



FOUR CAMPS AT SEA

As the Egyptians pursued them, the Jews were busy arguing over their next step. Was collective suicide an option? And why did G-d side against passionate prayer?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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The Jewish people are standing at the sea, at a loss (Source 1). An argument breaks out among the nation about what their next step should be (Source 2). When examining the four schools of thought detailed below, two are difficult to fathom. Why would they wish to drown in the sea or return to Egypt?

B. The Logic Behind The Opinions.....8

The logic behind each option: A. Drown at sea: they considered it preferable to give their lives up rather than return to exile. B. Return to Egypt: they thought they hadn't truly been liberated from Egypt and wished to return to complete their exodus. C. Wage war: they didn't see any other option. D. Pray: Whenever one is in difficult circumstances, they should pray.

G-d told the Jews "Go!" Sometimes we need to close our prayer books, go out, and split the sea!

What does the sea represent? Everything on land has its parallel in the sea, but it is concealed. Splitting the sea means uncovering the hidden potential. "Go!" means go to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah and uncover the spiritual layer of the material world. If you encounter a sea on your way, go through it and it will split.

C. Jump to Succeed.....13

On dry land, we're in our comfort zone, walking on firm ground. We can't split the sea and bridge the spiritual and the material. We must be prepared to leap into the sea with self-sacrifice, get out of our comfort zones. Then we can achieve our goals.

This concept is also expressed in the mitzvah of repentance. It is stated about certain sins that one cannot repent for them (Source 3). The Alter Rebbe explains that repentance is possible even for those sins, if you really force your way through (Source 4).

The Rebbe demonstrates this with the story of Elisha ben Avuya, or "Acher." Despite a heavenly voice proclaiming "return wayward sons except for Acher," he was still expected to force his way in and repent (Source 5)

The Jewish legal source for this is in the Talmud: "obey everything the master tells you—except for 'leave.'" The Shalah explains this means that a Jew must follow every one of G-d's commandments, however if told to "leave" he must not listen, he should force his way inside (Source 6).

Pushing Means to Give Your Life

Giving up one's life is only permitted in the face of the three cardinal sins. However, some situations warrant giving your life for every mitzvah, as the Midrash says: "Why are you being executed? 'For circumcising my son'" (Source 7).

Some things cannot be reached through the regular process. To achieve them you need to leap out of your comfort zone. This is what transpired at the sea. After Moses commanded to Jews to go, the tribes fought over who would be first. Suddenly, Nachshon jumped into the water—ready to give his life—and then the waters split for everyone (Source 9).

This is an eternal lesson for the Jewish people:

We have one primary objective: to reveal G-d's light in the world. Every so often we are faced with challenging times, and there are conflicting approaches. G-d's command to Moses of "Go!" is a lesson for us. We need to focus on the goal, revealing G-dliness in the world. We must ignore the background noise and press on. Sometimes it may require jumping into the sea, meaning self-sacrifice and leaving our comfort zone. Then, the sea will split and we will reach the finish line.

Introduction

The Jews are facing the sea, at a loss. Behind them - the Egyptians, and in front of them - a sea. They split up into four camps. One says to drown at sea; the second says to return to Egypt; the third says to fight; and the fourth says to pray. What do they do?

השיעור לפרשת בשלח

על פי שיחת י"ד שבט, ה"תש"מ
הנחה פרטית – בלתי מוגה

[לצפייה בוידאו מהשיחה בתכנית תורת חיים לחץ כאן](#)



A. Four Groups at Sea

Source 1 Exodus, 14:5-15

Stuck Between the Egyptians and the Sea

Student's When the king of Egypt was told that the people
pg. 3 had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Jews go and have lost them as slaves!" So Pharaoh had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. G-d hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Jews, who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops—pursued the Jews and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hachiroth, opposite Baal Tzefon.

As Pharaoh approached, the Jews looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to G-d. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the desert? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance G-d will bring you today. The Egypt you see today you will never see again. G-d will fight for you; you will remain silent.

"Then G-d said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Jews to go forward.

וַיִּגְדַּל מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם, וַיִּהְיֶה לְבַב פְּרַעֲהוֹ וַעֲבָדָיו אֶל הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מַה זֹאת עָשִׂינוּ, כִּי שְׁלַחְנוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעִבְרָתָנוּ. וַיֹּאסֶר אֶת רֶכְבּוֹ וְאֶת עַמּוֹ לָקַח עִמּוֹ. וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בָּחוּר וְכָל רֶכֶב מִצְרַיִם וְשֹׁלְשָׁם עַל כָּלָּו. וַיַּחֲזֶק ה' אֶת לֵב פְּרַעֲהוֹ מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּרְדֹּף אַחֲרָיו בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹצְאִים בְּיַד רַמָּה. וַיִּרְדְּפוּ מִצְרַיִם אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁיגוּ אוֹתָם חֲנִיּוֹת עַל הַיָּם כֹּל סוֹס רֶכֶב פְּרַעֲהוֹ וּפָרָשָׁיו וַחֲמִילוֹ עַל פִּי הַחַיִּית לִפְנֵי בַעַל צָפֹן.

וּפְרַעֲהוֹ הַקְּרִיב, וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת עֵינֵיהֶם וַהֲגִיזוּ מִצְרַיִם נֹסַע אַחֲרֵיהֶם, וַיִּירָאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה'. וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה: הַמִּבְלִי אֵין קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לְמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר, מַה זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם. הֲלֹא זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר, חַדְל מִמְנוּ וְנַעֲבֹדָה אֶת מִצְרַיִם, כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ עַבְד אֶת מִצְרַיִם מִמֹּתְנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל הָעָם: אַל תִּירָאוּ, הַתִּיצְבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת ה' אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם, כִּי אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתֶם אֶת מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם, לֹא תִסְפוּ לְרַאתָם עוֹד עַד עוֹלָם. ה' יִלָּחֵם לָכֶם, וְאַתֶּם תַּחֲרֹשׁוּן.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה: מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי, דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ.

Source 2 Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit, 2:5

The Debate

Student's Our ancestors split into four groups at the sea.
pg. 4 One said, "Let us drown." Another said, "Let us return to Egypt." Another said, "Let us wage war with them." Another said, "We will cry out to G-d."

Moses told the ones who wanted to drown: Stand firm and you will see G-d's salvation.

Moses told the ones who wanted to return to Egypt: The Egypt you see today you will never see again.

Moses to the ones who wanted to wage war: G-d will fight for you.

Moses told the ones who wanted to cry out to G-d: You will remain silent.

אַרְבַּע כִּיתִים נַעֲשׂוּ אַבּוֹתֵינוּ עַל הַיָּם. אַחַת אוֹמְרַת - נִפּוֹל לַיָּם, וְאַחַת אוֹמְרַת - נַחְזוֹר לְמִצְרַיִם, וְאַחַת אוֹמְרַת - נַעֲשֵׂה עִמָּהֶן מִלְחָמָה, וְאַחַת אוֹמְרַת - נִצּוּחַ כְּנַגְדָּן.

זו שְׁאֹמְרָה נִפּוֹל לַיָּם, אָמַר לָהּ מֹשֶׁה - הִתְיַצְבוּ וּרְאוּ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת ה' וְגו'.

זו שְׁאֹמְרָה נַחְזוֹר לְמִצְרַיִם, אָמַר לָהּ מֹשֶׁה - כִּי אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתֶם אֶת מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם וְגו'.

זו שְׁאֹמְרָה נַעֲשֵׂה עִמָּהֶן מִלְחָמָה, אָמַר לָהּ מֹשֶׁה - ה' יִלָּחֵם לָכֶם.

זו שְׁאֹמְרָה נִצּוּחַ כְּנַגְדָּן, אָמַר לָהּ מֹשֶׁה - וְאַתֶּם תַּחַרְשׁוּן.

>> The Rebbe

Where Did The Talmud Derive It From?

Student's The lengthiness of Moses' answer teaches
pg. 4 us that he was responding to four camps among the Jewish people. To those that advocated jumping into the sea, Moses said "Stand firm and you will see G-d's deliverance." To those that advocated returning to Egypt he responded, "The Egypt you see today you will never see again." To those that advocated war he said "G-d will fight for you." And to the fourth group that advocated crying out in prayer he responded, "you will remain silent."

האריכות בתשובת משה רבינו מלמדת שהיו ארבע כיתות בישראל. לאלו שאמרו ניפול לים, ענה משה: "התייצבו וראו את ישועת ה'", לאלו שאמרו נחזור למצרים, הוא ענה: "כאשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תוסיפון לראותם עוד עד עולם", לאלו שאמרו נצא למלחמה, הוא ענה: "ה' ילחם לכם", ולכיתה הרביעית שאמרה "נצווח" הוא ענה: "ואתם תחרישון".

The Rebbe teaches us an interesting point here. We often ask ourselves, “from where did the Talmud derive its information about events that occurred thousands of years earlier?” The answer is that many of these stories were traditions transmitted through the generations, other times the sages derived information from the text, and other times it is a combination – there was a tradition, and the Sages identified an allusion to it in the text.

In our case, the Rebbe says, the lengthy form of the verses and inclusion of four separate points teaches us that there were four opinions among the people that Moses needed to address.

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When examining these four different opinions, a question arises. The last two schools of thought are easily understood: fighting back or praying both seem like logical responses. Rashi teaches us similarly about Jacob: before meeting his brother Esau, he did three things: prepare gifts, pray and prepare for war (Rashi, Genesis 32:9).

On the other hand, the first two approaches don't seem to make sense. Jump into the sea and drown? That isn't the Jewish way of dealing with life's challenges. Return to Egypt? After the ten plagues and the heavenly miracles, is that really what they wanted to do, to be enslaved once again? What were they thinking?

The Rebbe goes on to explain the moral and legal justifications for each of these approaches, and why G-d nevertheless rejected them and commanded something entirely different.

B. The Logic Behind The Opinions

>> The Rebbe

1. Jumping Into The Sea - Self-Sacrifice

Student's The first camp advocated jumping into
pg. 5 the sea. These people maintained that the nation needs to sacrifice their lives in order not to return to Egypt.

Following the giving of the Torah we were commanded to sacrifice our lives in order to avoid transgressing certain specific commandments. This group among the Jews maintained that the mitzvah to leave Egypt was such a mitzvah that requires sacrificing their lives, if necessary.

Moses had led them out of Egypt, they had seen G-d's great wonders, and they had been told that this is a Divine redemption from their difficult exile. Suddenly, 600 chariots arrive in order to return them to slavery in Egypt, contrary to G-d will.

This camp among the Jews concluded that they must sacrifice their lives in order not to return to Egypt. The only way to do this was to jump into the sea, so that's what they believed was required of them.

הכיתה הראשונה שאמרה ליפול לים - חשבה שעל העם למסור את הנפש כדי שלא לחזור למצרים.

לאחר מתן תורה נצטוונו למסור את הנפש על מצוות מסוימות - "ייהרג ואל יעבור". הכיתה הראשונה חשבה שמצוות יציאת מצרים היא כזו שצריך למסור עליה את הנפש.

הרי משה רבינו הוציא אותם ממצרים, הם ראו את נפלאות ה', ונאמר להם שזוהי הגאולה מהגלות הקשה - "פקד פקדתי אתכם" ... ולפתע מגיעים שש מאות רכב בחור מתוך כוונה להחזירם לעבדות מצרים נגד רצון ה'!

מסקנתם היתה, שההלכה היא שעליהם למסור את נפשם שלא לחזור למצרים. ומכיון שהדרך היחידה לפעול זאת היא על ידי נפילה אל הים, הם חשבו שבענין זה צריכה להתבטא אצלם מסירות הנפש - ייהרג ואל יעבור!

2. Returning to Egypt to finish the job

Student's The second camp advocated returning to
pg. 6 Egypt. Their logic was that these events are an indication that they hadn't yet finished their job in Egypt of elevating the Divine sparks located there.

Chassidic and Mussar sources state that when a person is sent to a particular place for a specific purpose, later told to leave that place, and then suddenly instructed to return, it is an indication that their mission in that place hasn't yet been completed.

In our case, the Jewish people were commanded to "empty out Egypt." The Talmud explains that this means that they were instructed to leave Egypt "like a bird trap empty of food, and like an abyss in the sea empty of fish." Seeing the Egyptians coming out to chase them with six hundred chariots, and with nowhere for them to run, they took this as proof that their role in Egypt had not yet been completed. They therefore decided that they must return to Egypt for an additional period of time in order to elevate the Divine sparks that evidently remained.

הכיתה השנייה שאמרה נחזור למצרים - חשבה שהמצב מוכיח שמן הסתם הם עדיין לא סיימו את עבודת הבריורים במצרים.

בספרי מוסר וחסידות מובא, וכך גם מובן בפשטות, שכאשר שולחים מישהו למקום ולשליחות מסוימת, ובנקודת זמן מסוימת מצווים עליו לצאת את המקום - אך לאחר מכן מצווים עליו לפתע לחזור לאותו מקום, זוהי הוכחה ששליחותו במקום עדיין לא הושלמה.

ובנוגע לענייננו: בני ישראל נצטוו "וניצלתם את מצרים". וכפי שהגמרא מבארת במסכת ברכות, בני ישראל היו אמורים להשאיר "כמצולה שאין בה דגים, וכמצודה שאין בה דגן". העובדה שלאחר יציאתם ממצרים הם רואים לפתע שהמצרים נוסעים אחריהם עם שש מאות רכב, כשלכאורה אין להם לאיפה לברוח, זוהי ראייה שהמצווה בה נצטוו עוד לא הושלמה, ולכן עליהם לשוב למצרים לתקופה נוספת, ולברר את הבריורים הנוספים שעדיין לא הושלמו.

3. Fight!

Student's The third camp advocated fighting the Egyptians.
pg.7

The general rule is that we can't rely on miracles. The Jewish people were few in number and weak in strength relative to the Egyptians, who had six hundred chariots and great military force. Why then did they even consider trying to fight them?

The answer is that they simply saw no other choice. To jump into the sea would be suicidal, contrary to the Torah's command to preserve life. Returning to Egypt would contravene Moses' instructions to leave Egypt. They therefore argued that the circumstances indicate that they must fight, and employ all possible military tactics in an attempt to overpower the Egyptians.

4. Call Out In Prayer

Student's The fourth group appears to have advocated the best solution - praying to G-d, vigorously and loudly. This raises the question, why didn't Moses agree with this approach?
pg.7

Why didn't Moses adopt their position? Jews want to pray, and Moses tells them to be silent!

הכיתה השלישית אמרה - נערוך מלחמה עם המצרים.

לכאורה, הרי אין סומכין על הנס! ובני ישראל הרי היו מעטים נגד רבים וחלשים נגד גיבורים - כי בצד המצרי היו שש מאות רכב בחור וכל רכב מצרים עם כל התוקף, אם כן לכאורה, כיצד בא בכלל בחשבון לערוך עמם מלחמה?

התשובה היא, שזהו מכיון שלא היתה להם שום ברירה אחרת. ליפול לים - זה נגד ציווי ה' "ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם". לחזור למצרים - זה נגד ציווי משה רבינו שאמר להם לצאת ממצרים. לפיכך, המציאות עצמה מוכיחה שיש להילחם, להשתמש בתחבולות ותכסיסי מלחמה על מנת לנסות לנצח את המצרים.

לכאורה הכיתה הרביעית הציעה את הפיתרון המתבקש ביותר - להתפלל לה'. ולא סתם להתפלל, אלא "נצווח" בקול גדול. וכאן מתעורר הפלא הכי גדול, מדוע משה לא הסכים לכך?

לכאורה, מדוע לא, הרי יהודים רוצים להתפלל! מה השיב להם משה? לא! ואתם תחרישון!

G-d's Instruction - Split The Sea!

Student's G-d said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Speak to the Israelites and tell them to go forward!" Sometimes there are situations that call on us to pack our talit and tefillin, go outside, and split the sea!

pg. 8

What does this mean?

Sea - Concealment

Student's The Talmud says that everything on dry land has a parallel in the sea. The difference between the land and the sea is that on dry land we can see everything, but in the sea everything is concealed, all we can see is the water. This is akin to the state of exile, in which we don't see G-d's wonders, and everything is concealed. There are miracles even during exile, but only G-d is aware of them, and even the subject of the miracle doesn't recognize the miracles that have happened to him. We don't recognize the miracles because we live in a state of concealment, and it appears to us that the world is just following its natural course.

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Splitting The Sea - Revelation

Student's "Splitting the sea" means uncovering the concealment, revealing G-dliness even during the time of exile. This is the

pg. 8

אמר הקב"ה למשה רבינו - "מה תצעק אלי, דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו!" לפעמים ישנו מצב בו היהודי צריך לקפל את הטלית ותפילין שלו, לצאת לרחוב, ולקרוע את הים!

מה הפירוש בזה?

הגמרא אומרת, שכל מה שיש ביבשה יש בים. מהו ההבדל בין ים ליבשה? ביבשה רואים את הדברים כפי שהם, מה שאין כן בים - "כמים לים מכסים" - הדברים נמצאים בהעלם, ורואים רק את המים. זוהי דוגמה לזמן הגלות, ש"אותותינו לא ראינו" והכל נמצא בהעלם. זה לא שאין ניסים, יש ניסים - "לעושה נפלאות גדולות", אך "לבדו" - רק הוא יודע אודות הניסים, ובעל הנס עצמו אינו מכיר בניסו. מדוע הוא לא מכיר? מכיון שיש העלם והסתר, זה מכוסה, נראה לו שעולם כמנהגו נוהג וזוהי דרכו של עולם.

קריעת הים משמעותה לגלות את ההעלם, לגלות אלוקות גם בזמן הגלות. וזה מה שהקב"ה אמר "דבר

Student's meaning of G-d's instruction "Speak to the
pg. 9 Israelites and tell them to go forward" - we must jump into the sea and split it, uncover the concealment. When we do this we will witness G-d's deliverance, just as the Jewish people did during the Exodus.

אל בני ישראל ויסעו" - יהודי
צריך לקפוץ לים ולקרוע
אותו, לפעול גילוי בים. או
אז רואים את תשועת ה', כפי
שאכן ראו אז.

Splitting the Sea - Uncovering the Latent Spirituality in the World

The Jews leave Egypt with the stated goal of receiving the Torah at Sinai. The giving of the Torah was the ultimate revelation of G-dliness in the world, when he gifted mankind the Ten Commandments and gave us the power to bring holiness into the material, revealing G-d's presence in the physical realm.

On their way to Sinai, some obstacles arose. Naturally, the Jews are confused and argue about the correct approach. After everyone speaks their mind, G-d talks: Stay focused. You have an objective and you need to stick to it. If there are challenges along the way, the correct response is to remain laser-focused on your goal. If there's a sea in the way, it's a sign you need to keep pressing forward, even if that means splitting the sea.

The goal was, obviously, reaching Sinai and receiving the Torah, revealing G-dlines in the world. They had to continue, even if it meant jumping into the sea.

A Defining Moment

At a public gathering which took place on the 15th of Shevat, the Rebbe explained that this was a defining moment, a moment that teaches us how to grapple with future challenges. Throughout the generations and through the entire existence of the Jewish people, there will be debates about the correct response to challenges that arise, and there will always be four camps: A) drown in the sea. B) return to Egypt. C) fight. 4) pray.

Here G-d gives them a foundational message for all future occurrences: "Tell the Jews to go forward." They need to stay focused and keep pressing on to their goal, the reason we are in this world: to reveal G-d in the world.

C. Jump to Succeed

>> The Rebbe

Leave Your Comfort Zone

Student's We can't "split the sea" while we are
pg. 10 standing on dry land. We need to "go forward" and jump into the sea. Only when we do this can we truly "go forward" from our previous state and witness G-d's deliverance and see how He is "fighting on our behalf" with great wonders, as the Jews witnessed during the Exodus.

כיצד מצליחים לקרוע את הים? אי אפשר לעשות זאת כשנמצאים ביבשה, אלא צריך להיות "ויסעו", ובאופן שהיו כאלו שהתחילו לקפוץ לים. ורק בשעה שקופצים לים, אז מתרחש ה"ויסעו" - זוהי העזיבה האמיתית ממעמדו ומצבו הקודם, ואז רואים את "תשועת ה'" וה"לחם לכם" עם כל הניסים, כפי שראו אז.

The Leap of Repentance

To explain the concept of jumping in the sea, the Rebbe cites the example of the repenting Jew.

Source 3 Mishnah, Yoma, 8:9

Student's One who says: "I will sin and then repent, sin and
pg. 10 repent," is not given the opportunity to repent.

האומר: אֶחָטָא וְאָשׁוּב, אֶחָטָא וְאָשׁוּב - אֵין מְסַפִּיקוֹ בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה.

In the Tanya, the Alter Rebbe focuses on this teaching, asking: In our prayers, when we mention G-d's "abundant forgiveness," that means we've repented. In the next prayer, when we repeat it, that shows we've sinned again and we again ask for forgiveness. And the cycle continues. We are constantly doing things we shouldn't and then repenting for them, exactly what the Mishnah warns us about!

The Alter Rebbe explains:

Source 4 Tanya, Iggeret Hateshuvah, 11

Student's
pg. 11

One is not given the opportunity to repent. The sages used this language to say that one is not given assistance to repent, but if they push and really try to overcome their bad inclination and repent, their penitence is accepted.

“אין מספיקין” ניקא - חקמינו
ז”ל משתמשים בלשון “אין
מספיקין” ניקא, שלא עוזרים
לו בכך, על ידי מתן אפשרות
לעשות תשובה, אבל אם דחק
ונתחזק ונתגבר על יצרו ועשה
תשובה, מקבלין תשובתו.

True, one who sins with the intention of repenting for the sin is not given the opportunity to repent. However, they can still force their way through to repentance.

The Alter Rebbe teaches us an important lesson in Judaism. There is the “normal” way, and then there’s the “force” way. Normally, for severe sins, one isn’t given an opportunity to repent, G-d doesn’t encourage them. However, there’s the long way: If a Jew tries with all their might, and leaves their previous state of being, then they can repent.

>> The Rebbe

Leave Your Comfort Zone

Student's
pg. 11

We can take an example from a person who is pursuing repentance. If he only takes measured steps it will be difficult for him to leave his previous state. This is all the more so regarding a person who “isn’t given the opportunity to repent” and is only able to achieve repentance if he forces his way through on his own.

על דרך משל, אדם שרוצה להיות בעל
תשובה. אם ילך באופן מדוד ומוגבל,
יקשה עליו לצאת מהמעמד ומצב
שלו. על אחת וכמה וכמה כפי שמביא
אדמו”ר הזקן את לשון חז”ל “אין
מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה”, שרק
באם הוא יפעל בעצמו - “דחק”, אזי
יתרחש ה”ונכנס”.

Elisha Should Have Pushed

To illustrate this concept, the Rebbe cites the case of one of the biggest sinners in Jewish history, Elisha ben Avuya, known as “Acher” (“other”) who heard a heavenly voice proclaim that he couldn’t repent. Nevertheless, as we learned, he was expected to force his way to repentance.

Source 5 Talmud, Chagiga, 15 a-b

Student's The sages taught: Acher was riding a horse on
pg. 11 Shabbat and Rabbi Meir was chasing after him, wishing to learn Torah from him. He told him: "Meir, retreat, for I have measured and this is how far you can walk on Shabbat." He responded: "So turn around yourself." The man answered: "I already told you that I heard a heavenly voice proclaim 'Return wayward sons, except for Acher.'"

תנו רבנן: מעשה באחר שהיה רוכב על הסוס בשבת, והיה רבי מאיר מהלך אחריו ללמוד תורה מפיו, אמר לו: מאיר, חזור לאחריך, שפבר שיערתי בעקבי סוסי עד כאן תחום שבת. אמר לו: אף אתה חזור בך. אמר לו: ולא פבר אמרתי לך פבר שמעתי מאחורי הפגוד: "שובו בנים שובבים" - חוץ מאחר.

Elisha tells his student, Rabbi Meir: I heard a heavenly voice say that everyone is welcome to repent except for me!

Student's When Acher died, the heavenly court said: He will
pg. 12 not be sentenced to purgatory, but he will also not enter the world to come.

כשמת אחר, אמרו ברקיע בבית דין של מעלה: לא נדון אותו בגיהנום, ואף לא יבוא לעולם הבא!

He will not be sentenced to purgatory because he studied and taught Torah. But he will not enter the world to come because he sinned.

והטעם: לא נדון אותו בגיהנום הואיל ועסק בתורה. ואף לא יבוא לעולם הבא, משום שחטא!

Rabbi Meir said: It would be better if they punish him and then allow him to enter the world to come ... When Rabbi Meir approached his death, he asked for mercy for Acher, and G-d accepted his prayer.

אמר רבי מאיר: עדיף שידונוהו ואחר כך יבוא לעולם הבא... כיון שהגיע רבי מאיר למות, בקש רחמים על זה וקבל הקב"ה תפלתו.

After his death, his students prevailed and he was allowed into the world to come.

>> The Rebbe

Student's This was the mistake of Acher. Even
pg. 12 though he heard a Divine proclamation that he could not repent, he shouldn't have been deterred. If he would have forced his way through he would have succeeded, as indeed happened to him eventually through his students' efforts.

זו היתה הטענה לאחר, שאפילו שהוא שמע שה'בת קול' אומרת 'חוץ מאחר', הוא לא היה צריך להתפעל מזה, ובאם הוא היה "דחק" אז הוא גם היה "נכנס" כפי שאכן קרה לבסוף (על ידי תלמידיו).

What is the Jewish legal basis for the idea that even if Heaven proclaimed that one cannot repent they must still force their way in?

Source 6 Talmud, Pesachim, 86b

Student's Do whatever the master commands except for
pg. 12 "Leave."

Shalah, Shaar Haotiyot, Hilchot Biah, 1

This is what the rabbis meant: 'The master' is G-d, 'whatever He commands' are the mitzvot and we must do them—except for leave. If He says to leave His home and not enter, like with Acher, do not listen. Repent, for this is what the master really wants; He is merely testing you.

כל מה שיאמר לך בעל הבית
עשה חוץ מצא.

של"ה, שער האותיות, הלכות ביאה,
פרק א'

וזה מה שאמרו ז"ל, כל מה
שיאמר לך בעל הבית עשה,
חוץ מצא. בעל הבית דהינו
הקב"ה, כל מה שיאמר לך
עשה מהמצוות, עשה. חוץ
מצא, שאם יאמר לך צא
מביתי ואל תכנס כענין
אלישע - אחר, אל תשמע לו,
אלא תכנס בתשובה, כי זה
חשקו של בעל הבית, אלא
שמטעה אותך.

>> The Rebbe

Student's The Sages say "obey everything the
pg. 13 master tells you—except for 'leave.'" Mussar works state that this means that a person must always follow the letter of the law, except when it tells you to leave.

The Code of Jewish Law and Maimonides state that there are 24 things that obstruct repentance. A person could take this to heart, knowing that he has done one or more of those things, and decide that he needs to "leave." He may think that everyone is invited to repent,

וכפי שמובא הרמז בספרי המוסר,
שכל מה שיאמר לך בעל הבית עשה,
חוץ מ'צא', שבכל הדברים צריך לציית
לשולחן ערוך, חוץ מ'צא'.

כאשר כתוב בשולחן ערוך ובמשנה
תורה להרמב"ם שישנם עשרים
וארבעה דברים שמעכבים את
התשובה, הנה, באם הוא יתפעל מזה,
בידעו שיש אצלו את אחד הדברים,
או רחמנא ליצלן יותר מאחד, ויאמר
לעצמו שהוא צריך לנהוג בעצמו
באופן של 'צא', ויחשוב שכולם
מוזמנים לחזור בתשובה חוץ ממנו

Student's
pg. 13

aside from him - Acher. G-d forbid that one should think this way. About this we are told to obey "except for 'leave.'" Don't listen to the letter of the law that tells you to leave, work hard and force your way in.

We see that there are two tracks of repentance. There is the regular track, on which G-d invites and encourages everyone to return, and accepts them with open arms. But then there are people who the Divine voice tells that they cannot return. Such people have a bypass route, and if they work hard and force their way through the door they will be accepted.

Forcing Entry Through Self-Sacrifice

Student's
pg. 13

The way to force entry is through acting with complete self-sacrifice.

There is a law that states that we may only give up our lives for three cardinal sins. But what if a person wishes to sacrifice his life to avoid a different transgression? Is it a mitzvah or a sin to do so? There is a dispute between Maimonides and other authorities about whether this is permitted.

Student's
pg. 14

Maimonides rules that under regular circumstances it is forbidden for a person to sacrifice his life. But Maimonides agrees that under certain conditions pious individuals are allowed to sacrifice their lives even for other commandments. The Midrash relates about a person beaten with mortal blows for eating matzah and other such mitzvot. These aren't the three cardinal sins, but nevertheless as an act of piety it is permitted to sacrifice one's life for this.

- מ'אחר', אז חס ושלום! במקרה זה אומרת התורה 'חוץ מצא'. אל תציית לבעל הבית - השולחן ערוך - שאומר לך צא, אלא תעבוד קשה ותידחק ואז תוכל להיכנס.

אך איך הוא עושה זאת? איך 'נדחקים' ונכנסים? על ידי שהוא נוהג באופן של מסירות נפש!

ידועה ההלכה, שייהרג ועל יעבור נאמר רק על שלוש עבירות. אך מה הדין באם מישהו רוצה למסור נפשו על עבירה אחרת? האם זו מצווה או עבירה? יש בזה מחלוקת בין הרמב"ם ופוסקים אחרים, באם מותר לעשות זאת או לא.

הרמב"ם פוסק שאסור לעשות זאת במקרה רגיל, אך גם לדעתו ישנם מצבים שלחסידי שבישראל מותר ומצווה למסור את נפשו גם על מצוות אחרות (מצד מעמדו ומצבו או מצד מצב הזמן). וכפי שאומר המדרש על הפסוק "המכות אשר הוכתי בבית מאהבי", שואלים אותו מדוע הוא מוכה? והוא עונה: מכיון שאכלתי מצה וכיוצא בזה. שעבירות אלו אינן מג' העבירות, ובכל זאת, על דרך החסידות מצווה לעשות כך.

Source 7 Zechariah, 13:6

Student's He asked him, "What are these wounds between
pg. 14 your hands?" and he said, "I was beaten in the house of my friends."

Midrash, Vayikra Rabba, 32:1

Why are you being stoned? For circumcising my son. Why are you being burned? For keeping Shabbat. Why are you being killed? For eating matzah. Why are you being whipped? For building a sukkah, for blessing the lulav, for wrapping tefillin, for wearing techelet, for fulfilling the will of my father in heaven, as the verse states: He asked him, "What are these wounds between your hands?" These wounds caused me to love my father in heaven.

וְאָמַר אֵלָיו מַה הַמַּכּוֹת הָאֵלֶּה
בְּיַד יְדִיךָ וְאָמַר אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתִי בֵּית
מֵאֵהֶב.

מדרש ויקרא רבה, ל"ב, א'

מַה לְךָ יוֹצֵא לְסַקֵּל, עַל שְׁמִלְתִּי
אֶת בְּנִי. מַה לְךָ יוֹצֵא לְשַׂרֵּף,
עַל שְׁשִׁמְרַתִּי אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת. מַה
לְךָ יוֹצֵא לְהַרְגֵּךְ, עַל שְׂאֻכְלִתִּי
מִצָּה. מַה לְךָ לֹקֵה בְּפֶרֶגוֹל עַל
שְׁעִשְׁתֵּי סֶכֶה, עַל שְׁנִטְלִתִּי
לוֹלֵב, עַל שֶׁהִנַּחְתִּי תְּפִלִּין, עַל
שֶׁהִטְלִיתִי תְּכֵלֶת, עַל שְׁעִשְׁתֵּי
רְצוֹן אָבִא שְׁבַשְׁמִים, הִדָּא
הוּא דְכָתִיב (זְכַרְיָה יג, ו):
וְאָמַר אֵלָיו מַה הַמַּכּוֹת הָאֵלֶּה,
מַכּוֹת הָאֵלֶּה גָּרְמוּ לִי לְהֵאָהֵב
לְאָבִי שְׁבַשְׁמִים.

Giving up one's life isn't limited to the three sins of idol worship, forbidden relations, and murder. There are other times that a person may feel giving their life is warranted.

This is practically how one forces their way through and repents, even if not invited. The secret is self-sacrifice. When a person leaps from dry land into the sea, they commit to a holy objective, and even though they don't have a life vest or financial backing they do it anyway. This is true self-sacrifice. This is the key to the bypass road to repentance, the way that leads straight to G-d.

Student's This can be achieved through "leaping."
pg. 15 When a person follows the regular process, from one level to the next, he cannot reach such a level. This can only be achieved by a person who leaps beyond the regular process, as Maimonides describes a person who was wicked and then repented to the extent that G-d himself testifies that he is completely righteous.

כִּיצַד אֲפֹשֵׁר לַעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת? בַּשְּׁעָה
שֶׁהוּא קוֹפֵץ. כְּאֲשֶׁר 'הָאָדָם יִשְׂרָאֵל
הוֹלֵךְ, מִדְּרָגָה לְדְרָגָה, וְאִין לוֹ שְׂיִיכוֹת
לְקַפִּיצָה מִעֲצָמוֹ מֵעֵבֶר לְעִבּוּדָה
הִרְגִּילָהּ, אִזִּי הוּא לֹא יִגִּיעַ לְרֵמָה כּוֹז.
רַק בַּשְּׁעָה שֶׁהוּא קוֹפֵץ, כְּפִי שֶׁהִרְמַב"ם
אוֹמֵר, שְׂקוּדָם הוּא הִיָּה בְּדְרָגָה שֶׁל
הִיפֵךְ הַצְדִּיק, וְאַחַר כֵּךְ עָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה
בְּרֵמָה כּוֹז - שִׂוְדַע תְּעִלּוּמוֹת יַעֲיֵד
עָלָיו, שְׂמַרְשַׁע גְּמוּר הוּא נִהְיָה צְדִיק
גְּמוּר.

Some things are out of reach when following the regular step by step process. A person needs to leap, elevate themselves beyond their regular self, in order to achieve them.

Source 8 Exodus, 14:21-22

Nachshon's Sacrifice Split the Sea

Student's Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night G-d drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Jews went through the sea on dry land, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת יָדוֹ עַל הַיָּם וַיּוֹלֶךְ
ה' אֶת הַיָּם בְּרוּחַ קְדִימִים עֲזָה כֹּל
הַלַּיְלָה וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת הַיָּם לְחִרְבָּה
וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם. וַיָּבֹאוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיְבֻשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לְהֵם
חֹמָה מִיְמִינֵם וּמִשְׂמָאלֵם.

Source 9 Talmud, Sotah, 37a

Student's This one said "I won't go first into the sea," and this one said "I won't go first into the sea." Nachshon, son of Aminadav, sprang up and jumped into the sea first.

זֶה אוֹמֵר אֵין אֲנִי יוֹרֵד תְּחִילָה
לָיִם, וְזֶה אוֹמֵר אֵין אֲנִי יוֹרֵד
תְּחִילָה לָיִם, קִפֵּץ נִחְשׂוֹן בֶּן
עַמִּינָדָב וַיִּרֵד לָיִם תְּחִילָה.

When the Jews faced the sea and heard Moses command them to go forward, they were afraid. Each tribe gave the honor of going first to the other. While the argument was raging, Nachshon jumped in the sea. Only after he went and put his life on the line did the sea split for everyone.

>> The Rebbe

Student's When Nachshon heard Moses say "speak to the Israelites and tell them to go forward" he went forward! It made no difference to him whether he was walking on dry land or into the sea. This was the direction to Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Torah, so he went forward and jumped into the sea. He did this with complete self-sacrifice, not knowing that G-d would save him. This sacrifice is what caused the sea to be split for all of the Jewish people.

בשעה שנחשון בן עמינדב שמע את משה רבינו אומר "דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו", הוא הלך קדימה! לא שינה לו באם הוא הולך ביבשה או בים. מכיון שזהו הכיוון שמקרב אותו להר סיני ולמתן תורה אז "ויסעו" - הוא קפץ לים. וזאת מבלי לדעת שתהיה תשועת ה'. הוא מסר את נפשו, וזה גרם לכך שהים נבקע בשביל כל עם ישראל.

Reaching the giving of the Torah also required a leap. Even when Moses was among the Jewish people and receiving clear instructions from G-d, things didn't proceed easily. They needed to jump into the sea, to leave their comfort zone and show total commitment. Only then did the sea split, clearing the path to receiving the Torah. This is the only way to reveal G-d's light in this world.

This is an eternal lesson for the Jewish people. Our primary objective is to reveal G-dliness in the world. Sometimes there are challenges and obstacles which confuse us and debate breaks out how to approach them.

For example, after the Holocaust there was a debate on how to go forward. Some advocated "war": Fight the foreign influences that have engulfed the Jews. Others advocated "returning to Egypt": keeping a low profile, learning to make do. Yet others wanted to pray—only G-d can help us, we cannot do anything.

The Rebbe teaches us that we must learn from G-d's command to Moses: "Tell the Jews to go forward!" Put down your prayer books and split the sea! Go out into the world and reveal G-dliness.

It's not easy and it won't happen on its own, and sometimes we will need to split the sea for it. Even more, without Nachson jumping in, the sea wouldn't have split. Ultimately, in order to achieve our lofty goal, we need to leave our comfort zone; it takes self-sacrifice. But when we do that, we split the sea, we arrive at Sinai, receive the Torah and complete our goal.

על פי שיחת יו"ד שבט, ה'תש"מ
הנחה פרטית - בלתי מוגה