are now back on our streets preparing Oct 700. The jubilation in the media of the hostage return while mass murder is being prepared inside this Trojan horse is frightening. Redemption is at our doorstep yet we return to slavery and our 'shortness of breath.'

Rav Shmuel Hachohen writes:

After Nazi Obama 1 and 2 - wonderful feeling to have an American president who seemed so pro YISRAEL. Never would we dream he'd bring us the worst most dangerous agreement in world history. Joseph's family, the Patriarch Jacob and his sons, were originally welcomed to Egypt as heroes. After all, it was Joseph who saved the nation of Egypt from starvation. But as we read in [last] week's Torah portion of Parashat Shemot, the nightmare of Egyptian exile and slavery was just around the corner, and it begins..with Pharaoh's words to his fellow Egyptians, 'Let us outsmart the Children of Israel.' That conference led to infanticide and plans for the Final Solution for the Jewish people. Sound familiar? Connect the dots between the Paris Peace Conference, Trumps agreement releasing a thousand wild beast murderous blood thirsty terrorists now and the initiative of Pharaoh then.

On the surface the outlook is depressing and we have only ourselves to blame, however maybe our Parsha can give us some hope. Moshe also saw things only becoming worse and Chazal explained that it was Hashem's way of speeding up the redemption. Even though things looked bad it was the beginning of a new reality that was about to be revealed in the world.

Therefore, convey to the Israelites: 'I am God. I will free you from the oppression of the Egyptians, rescue you from their servitude, and redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great chastisements. (Shmot 6:6)

Rashi explains that the gematria 'lachen' (therefore) that opens this passage is 100 and alludes to the Patriarchs in three different ways. Avraham was 100 when Itzhak was born. This was a great fulfillment of Avraham's life. An open miracle occurred when Itzhak reaped 100 fold which was a blessing that was seen for miles around. Yacov was 100 when Binyamin was born and was the fulfillment of the expected 12 tribes. He was the child of his old age and in his territory the Bet Hamigdash would be built. He was also the only child born in Israel.

I suggest that the connection between these three events, in addition to their age, is a new type of reality came about; a type of climax or vindication. Of course after Itzhak's birth there was the Akeida, and after Itzhak's blessing he was forced to move, and after Binyamin's birth the story of Yoseph's abduction occurs. The redemption process grows along with setbacks that ultimately magnify the redemption that follows. The Parsha Vayera where Avraham is told that he is about to see his personal redemption with Itzhak is reflected in the great national redemption about to occur in our Parsha Va'era. Our history seems to unfold like a spiral staircase of redemption then setback then a greater redemption.

Frogs

I heard an idea from Rav Roi Zaga on the Har Habayit regarding the plague of the frogs. The Midrash tells us it began with one large frog. When the Egyptians struck it, it turned into two. Each time they struck, they multiplied until they swarmed throughout Egypt. He said that this alludes to Israel. When we face great challenges we grow. Adversity makes us stronger. Everytime we are struck there is more 'mesirat nephesh.' Instead of running from Israel after Oct 7 thousands of Jews came from around the world to join the fight and we became stronger and overcame immense odds. Although there is tremendous danger that lurks from our incredible foolishness and disconnection from the wisdom, strength and guidance of the Torah there is also tremendous light that we have seen and have yet to see.

Let me explain with a chassidic story of Menachem Mendel ben Chava who is currently in the hospital and needs our prayers for a complete and speedy recovery. Here is the story

A few years ago a friend said to Menachem Mendel I have regards for you from Israel from John Smith. He did not know any John Smith which was clearly not a Jewish name. His friend reminded him that he was a professor of his when he was seventeen. It was 1973 (Yom Kippur War) and Menachem had requested to take his test two weeks later because he and his girlfriend planned to volunteer and help the soldiers. Suddenly Menachem remembered John Smith but what was he doing in Israel? His friend continued.

Here is the story that you don't know. John Smith came home to his wife and was astonished at this Jewish student who decided to leave the comfort of Canada to travel to a war zone. He and his wife both began reading about the Jewish people. They were so fascinated that after some time they decided to visit a synagogue. They were welcomed in and began going regularly. After a few years they decided to convert. A few years after that they concluded that the best place for Jewish people to be is in Israel. Fast forward 30-40 years and Menachem's friend saw a chassid with a long beard and eight children who said 'say hello to Menachem Mendel for me.' By simply asking to postpone his test unknowingly he created ten Jewish souls.

This story teaches many lessons

1. Look at the tremendous consequences of self sacrifice
2. Look at the tremendous consequences of giving of yourself to your people regardless of your political leaning
3. Look at the tremendous results of publicly standing and fighting for Israel.

Menachem Mendel thought he was simply asking for an extension for his test. He was unaware that he was the catalyst that created ten Jewish souls. With this in mind, Imagine how many Jewish souls have been created and activated since Oct 7. On the surface we cannot see the future. We all know that Sinwar (Yimach sh'mo) was released in the Shalit deal and look what happened. Alternatively there was a Jewish victim that was saved that proved to be critical to the redemption of Am Israel. That was Moshe Rabenu. Of course he was not exchanged for the freeing of mass murderers.

The Horizon

The future looks bleak as we have been duped and coerced once again just like Oct 6, as if nothing has changed. Under the surface many things have changed and we have yet to see how they play out. I expect the worst and I expect the best as well. May the generation of victory quickly advance into positions of political power and save our nation from faithless leadership of the past that jumps at the turn of every gentile screw (to borrow a phrase from Rav Kahane). We truly need a miracle from above as we have fallen so low. Rabbi Kahane in Perush HaMacabee brings down an interesting Midrash:

Rabbi Shimon says: Israel are greatly beloved, for GOD revealed Himself in a place of idolatry and filth and impurity in order to redeem them. This can be compared to a Kohen whose priestly-dues fell into a cemetery. He said: What should I do? I cannot defile myself [by entering the cemetery], but neither can I abandon there my priestly-dues. Better that I defile myself just once, and then purify myself, rather than lose my priestly-dues. In the same way, our ancestors were GOD'S "priestly-dues," as it says, Israel is holy to HASHEM, the beginning of His crop (Jeremiah 2:3), and they were in the midst of the graves... GOD said, How will I redeem them? I cannot abandon them; better that I go down to redeem them. - Sh'mot Rabbah 15:5

We have sunk so low and need divine intervention. May Hashem help us and extricate us with his outstretched arm and redeem us. May we have the desire to be redeemed. May our enemies suffer all the plagues in the world so that we can finally stop relying on them and believing them and only trust in Hashem Yitbarach. May we wake up, expel our enemies, settle the lands we have conquered and decide to leave Egypt once and for all.

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