

פרשת וארא

ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלקים וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים. והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר נשאתי את ידי לתת אתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב... (פרק ו' ז-ח)
I shall take you to me for a people and I shall be a G-d to you; and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I shall bring you to the Land about which I raised My hand to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov...

The ולקחתי אתכם לי (in our pasuk) R' Simai says, "It is stated (in our pasuk) and it is stated (in the very next pasuk) והבאתי אתכם. By placing these two verses in juxtaposition, the Torah is comparing the בני ישראל's exodus from Egypt to their coming to the Land of Israel. Just as their entering into the Land was realized by only two survivors out of six hundred thousand i.e. Yehoshua and Caleb, so too their exodus from Egypt was realized by only two survivors out of every six hundred thousand!" Rashi explains: At the time of the Exodus, there were six hundred thousand adult Jewish males between the ages of twenty and sixty. As punishment for following the מרגלים, all these men were condemned to die in the desert except for Yehoshua and Caleb. Thus, out of six hundred thousand men who left Egypt, only two entered ארץ ישראל. R' Simai applies this tiny fraction, 1/300,000, to the number of Jews who left Egypt so that an unfortunately astronomical amount of Jews died during the plague of darkness, when the Egyptians would not be able to witness their downfall. The Maharal softens this number by telling us that R' Simai's calculation should be understood as follows: Over the course of the Jews' two hundred-ten year stay in Egypt, many generations and multitudes of people lived and died before the redemption. All of these myriads of people had hoped to see the redemption in their generation. Those who actually merited seeing it were a miniscule portion of the very many who had yearned to see it. The גמרא continues and quotes Rava: "And so it will be in the days of the Messiah (i.e. the Nation's numbers will be reduced in the same measure they were reduced upon her exodus from Egypt), as it is stated in ועתה הושע ב' יז *And she will be humbled there as in the days of her youth, and as on the day she came up out of the land of Egypt.* Rava understands *And she will be humbled...* as a reference to the relatively small number of people who will merit the final redemption.

The Meshech Chochma sees in R' Simai's "extreme" assertion, a very important message: Just as it was worthwhile for HKBH to perform the many dramatic מופתים in Egypt for only one out of three hundred thousand who was worthy to leave that morally degraded land, it was likewise important for Him to take the entire Nation through the Wilderness, show them an entirely different set of wonders, for only two out of six hundred thousand who were worthy of entering the Land of Israel; and so too Hashem will always be ready to modify Nature for His children, even though there is only a tiny fraction of them who are worthy of such miracles! He believes that this is in fact Rava's point-when the Messianic era arrives, Hashem will once again reveal His might for just a few אנשי מעלה, men of distinction, for they will act as beacons of light for the masses.

He uses this to explain the wording of a pasuk in לד' דברים: **לכם** ה' אלקיכם: דברים ד' לד'... ככל אשר עשה לכם ה' אלקיכם...such as everything that Hashem, your G-d, did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Why the switch from the plural לכם to the singular לעיניך? Utilizing R' Simai's concept, the Meshech Chochma says that it is telling us that Hashem will perform (עשה) wonders for the multitudes to see but His true intent is to salvage the select few who truly see (לעיניך) i.e. appreciate His greatness. And Hashem will continue to perform these miracles because just as a spark can bring light to a vast area, so too can a few יחידי סגולה spiritually brighten an entire generation! Rav Meir Simcha concludes this piece by explaining the positioning of the מימרא which is immediately prior to R' Simai's statement: In referring to the future redemption of the Jewish people הנביא ירמיהו writes, **אחד מעיר ושנים** *For I have become your Master, and I will take you, one from a city and two from a nation*. Raish Lakish believes the verse should be understood as written i.e. only one Jew from an entire city and two from an entire nation will be redeemed. R' Yochanan replied: "Their Master is not pleased that you say such a thing about them (i.e. that the majority of them will be removed from the ranks of the redeemed)! Rather, the meaning of the verse is that (in the Messianic era) even one righteous person from a city will exonerate the entire city, and but two righteous people from a region will be enough to exonerate the entire region." The words of R' Yochanan ring very nicely with the next statement of R' Simai who explains the true value of those who are **דבוק בה'**

As I approach the fifth yahrtzeit of my father, **ר' ישראל מנחם בן שלום ע"ה**, I realize how aptly these words of the Meshech Chochma apply to him. Although he lived the life of an "ehrliche Baal Habayis," he understood the bigger picture. Having gone through the Holocaust and being the only member of his family to survive its horrors and then, with the help of my mother **יבדה לחיים**, building generations of Torah true Jews-I believe he went to the **עולם האמת** at peace and with a deep appreciation of **היא תקום ועצת ה'** רבות מחשבות בלב איש, **מליץ ישר** for my mother, our family and the entire **ישראל**. May he continue to be a **כלל ישראל**.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ישראל מנחם בן שלום ז"ל
ולזכר נשמת הרב יהודה בן אברהם שמחה (קופרמן) זצ"ל מחבר הגהות על
ספר משך חכמה