YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA**

**Parashat BESHALACH**

**SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL *ZT"L***

"**When Pharaoh Sent Out the People**"

Translated by Kaeren Fish

"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh sent out the people…" (*Shemot* 13:16)

Why does the text attribute the sending out of the people to Pharaoh? Was it really Pharaoh who was responsible for their departure? Was it not God Who brought Am Yisrael out of Egypt, by forcing Pharaoh, through His strong hand and His signs and wonders, to permit their departure?

The midrash asks the same question, and explains the phrase as follows:

"Was it then Pharaoh who sent them out? Bil'am said, 'God brought them out of Egypt…' (*Bamidbar* 23:22); why then does the text state here, 'And it came to pass when *Pharaoh* sent out (*be-shalach Par'o*)…'? This teaches us that Pharaoh accompanied them, saying, 'Pray for me and seek [Divine] compassion for me' - as it is written, 'Take also your flocks and your cattle, as you have spoken, and go, and bless me, also' (*Shemot* 12:32). The 'sending out' referred to here teaches that he escorted them, in the same way that it is written, 'Avraham went with them, to send them (*le-shalcham*)' (*Bereishit* 18:16)." (*Shemot Rabba* 20, 3)

The matter of "sending out" is a central motif in the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The phrase "Send out (*shalach*) My people, that they may serve Me" appears no less than seven times. Various liberation movements adopted as their rallying cry a corrupted translation of this biblical command - "Let my people go." The translation implies that all that was required of Pharaoh was passive acquiescence: "Let them go" means "don't prevent them from going."

But the message in the Torah is different: "*Shalach et ami*" means "Send out My people." Pharaoh is asked to actively send them out. "Send out My people, that they may serve Me" means that Pharaoh must send *Bnei* *Yisrael* to serve God; moreover, we read, "You, too, shall give us offerings and sacrifices that we may offer to the Lord our God" (10:25). (This also appears to be the message of the midrash above.) This is an event of historical significance: Egypt, at the time a world power, was recognizing God and sending *Am Yisrael* to worship Him.

In our days, too, there are important processes that bear some resemblance to this. Some years ago the Vatican officially recognized the State of Israel. Having maintained for centuries that the Christians were the true Jews (the miserable existence of the Jews in exile representing an important "proof" of their fall from grace), the Christian establishment was finally forced to face reality and recognize the return of the Jewish nation to its land. The Arab states, too, with leaders who refused to sit in the same room as Jews, were likewise eventually forced to recognize Israel's existence, and even to hold talks with its representatives.

The historical significance of the recognition of *Am Yisrael* and its country on the part of the nations of the world cannot be overstated. (Another event in contemporary times whose full historical and spiritual significance we fail to grasp is the fall of Communism: the downfall of an ideology which tried to manage without God and to build a system of justice and social good not based on the fear of Heaven.) Admittedly, Jerusalem as yet to be universally recognized as our capital, and our rights to the land and to the Temple Mount are subject to much controversy, but we must keep in mind that this is an essential part of the process whose conclusion has been foretold:

"… the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. And many peoples shall go and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Yaakov; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' For teaching shall emerge from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

(*Yeshayahu* 2:2-3)