



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דזעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Trumah 5763

In tonight's portion of *Tana D'vei Eliyahu* (פרק כ"ג אות ט-י), we learn the following,

“When Am Yisrael were in Mitzrayim, they all gathered and sat together, because they were all *agudah achas* - one united group. They made a *bris*, a covenant to do *gemilus chasadim* with each other, to keep the *bris* of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov in their hearts, to serve Hashem alone, not to abandon the language of their father Yaakov, and not to learn the language of Egypt, in order to avoid the ways of idolatry.

Also, when Am Yisrael circumcised their sons in Egypt, the Egyptians would ask, ‘Why are you circumcising them? Aren’t we going to throw them into the river soon afterwards?’ And the Jews would answer, ‘We will circumcise them and afterwards, do with them what you will.’ When Jews celebrated the seven days of feasting after a wedding, the Egyptians would ask, ‘Why are you celebrating these seven days, when we are about to take him (the *chasan*) to be tortured?’ And the Jews answered, ‘we will celebrate the seven days of feasting, and afterwards, do with him what you will. The one who is to die, will die. The one who is to be killed, will be killed, and the one who is to live will live.’”

Unfortunately, our generation didn't have to hear this lesson as a story transmitted from father to son over the centuries, or to simply read it in *sefarim*. There are people living among us who faced those same *nisyonos* during World War II. They married and circumcised their children while aware that the angel of death waited just outside the door.



[1]

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There was a story that was publicized by an eyewitness. On the twentieth of *Iyar* תש"כ (1940), the Germans, *yimach shmam*, announced that any children born in the Kovno ghetto would be killed along with their mothers. The Jews didn't submit to this decree, and they refused to kill their unborn children. Not only did they give birth to children, but they also performed *bris milah* on the boys in accordance with the *halachah*.

The eyewitness related that he attended one such *bris milah*, and just as the *mohel* was about to perform the *bris*, a Jew rushed into the hiding place and warned them that the Nazi animals, *yimach shmam*, were coming. Everyone was gripped by fear and the *mohel's* hands began to tremble uncontrollably. No one was able to think of a way to avoid their impending execution.

Suddenly, in the midst of all the fear and panic, the mother of the child turned to the *mohel* and cried out, "Quick! Perform the *bris milah* so that my child will at least die as a Jew!" These were the deeds of the righteous men and women in our generation, which is hopefully the last before the coming of Mashiach.

We also know that during those terrible war years, *rabbanim* emphasized the obligation to get married. They declared that especially in such times, it is forbidden to despair and give up. Instead, they emphasized the importance of encouraging as many marriages as possible so that *chalilah*, the name of *Yisrael* shouldn't be erased from the world.

They followed the example of Amram and Yocheved as described in *Maseches Sotah*, (י"ב.)

"Amram was the *Gadol Hador*. When Pharaoh decreed that every boy born must be thrown into the river, Amram said, 'We toil for naught'. He divorced his wife, and then the other men divorced their wives. His daughter said to him, 'Father, your decree is harsher than that of



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Pharaoh. Pharaoh's decree was on the male children whereas your decree is on both male and female children. Pharaoh's decree only applies to this world, whereas your decree applies to both this world and the next. Pharaoh's decree may or may not succeed, because he is a *rasha*. You are a *tzadik*, so your decree will certainly be fulfilled...' Amram then remarried his wife, and everyone else then did the same."

It is known that the brother of the *Imrei Emes* of Gur zy" a, Rav Moshe Betzalel Alter hy" d, who was killed by the *reshaim*, declared that the merit of this *mitzvah*, helped Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim.

Our weak, materialistic intellect can't begin to imagine the horror of this *nisayon* or comprehend the deep *emunah* of those Jews and the strength of their spirit. However, by paying close attention to the words of the *Tana D'vei Eliyahu*, we can discover an aspect of *avodas Hashem* that provided Am Yisrael with the strength needed to withstand those *nisyonos*. The description of their heroism was preceded by the description of the Jews in Egypt gathering together and sitting together *b'agudah achas*, as one united group. They forged a covenant to do *gemilus chasadim* with each other. That unity and togetherness enabled their *emunah* to penetrate to the deepest levels of their hearts. That *emunah* provided them with the strength to be *moser nefesh* - to risk their lives, to ensure the continued existence of Am Yisrael.

The power of unity is also emphasized in *Parshas Terumah*. The *krashim*, the boards which formed the walls of the *mishkan*, were joined together by the *בריח התיכון*, a central beam that went through the boards from one end of the wall to the other. The *Zohar Hakadosh* explains that this central beam is Yaakov Avinu who is described as *וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֲלִים*, a complete man who dwells in tents. The *Zohar Hakadosh* points out that the Torah refers to *אהלים* - multiple tents, rather than *אהל* - one tent, to teach us that Yaakov Avinu unified one tent with the other. So too, the *בריח התיכון*, the central beam united each board with the one next to it, for the entire length of the wall.



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In other words, just as the בריח התיכון joined one board to another, transforming the individual boards into one *mishkan* for Hashem, *achdus* unites and transforms all individual Jews into *Klal Yisrael*.

The power of unity is expressed by Yaakov Avinu's statement, כִּי בַמַּקְלִי הֵיָה עָבַרְתִּי אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה - For with my staff I crossed this Yarden. The *Midrash Tanchuma* explains that Yaakov Avinu turned his eyes to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, who performed miracles for him. Yaakov placed his staff in the Yarden, and the river split before him, enabling him to cross. (explaining כִּי בַמַּקְלִי as "by means of my staff").

Rav Ephraim of Sedilkov zy" a write in his *Degel Machneh Ephraim*, that the *pasuk* can be understood with a story of his grandfather the *Baal Shem Tov* zy" a. The *Baal Shem Tov* once related that he crossed the Nester River without utilizing the power of Hashem's name. He simply placed his belt on the water and crossed by walking over it. He explained that it was his great *emunah* that enabled him to cross the river.

The *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* adds that it is possible that Yaakov Avinu hinted to this in his words, for the *gematria* - the numerical value of עֵקֶב equals that of his name בַּמַּקְלִי. In other words, he crossed the river with the power of his attribute of truth, *midas ha'emes*. He meant to say that the power of his great *emunah* (a parallel *midah* to *emes*) enabled him to cross the river.

Since the Zohar Hakadosh explained that the בריח התיכון, the central beam that unites the board of the Mishkan, represents Yaakov, we learn that *achdus* - unity, is the source of strong, unshakable *emunah*. By joining together in a *bris* of unity, Am Yisrael acquired the *emunah* that enabled them to withstand the trials of Mitzrayim and passed that strength on to all future generations.

This is the hope for our generation as well. Our weak and lowly generation faces difficult, bitter tests of *emunah*. Chazal teach us,



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(פסחים קט"ז:) "In every single generation, a person is obligated to view himself as if he came out of Mitzrayim". This means that we too, faced those *nisyonos* at that time, and that we as well, acquired the power of the unifying *בריח התיכון* and the strengthened *emunah* it provides. Therefore, let our community make a commitment to do all we can to strengthen the *bris* that we already forged in Mitzrayim. In the words of the *Tana D'vei Eliyahu*, "to do *gemilus chasadim* with each other, to keep the *bris* of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov in their hearts, to serve Hashem alone, not to abandon the language of their father Yaakov, and not to learn the language of Egypt, in order to avoid the ways of idolatry." לטוב לנו כל הימים אכי"ר



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