

Bnei Yisrael were armed when they went up from Egypt... And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him. (13:18, 19)

Rashi explains *chamushim* to mean “armed.” In an alternative exposition, *Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* which posits that *chamushim* is derived from *chomesh*, “a fifth.” This implies that actually only one fifth of the Jewish People left Egypt. Apparently, the bulk of the nation was prepared to adopt the Egyptian lifestyle. They did not want to be slaves, but they were not yet prepared to leave the country. They died during the three-day plague of darkness. In his *Shemen Hatov*, **Horav Zev Weinberger, Shlita**, quotes **Horav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zl**, of *Yerushalayim*, who offered an insightful explanation of *chamushim*, armed. Of what did their weapons consist? Where did the Jewish people obtain weapons in the short span of time allotted to them to prepare to leave? They did not even have time to prepare food, let alone search for weapons.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* of Brisk explains that their *klei zayin*, weapons, were, as the Torah immediately states: “And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him.” These bones, the coffin of Yosef *HaTzadik*, protected the nation when they came to the Red Sea. *Chazal* say, “*Hayam raah va’yanos*”, “The sea saw and fled.” (*Tehillim* 114:3) *Chazal* ask what did the sea see that prompted it to flee /split? *Raah arono shel Yosef*, “It saw the coffin of Yosef.” *Yanus mipnei ha’nas*, “Flee from the one who ran” is a reference to Yosef’s reaction to the blandishments of Potifar’s wife. These were the powerful armor of the Jewish People. It was Yosef’s coffin which protected them.

Rav Weinberger integrates both *p’shatim*, explanations, demonstrating how one complements the other. The fact that only one-fifth of the nation left Egypt – the fifth comprised of devout, committed, believing Jews; the faithful --is the reason that they were armed. What greater protection is there than a group of Jews who are all righteous? They were armed with *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim*, good deeds.

Rav Weinberger employs this idea to explain the statement of the *Chafetz Chaim* regarding the fifth that left. The sage explains that even this unusual group of Jews – the fifth that left -- were the ones about whom it is said at the beginning of the *parsha*, *V’lo nacham Elokim derech erez Plishtim*, “And Hashem did not lead them by way of the land of Plishtim” (ibid.13:17). Even this group of righteous Jews could not withstand the challenge of a confrontation with their ex-masters, the Egyptians. They were strong and committed, yet exposure to the moral bankruptcy evinced by the Egyptians was dangerous. When the “air” is spiritually impure, it has a detrimental effect on even the most righteous.