

Hashem said to Moshe, “Why do you cry out to Me?” (14:15)

More than once in his lifetime, a man will face a situation from which there is no escape. He is up against the wall. Anxiety, fear and trepidation set in. What does he do? To whom does he turn? Horav David Bliacher, z.l., one of the preeminent disciples of the Alter m'Novardok, cites this above pasuk in his response to the problems that so many of us face during the course of a lifetime. Klal Yisrael was up against the proverbial wall. In front of them, was the Red Sea; behind them were the cruel Egyptians, intent on “recovering” their slaves. Their alternatives were truly bleak. They cried out in fear. Hashem criticized Moshe Rabbeinu for the fact that Klal Yisrael cried out to Him. Why? What else should they have done?

Horav Bliacher gives an insightful response. Undoubtedly, Klal Yisrael had no other alternative but to turn to the Almighty and supplicate Him with emotion-filled prayer to save them. Had the time for this arrived? They were not yet at the shore. The water was not yet enveloping them. Hashem was saying to Moshe: Why are they crying – now? The situation is not yet hopeless. They still have a few more steps before they arrive at the water. Then they should cry – not before.

With this idea in mind, we can understand a difficulty in the parsha of Shemittah. The Torah states in Vayikra 25:20 that the people will ask “Mah no’chal?”, “What will we eat?” Chazal consider this to be an admission of a lack of faith on their part. They should have trusted in Hashem to provide for them. When should they have asked this question? Obviously, not during the seventh year, since Hashem has assured us that there will be an increase of grain output during the sixth year that will suffice for the seventh year. We must, therefore, say that the question is to be asked during the beginning of the seven-year cycle, in the first or second year. The critique of the question is that they were bothered by what might or might not happen in the future. One should not worry prematurely. There will be enough time to worry about the lack of food when the seventh year arrives.

The lesson is clear and simple. Even during a period of concern some time remains, an avenue of relief and cure is available. Do not despair as long as there is an opportunity for salvation. Hashem has His own timetable for granting us deliverance from misfortune. It does not necessarily coincide with our own.