

SEVENTH DAY PESACH 1988  
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On the seventh day of Pesach we celebrate our deliverance from the Egyptian army. The Egyptian army pursued us after we left Egypt, and unless they would have been destroyed by the waters of the Red Sea, we would have been recaptured and brought back to be slaves in Egypt. Because of this great deliverance, the Jewish people sang a song which we say every morning in our prayers. After they sang this song we then learn a strange thing.

We learn how it says that Moses led the people from the Red Sea and they went into the wilderness assured, and when they had been in the wilderness three days they found no water. They came to Maror they were not able to drink because the water was bitter, and the people complained against Moshe, and he cried to G-d and G-d showed him a tree and he threw it into the water and the waters were sweetened there, and he gave them a law and a judgment. That does not seem logical why we should read this passage on this great day of deliverance. After all, why didn't the rabbis just have us stop reading the Torah portion after the song of deliverance?

Why did they have to teach us what happened to the Jewish people when they went on to Maror, and, what's more, why do we learn that the Jewish people were given laws and judgments there? What does that have to do with sweetening the water? What's more, it is obvious that if people go without water three days they are going to die. The Jewish people must have had some water with them at this time, but, besides that, children, of course, and old people could not go three days without water. Maybe healthy adults could but not them. What are we talking about here?

It seems to me that what we are talking about here is not physical water but spiritual water, what it is that causes the human being to go on, what gives him the motivation to live his life. In the song that the Jewish people sang praising G-d they not only praised Him for destroying the Egyptian army, but they also praised Him for the goodwill that they now enjoyed

among the other peoples of the world. They said, "Peoples heard, they trembled, then the chieftans of Moab were afraid, the mighty men of Moab trembled taking hold of them. All the heavens of Canaan melted, terror and dread fell upon them, by the greatness of Thy arm they are still as stone." In other words, the Jewish people were not only an admired people, but they felt that they were now, so to speak, the talk of the town, that they had great prestige, and many people, of course, live for prestige, for what other people say about them. This is their spiritual water, that if people talk good about you then you feel good and then you feel you can go on and you have the courage to continue and to produce and to fulfill your talents. On the other hand, if people criticize you and say bad things about you, you cringe and feel depressed and helpless. You do not feel optimistic anymore. People need to have an inner courage in order to go on, and many people find this courage not from within themselves but from outside themselves, from what other people say. In other words, they are other directed. What they say about you in Washington or Paris or London is what counts, not what you feel inside, not whether you feel you are living up to your own ideals, etc. This is the type of water we are talking about, the spiritual water of internal courage and motivation. Where does this motivation come from? What is it that causes you to be able to look yourself in the mirror and say, "I am a good person. I am doing the right thing, and because I am doing the right thing, I have the courage to persevere even against opposition." Many people look for this courage outside themselves. This will not lead, though, to a good situation because many times in life we have to endure the barbs and criticisms of others in life and, therefore, when we are criticized we should not feel then that we are worthless and no good. We should feel that if our purpose and if our goals are just and right even though people criticize them, that we should still have the courage to go on, that spiritual water to go on.

What Moshe and this Torah portion is teaching us is that not always will we benefit from the approbation of others. Not only are we going to have their good will, but we should still persevere. There will be a lot of bitter waters spewed upon us. We will not always be the darlings of the media or the darlings of the nations of the world. In fact, in most of our history we were the subject of terrible cruel criticism, biting criticism. We were told we were in league with the devil, sub-human, etc. That is why it talks about being given a law and a judgment. From then on Moshe said we should not be worried about what the rest of the world thinks about you. You are given your own values. You should judge yourself by your own values. Are you living by your own values? If you are not, then something is the matter with you. Then you will always be frightened by what other people will say.

We can see that this is happening in Israel, too, where so many people are worried about what France will say and Washington will say, what will London say because much of the intellencia of Israel does not look at internal Jewish values for their self-approval. They look for their self-approval towards what western culture says. If the New York Times or the London Times does not say good things about them they feel terrible. In other words, they are not inner directed but outer directed. Although we do know that sometimes it is important what people say, it is a secondary consideration. The primary consideration is what do you say about yourself. Do you feel you are living up to your own values and aspirations? It is not important what they say about you in Washington or Paris or London. It is important what you say about yourself. This seems to be the normal in our civilization today to worry too much about what other people think about us, that the ordinary actions that you know are right and just, if they do not get the approbation and approval of others, people feel disgusted

with themselves. Housewives feel disgusted with just being housewives. They have to be something else. Businessmen feel they have to be something else. They cannot just be an honest businessman. They have to have a flashy appearance. People feel they have to set records and do things to get their names in the paper otherwise they are not living. They are not doing things that are important. Everything is hype now. Even the weather is hype on television. The news has to be hyped up. The weather has to be hyped up. I know the story of a friend of mine who was in New York and had to go to Philadelphia and the weather talked about a huge storm coming. Outside you could see there wasn't much of a storm, but he decided to go three hours early. He got there 3 hours early because there was nobody on the road. Everyone was so afraid of the hype. They did not believe their own eyes. They believed the hype even though the storm veered off in another direction. Of course, sometimes we have to take proper precautions, but we live in a society in which we tend not to listen to our own internal values but to what the critics say, to what people who do not share our values say, and that is wrong. Not always are you going to benefit from the approval of others. Sometimes you still have to stick to your goals even though you are going to be criticized if you, yourself, know your goals are just and right. The same thing should be in Israel today, too. The important thing in Israel is not to do things to please others but to do things which are good for the country. There are many solutions which have been offered. Rav Goron has a solution that we should divide the country into ten camptowns and not worry too much about the demography problem because Jews can have babies, too, but also let those Jews who have left Israel and still have Israeli passports vote, too, just like American who live overseas can vote. There are many solutions to the problems. Maybe one of the solutions is giving back land, but the

important thing is not to do it because Washington thinks it is good or Paris thinks it is good or London thinks it is good but because you think it is good and know it is good for the Israeli situation. We do not do things in order to get our names in the paper and get patted on the head or because we set a record. We should do things because they are the right thing to do.

I am reminded of a man who called up what he thought was a record shop but was actually a private individual. He said, "Do you have 'Eyes of Blue' and 'A Love Supreme'?" The man said, "No, but I have a wife and 11 children." The man asked, "Is that a record?" The man answered, "I don't know, but that's as close as I want to get." In this life we must have the courage to do what we think is right. Moshe gave them a law and a judgment. A lot of times there will be bitter waters heaped upon us, criticism, biting criticism, but we should look for our spiritual sustenance not from the outside but from the inside. Are we living up to our values or not? If we are, then we can disregard the criticism. If we are not, then we should change.