**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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

PARASHAT VAERA

SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL ZT”L

**Paths of Divine Providence**

Translated by Kaeren Fish

“And God spoke to Moshe and He said to him, I am the Lord. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov by the Name of E-l Sha-dai, but My Name, the Lord, I was not known to them… And I have also heard the groaning of Bnei Yisrael… I will bring you out… and I will deliver you… and I will redeem you… and I will take you… and I will bring you to the land… Go in, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he send out Bnei Yisrael from his land.” (*Shemot* 6:2-11)

“‘And God spoke to Moshe’ – He spoke judgment to him for having questioned, saying, ‘Why have You done evil to this people’ (*Shemot* 5:22).” (Rashi, *Shemot* 6:2)

Chazal note the rebuke in God’s words to Moshe, and interpret the invocation of the forefathers (“I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov”) as an expression of longing for the departed, for they did not question God’s ways. Seemingly, the verse offers no real response to Moshe’s questioning (“Why have You done evil to this people; why have You sent me?”), and after putting Moshe in his place, God commands, “Go in to Pharaoh… that he let Bnei Yisrael go out of his land.”

However, in truth this is not the situation. If we look carefully, we see that Moshe did not utter two separate claims when he asked, “Why have You done evil to this people; why have You sent me?”, but rather one single question. Moshe turns to God and cries out: You, God, have the power to deliver Israel in any way You choose. Why, then, was this “diplomatic mission” necessary in the process of bringing Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt? “For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he has done evil to this people” (*Shemot* 5:23). Is it not a pity to waste all this time in contacts in which God’s emissary tries to appease the ruler of the Egyptian empire, while meantime Bnei Yisrael continue to suffer under their cruel bondage, their cries piercing the heavens? Moshe wants an immediate, direct redemption, not one that takes the longer route, seeking Pharaoh’s approval.

God responds to this by letting Moshe know, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways” (*Yishayahu* 55:8). “Woe for those who are departed” – the forefathers did not start questioning when they discovered unfathomable contradictions between My promises to them and the reality that faced them. Avraham and Yaakov were forced to leave the promised land; Yitzchak was involved in arguments with the shepherds throughout his life – but despite all this, they never questioned God’s ways. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (*Yishayahu* 55:9). The redemption envisioned in the Divine plan does not entail an exodus that the nations of the world decry. Rather, this historical event must be carried out in accordance with the Divine will specifically with the agreement and active involvement of the nations of the world.

As the ruler of the Egyptian empire and thus as a representative of the world powers, Pharaoh is told, “Send out My people (*shalach et ami*).” The popular translation, “Let My people go,” is inaccurate; Pharaoh is being asked to intervene and to actively cause Bnei Yisrael’s departure from Egypt. Thus, while God speaks to Moshe and promises “I will bring out… I will deliver…”, the realization of these expressions of redemption comes through the command, “Speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, that he send out Bnei Yisrael from his land.”

We do not understand God’s ways, but at times He makes His will known to us through various means. The Exodus from Egypt is the model of an event that is part of the course of Jewish history but whose impact is nevertheless felt by the nations of the world. Therefore, a miraculous, unworldly exodus will not suffice, and God sends Moshe to ask of Pharaoh, “Send out My people that they may serve Me.”