

Parshas Beshalach 5762

1. We think of קיי"ס as culmination of punishment of Egyptians. And this is true: במצרים לקו עשר מכות ועל הים לקו חמשים מכות.
2. However, the Midrash tells us that the Egyptians at קיי"ס also received a שכר - of sorts.

On the pasuk: מכאן שזכו לקבורה בשכר שאמרו: Rashi quotes Chazal: נטית ימינך תבלעמו ארץ. The Egyptian bodies should have been lost in the sea, food for the fishes. But because after the מכה of ברד פרעה had said ה' הצדיק, the sea spit them up so that they could at least be buried.

3. Now the Midrash is difficult. First: What is the מידה כנגד מידה; why is this the appropriate reward. Probably if you would have asked them the Egyptians would have preferred a different reward, something they could actually enjoy.
4. Second: Rashi's version of the Midrash is that they rewarded for saying ה' הצדיק ואני ועמי הרשעים. That, at least, had the virtue of being a confession, albeit under duress and albeit it didn't last long. But there is another version of this Midrash, cited by רשב"ם - Rashi's grandson - פסחים קיי"ח. In his version the reward was not for saying ה' הצדיק; after all, only פרעה had said, not the other Egyptians. Rather, the reward was for saying at the time of קיי"ס itself: אנוסה הפעם כי ה' נלחם להם במצרים.

5. Very difficult. This isn't even a confession. Who could deny - with the sea having split and now crashing down on them - that השם was miraculously destroying the Egyptian host? Why should the מצרים have been entitled for saying - what anyone in their place would have said - let's get out of here, G-d's out to get us.

6. The שערי אורה explains beautifully:

The מצוה of קבורה is connected with the fact that man is created בצלם אלקים. The Torah says in תצא כי תצא: לא תלין נבלתו על עץ ... כי קללת אלקים תלוי; a human body cannot be allowed to remain unburied because it is, כביכול, a disgrace to the One in whose image he is made.

7. What does it mean that man is בצלם אלקים? Many interpretations: He has free will; he has intelligence; he has the capacity to create. In any event, in some essential way man is able to emulate the רבונו של עולם. We have a concept והתהלכת בדרכיו; we can emulate His ways. The more we do so, the more we rise to the level of אלקים.

8. The most fundamental מידה of הקב"ה is אמת, truth. G-d is the ultimate truth. As the רמב"ם explains, that means He is the ultimate reality. A person who denies His reality is living without the most basic truth. His whole life is built on שקר. And, therefore, in the deepest sense, he has failed to be a צלם אלקים.

9. The Egyptians lived their whole life in denial of the *הקב"ה*'s existence. *מי השם*; Who is Hashem, *פרעה* had said. They worshiped the Nile and the sheep and the dog and the demons of the underworld. Their whole way of life, their whole existence, was built on *שקר*. And therefore, they lacked any connection to being *בצלם אלקים*.

10. But in those final few seconds of their lives they were suddenly brought face to face with reality: *אנוסה הפעם כי ה' נלחם להם במצרים*. They suddenly were brought up to the truth, which was about to destroy them. And in those last few seconds they lived in reality, they caught a glimpse of the *אמת* of the world. And in those second they rose - in some small, infinitesimal degree - to the level - to the lowest level - of a *צלם אלקים*. And therefore human dignity - which is predicated on man's being *בצלם אלקים* - required thier burial.

11. The Egyptians were forced to this recognition with their deaths - as the *רבשי"ע* had foretold: *וידעו מצרים כי אני ה' בהכבדי בפרעה ובכל חילו*. For that the most they deserved was a decent burial.

It is for us, however, to infuse this recognition into our lives. To say each day *אני ה'* *אלקיכם אמת*, that the *רבונו של עולם* is the true ground of existence. And to recognize that *ה' נלחם להם במצרים*, that it is He who fights against *מצרים*, the Egyptians of each generation. He uses many instruments and we are required to have *הכרת הטוב* toward them; but it is His battle. When a terrorist with Jewish blood on his hands is eliminated it is not only Israeli derring-do that we should applaude; but *השם הנלחם להם במצרים*. When the thousand pound bombs fell in Afghanistan on the avowed enemies of our people it was only George W. who had our thanks; but *השם הנלחם להם במצרים*. Whenever the blood of innocents is avenged, as avenged it must be, it is *השם הנלחם להם במצרים*.

Until such time as evil shall be destroyed altogether, *כי תעביר ממשלת זדון מן הארץ*, when the reign of evil shall pass from the earth, *במהרה בימינו אמן*.