

BESHALACH (EXODUS 13:17-17:16)

Don't Leave Home Without It!

2007 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

It's the stereotypical situation. You go on a trip. The husband takes along whatever clothes and toiletries he knows he'll need. The wife shlepps along everything she has the slightest suspicion she MIGHT need. Mr. argues with Mrs. "C'mon, Honey, whaddaya need THAT for?!"

Men and women just don't see things the same way. Men are practical. Women are emotional. Women pack for a trip to Mars as if they are going all the way to Venus. Men sometimes get exasperated over their wives' lack of practicality.

Consider the very first Seder Night. After Ten Plagues' worth of obstinate refusal, the Pharaoh has just done a political flip-flop. He is now DEMANDING that the Israelites leave. NOW!

You're packing your bags. You can't take much. You don't even have time to let your bread rise. You grab your money, some weapons, all your credit cards... You're going with barely more than the clothes on your back. Wait a second... "Honey! Where are you going with THOSE?!!"

Your wife has just packed her drum set into the back of the station wagon.

"Oh, I need these!" she responds.

"Honey, were going out into a desert! We have to get out of Egypt as quickly as possible. We can't bring unnecessary luxuries."

"It is NOT a luxury," she answers. It is absolutely essential! We just can't leave Egypt without it!"

"But, Honey!" ...

You give up. You know you've lost. She is once again totally emotional, totally irrational, and totally illogical. But you're not going to fight about it. You roll your eyes, shrug your shoulders, mumble about how strange women are, and finish your packing.

One week later.

Pharaoh changed his mind.

He regrets releasing the Hebrew slaves from captivity. He leads his army in hot pursuit. The Red Sea is in front of you and the Egyptian cavalry is approaching rapidly. You begin to panic. What are you going to do?

Suddenly, all of Nature turns upside down! G-d splits the Red Sea and every other body of water in the world. The Red Sea becomes a twelve-lane highway, and each tribe gets its own Red Sea tunnel through which to escape. There are fresh fruits on trees and running fresh water for your eating and drinking pleasure as you stroll through the dry paths in the sea. You are amazed by this unexpected miracle.

But wait! What's that you see? The Egyptians have also taken advantage of this miracle. They have followed you into the tunnel. You won't escape! You begin to panic. What are you going to do?

Suddenly, all of Nature turns rightside up! G-d now closes up the sea. The Egyptians are tossed around in the currents and their drowned bodies are deposited on the shore for all to see. You are amazed by this unexpected miracle.

You are dumbstruck by G-d's Providence. You are absolutely overwhelmed. You have witnessed the Divine Presence of G-d up close. You have experienced a level of prophecy that, according to our Sages, exceeded the greatest prophecies of Ezekiel. You are thankful to G-d for His unexpected miracles.

You sing!

Then Moses and the Children of Israel sang this song to G-d, saying: "I will sing to G-d for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse and rider into the sea..." (Exodus, 15:1)

Your wife sings too!

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took her drum in her hand and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dances. Miriam spoke up to them, "Sing to G-d, for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse and rider into the sea..." (Ibid. verse 20)

Drums? Did someone say something about drums?

Rashi explains that the righteous Daughters of Israel were so sure that G-d was going to perform miracles for them that they brought their drums with them in order to properly celebrate G-d's salvation.

Drums? Aren't those the drums you told your wife not to bring? Aren't those the drums you mumbled about, complaining about your wife's lack of practicality? Aren't those the drums that your wife said were necessary? Aren't those the drums that your wife knew she needed in order to celebrate the miracles that SHE EXPECTED and you didn't? Aren't those the drums that demonstrate that your wife has more faith than you do??

Aren't you embarrassed that in the interest of being "practical" you didn't demonstrate as much faith as your wife did?

Aren't you glad that G-d chose the Daughters of Israel to be the Mothers of Israel?

Have a great Shabbos.

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