

Bnei Yisroel is free. They have traveled six days in the desert away from Mitzrayim. They see Mitzrayim pursuing them. Moshe tells them:

ה' יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ שָׁמְטִים: {פ}

“HaShem will do battle for you! And you shall be silent.” (Shemos 14:14).

What was the complaint from the Bnei Yisroel? How was HaShem to do battle for them? Why did they complain about Mitzrayim coming after they saw ten makkos and a myriad of wonders while still in Egypt?

The Gemara Yerushalmi tells us in Sukkah 5:1 *Rebbi Shimon ben Yochai said, at three places were Israel warned not to return to the land of Egypt and in all three cases they returned and in all three cases they fell. One in the days of Sancherib the king of Assyria, and one in the days of Yochanan ben Koreich, and one time in the days of the evil Trajanus.*

The Gemara Yerushalmi says in Taanis 2:5 *our forefathers formed four factions on the Yam Suf. One said let us fall into the Sea. And another said, let us return to Egypt. And another said, let us fight with them. And another said, let us shout against them. To the one who said, let us fall into the Sea, Moshe said, ‘stay firm and see the help of HaShem’ (Shemos 14:13) And to the one who said, let us return to Egypt, Moses said, ‘for as you are seeing Egypt today’ (Ibid). And to the one who said, let us fight with them, Moshe said, ‘HaShem will fight for you (Shemos 14:14). And to the one who said, let us shout against them, Moses said, ‘and you be silent.’ (Ibid).*

According to the Gemaras, this is how the conversation went. The back and forth is not recorded in the Torah but the answers from Moshe imply the rest of the discourse.

Rashi says, “will do battle for you” means *He will fight on your behalf; similar is (Ibid 14:25) “For HaShem fought for them (לָהֶם).” So too, (Iyuv 13:8) “will you contend for the Lord God?” And also, (Bereishis 24:7) “and who spoke on my behalf (לִי).” And in (Shoftim 6:31) “Will you plead for Baal (לִבְעַל)?”*

Rashi means to say that HaShem was not just fighting Mitzrayim, he was doing it for the benefit of Bnei Yisroel. They would not have to fight. (Unlike when they had to fight Amalek,

Midyan, Moav, and Amon). We can point out that the entirety of the episode with Mitzrayim Yisroel did not have to lift a finger to fight. HaShem did it all.

Ibin Ezra says, *'Lakhem' means for you. Similarly, whenever the word war (milchamah) is followed by a lamed it indicates aid. Rabbi Moshe Ha-Kohen therefore explains li (me) in For there are many that fight (lohamim) me (li) on high to mean for me. The meaning of on high is, a war on high. "You shall be silent" means in contrast to 'and the children of Israel cried out.'*

The commentary here is saying that HaShem was not doing battle to Bnei Yisroel but for Bnei Yisroel. It does seem odd for Moshe to tell them to be silent for crying out to him when HaShem said the same thing to Moshe in the next passuk. "Why are you crying out to me?" (Shemos 14:15).

Bechor Shor says similarly that *"be silent" is opposed to crying out. There is no need for you to cry out.*

Chizkuni says, *you only have to keep silent! Do not keep on complaining to me accusing me as being "guilty" of taking you out of slavery.*

This was a mussar to Bnei Yisroel that they complained about being free as if it was wrong of HaShem to make them free. Clearly the complaint had to be something other than being free.

Ohr Chaim takes an esoteric viewpoint. *The reason the Bnei Yisroel had been frightened had been that they saw themselves confronting celestial forces, HaShem tells them that the most powerful celestial force, He Himself, will fight on their behalf. When He is involved personally, even a thousand celestial forces equal to the guardian angel of Egypt are nothing to be afraid of. By emphasizing the attribute חַסֵּד i.e. the attribute of Mercy, the Torah suggests that even the attribute of Mercy concurred with the retribution that was about to exact from the Egyptians. The Torah writes יִלָּחֶם "He will fight on your behalf," because from Israel's point of view this would be a manifestation of the attribute of mercy. Moreover, the word יִלָּחֶם implies much more than mere assistance. HaShem was going to conduct the entire war single-handedly, hence ואתם תחרישו "you have to keep silent."*

This means that the name of HaShem, which is the attribute of mercy, is used here because the story is told from the point of view of Bnei Yisroel. HaShem was merciful to them by destroying Egypt. There mercy was, though, the location of this salvation.

Rabbeinu Bechaya says the same. *Justice is what causes great wars and seas to dry up. However, even in justice there is mercy. HaShem still uses the attribute of mercy when giving out justice.*

To fully understand our passuk we review the entire episode: HaShem told Moshe to tell the Bnei Yisroel to turn back and camp before Pi-Hachiros. (Shemos 14:2). Now, why did HaShem give that instruction if HaShem already had a cloud pillar and fire pillar guide them? (Ibid 13:21). Surely the pillars would guide them to Pi-Hachiros. So HaShem was giving the instruction to not encamp by the pillar but to encamp the other way, *turn back and encamp*. They were to face the other way. HaShem wanted Bnei Yisroel to face back toward Mitzrayim. “You shall encamp facing it.” (Ibid). HaShem purposely had them encamp *facing* that direction to see what was coming.

Pharaoh hears from the King of Egypt province that the Bnei Yisroel are wandering and lost in the desert (Ibid 14:5) and he orders the pursuit. (Ibid 14:9). Israel saw that Pharaoh and his army were coming and they were frightened and cried out to HaShem. (Ibid 14:10). This was out of fear of Mitzrayim. After seeing ten makkos and a myriad of wonders and punishments, they still feared. The Bnei Yisroel were taken out with wonders “in order that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and that you tell of My signs that I placed in them, and you will know that I am HaShem.” (Ibid 10:2; see also 6:7 “I will take them out and they will know I am HaShem”). By now, how could they not know?

After crying out to HaShem they then brought their complaint to their leader, Moshe. (Ibid 14:11). They even reminded Moshe they had the same complaint to him after he left Pharaoh's quarters the first time and Pharaoh issued the decree to make bricks without straw. (Ibid 14:12. see ibid 5:21. There is no explicit complaint there about not wanting to leave but that is where it fits that they lodged this complaint). Moshe's response was for them to not be afraid, see the salvation, HaShem will do battle for you. (Ibid 14:13 and 14). It seems odd, then, that the next verse HaShem is telling Moshe himself not to pray. (Ibid 14:15).

Moshe knew that HaShem will do battle, and HaShem did battle. (see Ibid 14:25 where the Mitzryiim said, “HaShem is doing battle for Israel.”). Moshe sought instruction. However, HaShem was telling Moshe, this is not a time for prayer and the salvation will not be on land. This salvation will have to come in midst the sea. “Why do you cry out to me? Tell Israel to go forward.” (Ibid 14:15). Meaning, you see where the pillar of fire is, it is right on the sea. The

pillar then moved to the rear between Israel and Egypt. (Ibid 14:19). So now the path into the Yam Suf was clear. It was not a rebuke of Moshe. It was instruction.

During this episode and in fact the entire episode of the great geula the common theme was HaShem taking Israel as its nation; no prayers required. HaShem heard their cries and since then there was no more prayer and no more crying necessary. As the passuk uses לָ, HaShem did bring battle *to* Bnei Yisroel. He made them face their enemy. He had Mitzrayim give chase. He brought the battle to them. And then He fought for them. They did not have to fight. HaShem did it all. He split the sea and they had their salvation.

So in our passuk Moshe said, *HaShem will do battle for you; he brought the battle here so you can see the annihilation of the remnant of the Egyptian cavalry in person. Hold your silence. You have cried enough and suffered enough. HaShem wants you to go forth and be saved.*

Still, why was this lesson learned here again? Were ten plagues not enough in Mitzrayim? The answer is the complaint itself. The Bnei Yisroel's complaint was 'let us stay here in Egypt better than to die in the desert.' They had this complaint prior to the makkos. They knew the request of three days to serve HaShem; to go free into the desert. Even after what they saw *in Egypt* they still were scared. They had no idea, *no hasgoh*, if you will, that HaShem was the Almighty, the everlasting, the King of Kings, on land, sea, air, and celestial. They saw the salvation in Mitzrayim but they did not know if HaShem had similar power outside of Mitzrayim, which is why they feared leaving. Can HaShem wage war for them outside of Mitzrayim, in the desert? Was HaShem equally powerful now in the wilderness?

Moshe told them to be silent. They would have to see the salvation and know HaShem is Almighty in Mitzrayim, outside Mitzrayim, in the desert, and in the sea. Moshe assured them, *even here in the wilderness HaShem will do battle for you.*

Mitzrayim had the same thought. Why did they continue to pursue Israel after being hit with ten makkos? After thirst, sickness, discomfort, and their animal population being wiped out, they suffered the genocide of all first born. Their dead were numerous and perhaps not even buried yet when they decided to give chase again. How could Mitzrayim think they would win?

It was because they also thought HaShem had no power in the desert. Thus, HaShem said it again, "and I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through his entire force, and the Egyptians

will know that I am HaShem.” (Ibid 14:4). Mitzrayim will know that I am HaShem there and here and everywhere.

The end result of this was “And Israel saw the great hand, which HaShem had used upon the Egyptians, and the people feared HaShem and they believed in HaShem and in Moshe, His servant.” (Ibid 14:31). This means they saw the great attribute of mercy how it itself can wage battle for them and they feared even HaShem’s mercy, and they believed in it. They also now believed in HaShem; not a god who is only in Mitzrayim, but HaShem who is omnipotent. Thus, they wholeheartedly declared: HaShem shall reign forever. (Ibid 15:18).