

Moshe's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. (17:12)

Moshe *Rabbeinu's* hands grew heavy from fatigue. Therefore, Aharon *HaKohen* and Chur supported his arms. Moshe sat on a stone, rather than on a pillow, because he was not about to sit on a soft pillow while his people were in danger and suffering. The *Talmud Brachos* 54a enumerates a list of places in which miracles occurred, stating that if one were to see any of these places, he would be required to offer praise to Hashem. One of these places is the stone upon which Moshe sat. The **Maharsha** wonders why the stone upon which Moshe sat retains such a prominence. One would think that the miracle for which one should offer praise should be the actual battlefield where *Klal Yisrael* emerged victorious over the evil Amalek. It was there that the miracle which spared our ancestors actually occurred.

The *Maharsha* explains that, given the *halachah* that a blessing is made at the place where the miracle takes place, one must view the top of the hill where Moshe sat as the *makom ha'neis*, place where the miracle occurred. Moshe raised his hands and, as a result, the tide of the battle turned in *Klal Yisrael's* favor. The result of the miracle might have been experienced on the battlefield, but the miracle which catalyzed their victory took place on the hill.

Commenting on this *Maharsha*, **Horav Betzalel Zolty, zl**, observes that, if we think the miracle occurred on the battlefield, our perspective is distorted. The miracle defines the turning point of the war. This did not happen on the battlefield; rather, it was the "praying" field which was the scene of the miracle. When the people saw Moshe *Rabbeinu* with his hands outstretched, they looked up to Heaven and obliged their hearts to their Father in Heaven. It was at that point that their prayers were accepted, and, as a result, the campaign against Amalek turned in their favor.

Perhaps we may extend this idea further. We pray to Hashem with extreme devotion, and as a result of our intense supplication, Hashem listens and grants us our wish. We, of course, offer *shevach* and *hodaah*, praise and gratitude, to Him for His favor, but we do so at the field of endeavor, whatever it may be, wherever the miracle occurred. We now understand that the miracle occurs in the *shul*, in the *bais hamedrash*, or at the place in which we perform a *mitzvah*, a *chesed*, act of loving kindness. It is where Hashem hears our plea and responds "Yes!", that we must offer our gratitude. When we are the recipients of Hashem's blessing, we should introspect and delve into our actions to determine what catalyzed Hashem's positive response.

How often is it that we err in thinking that Hashem did not hear our entreaty, or that He totally rejected it, because the salvation upon which we were counting did not materialize according to our hopes and plans? This is categorically wrong. Just because that which we hope for does not happen, does not mean the answer is "No." Hashem does not have to conform to our preconceived schedules and definitions of salvation. He can do what is right for us – something which is not always in sync with what we personally have in mind.

Ramban teaches us this idea in his commentary to *Shemos* 14:1: *Klal Yisrael* saw Pharaoh and his army approaching. In front of them was the Red Sea; behind them was Pharaoh. They cried out, "Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you brought us out to die in the wilderness?" *Ramban* explains that originally they had prayed to Hashem to change Pharaoh's mind, to have him turn around and return to Egypt. When they saw this was not happening, they became vexed. Hashem was not listening to their pleas. Their anxiety led them to doubt Moshe's leadership. He was attempting to kill all of them out in the desert. All of this was the result of their inability to accept the fact that Hashem will listen to them, but He is not beholden to carry out their salvation in accordance with their preconceived notion. It does not have to be their way. It will happen, but it will happen Hashem's way, because He knows what is best. This, too, is part of faith; the ability to trust that Hashem will do what is best for us on His own timeline.

Horav Chaim Stein, zl, considers this to be a powerful lesson in understanding the ways of Hashem. It is a major principle in understanding the ways of prayer and faith. People trust in Hashem. They believe that He will send their salvation in accordance with their way of thinking. They have determined what they feel should be their salvation. When they see that their hopes have not achieved fruition according to their perception of salvation, they begin to doubt Hashem, even questioning their faith. The situation can progress to the point of apostasy, "Are there not enough graves in Egypt?"

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that this approach is totally erroneous. Hashem does not have to conform to our line of thinking. Hashem did not want Pharaoh to return to Egypt, because He wanted to make him suffer two hundred and fifty plagues at the sea – before drowning. By arranging for *Klal Yisrael* to stand at the banks of the sea and watch it split in two, they were availed a miracle of epic proportion. The people were privy to a seminal revelation unparalleled to what they had ever experienced. They became wealthy from the Egyptian spoils, and they achieved a level of faith heretofore never realized by any of them. This is why Hashem did not have Pharaoh return to Egypt. He had His reasons. Our diminished faith did allow for us to exhibit greater patience in trusting Hashem to save us.

During our entire lives we rely on *siyata diShmaya*, Divine assistance. Without Hashem's constant help and guidance, we cannot function – at all. Yet, we have the audacity to expect Him to do it our way! Part of trust is the belief that Hashem will provide for our salvation in the best and most optimal manner. **Horav Yisrael Stam, zl**, was a *talmid*, student, in the Kelm *Talmud Torah* during the tenure of the *yeshivah*'s founder and mentor, the *Alter, zl, m'Kelm*. He later became a *Rav* in New York until his retirement, at which time he moved to Bnei Brak. He related that a distinguished lay person once visited the *yeshivah*. The students noticed that, when he recited *Shemoneh Esrai*, he manifested great intensity when he came to the words *b'shuvcha le'tzion b'rachamim*, "When You will return to *tzion* with mercy," a prayer entreating Hashem to return the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, and our People to Yerushalayim. This would signal the end of our bitter *galus*, exile. On the other hand, when he recited the blessing which addresses our material needs, earning a livelihood, he quickly ran through the words. They were impressed with his devotion to matters of a

spiritual nature, and his apparent disregard of the mundane. Upon sharing their impression with the *Alter*, they were surprised with his reaction, "He is not a very great *maamin*, believer."

When the *Alter* noticed the look of incredulity on their faces, he explained with an analogy: "If I were to travel by carriage to a city which I had never before visited and for which I am unsure of directions for traveling there, I would rely totally on the driver. I would not offer suggestions or directions on how to reach the destination. I would naturally rely totally on the driver, trusting that he knows the best way to reach my destination. This would not be the case if I had made the trip numerous times and was well aware of the most propitious way to arrive there in a timely fashion. I would then make subtle suggestions to encourage the driver to follow my directions. (In other words, when one does not know how to get there, he leaves the driving to the driver.) Apparently, when it concerns *parnassah*, earning a livelihood, this Jew has his own self-reliant approach. Thus, he does not devote much time or energy to prayer (he has his directions). When it involves *galus ha'Shechinah*, he apparently does not know his way around. It is beyond his ken. Therefore, he relies totally on Hashem and prays fervently."

I think the *Alter* was intimating that when it comes to our material deliverance, our sustenance – anything to do with "us" – we must rely solely on Hashem. We are clueless concerning what is best for us. Our faith must apply to every endeavor, to every aspect of our lives, because only Hashem knows what we really need, and the best way for us to sustain it. One who takes matters lightly does not have much faith.