

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

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Bnei Yisroel are free, but they have one enemy left in Mitzrayim.

וַיִּגְדַּל לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם וַיִּהְיֶה לִּבָּב פַּרְעֹה וַעֲבָדָיו אֶל-הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֶה-זֹּאת עֲשִׂינוּ כִּי-שָׁלַחְנוּ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַבְדָּנוּ:

“And it was told to the King of Egypt, because the nation fled. And that the heart of Pharaoh and his servant reversed toward the people. And they said, ‘What is this that we have done? Because of it we sent Bnei Yisroel from our service.’” (Shmos 14:5).

The pasuk seems to indicate that Pharaoh and his servants regretted what they had done. Is it teaching something else? Why is Pharaoh seemingly called King of Egypt in the beginning of the pasuk but then Pharaoh toward its middle? Did Pharaoh chase after Bnei Yisroel himself?

The Torah reveals something interesting when it comes to this grand chase in the wilderness. It says “Egypt” not “Pharaoh” pursued Bnei Yisroel. It also calls Pharaoh the King of Egypt for the first time since perek vav. It also called him Pharaoh King of Egypt way back when Pharaoh appointed Yosef to be the vizier. (Bereishis 41:46). This is what happened.

Pharaoh was the city-state King of Egypt, a small territory in the north, that included Goshen. Through the years of plenty and the years of famine, and with Yosef’s ingenuity, Pharaoh became an emperor of this massive empire called Eretz Mitzrayim. After Yosef was appointed vizier, the Torah calls him Pharaoh. When Bnei Yisroel arrived, there was a King of Egypt, and that was a local Nomarch over the city-state of Mitzrayim (think of it like New York City in New York State). However, that King of Egypt had a major problem: the Hebrews. They kept producing even with hardships, and bondage. (Shmos 1:14). He asked the midwives to refuse life affirming care to neonate male Hebrews. (Ibid 1:16). However, that did not work. He brought his issue to Pharaoh. The midwives pleaded to Pharaoh, who did have the power to order to deaths of the newborns. (Ibid 1:19). Pharaoh, however, was cruel and more powerful and ordered every newborn be thrown into the Nile. (Ibid 1:22). This is why Moshe, who was three months old, was still in danger (ibid 2:2) while previous newborns were safe (ibid 1:18).

However, another problem arose. Moshe and Aharon appealed to Pharaoh to free Bnei Yisroel. (Ibid 5:1). Moshe previously went to the King of Egypt. He had merely told them to get back to work. (Ibid 5:4). Pharaoh, though, had to step in and order that straw no longer be given for the making of bricks. (Ibid 1:18, 5:7). Then the Torah calls Pharaoh, “Pharaoh King of Egypt” again. (Ibid 6:11, 13, 27, 29). After the King of Egypt again failed to get Bnei Yisroel under control, Pharaoh had to step in. Afterwards, the Torah calls him

Pharaoh again, because they were dealing with him as the Pharaoh, the emperor of the Land of Egypt. The entire country was about to be struck.

After Bnei Yisroel were driven out, this information was told to the King of Egypt. (Ibid 14:5). The wording of *וַיִּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ* instead of *אָל* indicates it was by message (just like when Pharaoh sent word to Moshe to leave, *ibid* 12:31). He may have been in prison or in exile. He also saw how Pharaoh and his servants reversed course toward Bnei Yisroel. Now, he took charge.

The King of Egypt then ordered his rider, and then he took his people with him. (Ibid 14:6). He purchased (or forcefully commandeered) six hundred selected chariots from Pharaoh, and all the chariots of Mitzrayim, with officers over all of them. (Ibid 14:7). He now had Pharaoh's entire army at his disposal. And Hashem strengthened his heart and called him Pharaoh King of Egypt. (Ibid 14:8). The King of Egypt now became the interim Pharaoh. And it was Egypt—not the Land of Egypt—that chased after Bnei Yisroel. (Ibid 14:9). The army was made up of Pharaoh's horses, his riders, and his warriors. (Ibid). Pharaoh had horses because the Mako of dever (pestilence) did not strike Eretz Mitzrayim, only the city-state Mitzrayim. (Ibid 9:4).

Hashem spoke to Moshe as he was traveling in the wilderness. He said, Pharaoh will say about Bnei Yisroel they are floundering in the land. (Ibid 14:3). He meant the interim Pharaoh. Hashem will then strengthen that Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue them. (Ibid 14:4). Then the *army* of Pharaoh (purchased by the King of Egypt) neared Bnei Yisroel. (Ibid 14:10). The *pasuk* does not have the usual terminology but says *וּפָרְצָה הַקָּרִיב*, putting the noun before the verb. This means it was the army of Pharaoh, or Pharaoh's appearance, that neared. Pharaoh, himself, was back in Mitzrayim devastated. That is why the Torah clarifies and writes in that *pasuk*, "Behold! Mitzrayim was chasing after them." (Ibid). It does not say Pharaoh was chasing. The Torah continues to use Mitzrayim as the adjective for the army. (Ibid 14:11,20,23,24). Hashem then says, "I have strengthened the heart of Egypt," no longer saying Pharaoh. (Ibid 14:17). "And Egypt will know" instead of Pharaoh and his servants will know. (Ibid 14:18). It was now Egypt chasing and the Egyptian camp, but with Pharaoh's army (*ibid* 14:28) and horses (*ibid* 15:19) all commandeered by the King of Egypt.

This also explains why Hashem told Moshe to go to the King of Egypt (*ibid* 3:18) and he will not let you go (*ibid* 3:19). It is only after smiting "all of Egypt" (not the Egyptians) with *all my wonders* will he send you. (Ibid 3:20). It was only after the wonders at Yam Suf and the destruction of the city-state of Egypt's strength, that the King of Egypt finally let them go. Further, this was all foreshadowed at the outset. "A new king rose upon Egypt who did not know Yosef." (Ibid 1:8). Yosef created this amazing empire of Egypt. However, at the end of all this, a new king rose—the King of Egypt took charge from the fallen Pharaoh after Bnei Yisroel left, and he did know Yosef. He did not know the Egypt that Yosef created. Egypt was in shambles. This city-state king was taking over a bereft country, not the empire created by Yosef.

It is important to learn from the experiences of others. When Hashem makes it clear what justice is, or what the right path is, a person should not think they can be successful when others failed. Failure of others is a lesson of how to do things better.