

פרשת עקב

ואשר עשה לחיל פרעה לסוסיו ולרכבו, אשר הציף את מי ים סוף על פניהם ברדפם אחריכם, ויאבדם ה' **עד היום הזה**. (פרק י"ד)
*and what (Hashem) did to the army of Egypt, to its horses and its chariots, over whom He swept the waters of the Sea of Reeds when they pursued you, and Hashem caused them to perish **until this day**;*

Ramban, among others, is bothered by the concluding phrase *עד היום הזה/until this day*-as he puts it: "I do not understand the meaning of *עד היום הזה*, for all those who die in the sea perish an everlasting perishing?" Ramban quotes Ibn Ezra: "'The meaning is that (as of the day that Moshe made this statement,) the pursuers' children did not arise to replace their fathers, to be like them.'" Ramban explains that Ibn Ezra's intent is to say that Hashem obliterated the pursuers at the Sea and **also** exterminated their children back in Egypt, so that no **שם ושאר**, 'no name or remnant' was left of the pursuers. This more severe treatment of the pursuers-the destruction of their descendents back in Egypt-was because they acted more wickedly than all the rest of Egypt. (Having witnessed Hashem's miraculous liberation of Israel, no Egyptian should have dared to try to recapture them. Those Egyptians who did attempt this were therefore even guiltier than the rest, and thereby merited total extinction of their family *until this day* i.e. nothing is left of them.) So that according to Ibn Ezra, *עד היום הזה* is referring to the *חיל פרעה* that went along with Pharaoh.

Ramban himself feels that it is referring to the earlier phrase *חיל פרעה לסוסיו ולרכבו* as follows: "It means that all horses and chariots were lost from that generation, because every last horse and chariot and every last rider of Egypt were taken out by Pharaoh to pursue the **בני ישראל**, and all of them went lost in the sea. So that for the remainder of that generation, Egypt was a lowly kingdom, without 'chariot, horse, army or force' *until this day*." The most mighty nation became effectively insignificant. Sforno interprets it similarly: "With the drowning of the captains of Egypt and their soldiers at the Sea, the loss continued to be felt even forty years later for they were the mighty ones, and there were none to replace them." Egypt never recovered from this disaster.

The Meshech Chochma offers his own interpretation of this phrase. He begins with a question: The pasuk seems to be highlighting the sweeping, *אשר הציף*, aspect of the miracle i.e. the returning of the waters of the Sea which drowned the Egyptians. Was it not the drying of the Sea, allowing the **בני ישראל** to cross it safely, the real **נס**? Should not the pasuk have written, *(and what (Hashem) did to the army of Egypt, to its horses and its chariots) when He dried up* the Sea of Reeds and left it dry (until the Egyptians entered it and then returned it to water)? Rav Meir Simcha explains that forty years after this miracle, revisionist history may have crept into the reality. People may have said that the splitting of the Sea was a natural phenomenon of the high and low tides of that area, possibly accentuated at different times of the year, thus explaining the drying up of the Sea. For this reason the pasuk writes and Moshe emphasizes: *אשר הציף*, *את מי ים סוף על פניהם*-it was the army of Egypt that drowned when the waters returned. A country that was situated on the Nile

and dependent on it for its agricultural survival would have certainly researched and become educated about the ebb and flow of the waterways of that region, including the ים סוף, and especially before sending out its army-how could they have been fooled so badly and be swept away to their demise? Furthermore, the waters continue to flow **עד היום הזה**-it is now forty years later and there has never been a recurrence of 'such a low tide' as to allow people to walk across the seabed! This could only have been a miraculous act of Hashem!" According to the Meshech Chochma **עד היום הזה** ויאבדם ה' fits in very beautifully for not only is it appropriately placed immediately following the phrase it is referring to (as opposed to Ibn Ezra, Ramban and Sforno's interpretations), but his rendering also explains why Moshe stresses that it was ויאבדם ה'-for only Hashem could have made this happen!

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