

## Pharaoh saw that there was a relief, and kept making his heart stubborn. He did not heed them. (8:11)

Every time Pharaoh was down and the plagues were getting to him, he ran to Moshe *Rabbeinu* and implored him to pray to Hashem. The instant he experienced relief, he forgot who Moshe was, he forgot that Hashem could just as well send another devastating plague. He did not care. He experienced relief at that moment. The *Midrash* claims that this is the way of the wicked. When it hurts, they cry. When circumstances change and life becomes tolerable, they forget about Hashem and immediately proceed to revert to their old ways. One of the *gedolei ha'mussar* after citing this *Midrash*, once commented, "Are we any different? Do we remember Hashem during a time of joy as we do during a period of grief? When the sun shines upon us, when things are going well, do we exclaim, Baruch Hashem that I merited what I did, in the same manner in which we cry out to Him when we are dealt one of life's challenges? Indeed, this *Midrash* does not apply only to the wicked. *Chazal's* statement is regrettably a portrayal of our own attitude towards Hashem's gifts. We simply forget to thank Him once life seems to take a turn for the better.

On the *Seder* night, we are enjoined to say/focus on three things: *Pesach*, referring to the *Korban Pesach*, that we slaughtered prior to the liberation; *Matzoh*, a reference to the speed in which we were redeemed, not allowing our dough to rise; *Marror*, recounting the suffering and persecution to which we were subjected. The *Baal Hagaddah* formats these three concepts in the above sequence, with *Marror* following *Matzoh*. This is enigmatic. The bitterness that was so much a part of our lives preceded the *Matzoh*/speed of redemption. Should it not be: *Pesach*, *Marror*, *Matzoh*?

*Hamayon Hanitzchi* points out that all too often - we reach the "*matzoh*," we are liberated from bondage, we are freed from persecution; we finally merit the opportunity to experience peace and harmony. But - we, regrettably, quickly forget the past, the suffering, the "*Marror*" that preceded the "*Matzoh*." Some of us simply forget, while others block the past out of their minds. We think that it is over, it can never happen again. The *Baal Hagaddah* would like us to know otherwise. It can happen again! Always remember the "*Marror*", so that through prayer we will merit that it will not occur again. The tribulations to which man is subject are for the purpose of stimulating him to reach out to the Almighty through prayer. *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, cites the *Midrash* that says that when *Klal Yisrael* were in Egypt suffering from the persecution, they turned to Hashem and cried out. He responded to their pleas and took them out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Hashem wanted to hear their voices one more time. But *Klal Yisrael* no longer responded. They were saved! Hashem, therefore, sent Pharaoh after them - to provoke their prayer. It is that simple. The purpose of Creation is for man to cling to Hashem. If we do it on our own, we will not need Hashem's "encouragement."

We must thank Hashem for the past and implore Him for the future. The *Torah* tells us that when Leah gave birth to Yehudah, she said, "*This time let me gratefully praise Hashem. Therefore, she*

*called his name Yehudah. Then she stopped giving birth.*" (Bereishis 29:35) Yehudah's name is derived from the word "*hodah*", which means to give thanks. The *Chozeh M'Lublin* asks why Leah stopped having children after she thanked Hashem for having Yehudah? Indeed, this is implied by the *pasuk*; she gave thanks, and she stopped giving birth! Does this make sense? He answers that Leah only offered gratitude for the past. She thanked Hashem for the gift of a child, but she did not turn to Him for the future. Consequently, Hashem gave her a reason to implore Him for the future.

"We are called *Yehudim*," says the *Chidushei Ha'Rim*, "because ingrained and imbued in the Jewish *neshamah*, soul, is the ability and proclivity to be *makir tov*, show appreciation, to offer gratitude, for every favor and gift that we receive. We are *Yehudim* because of our ability to give *hodaah*." Moreover, just as Leah realized that with Yehudah's birth she had received more than she deserved, so too, do we recognize that whatever beneficence Hashem shines upon us, it is more than we deserve. How important it is for all of us to live up to the standard of *Yahadus*.