



Parshas Beshalach / פרשת בשלח תשפ"א

”ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם ולא נחם אלוקים דרך ארץ פלשתים...” שמות יג:יז

“And it was when Pharaoh sent out the nation and Elokim did not lead them the way of the Land of the Philistines...” Shemos 13:17

When Hashem led the Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim, why did He specifically lead them into the Wilderness on a roundabout journey ‘towards’ the Promised Land, as opposed to guiding them ‘as the crow flies’ on a direct trajectory straight through the land of the Philistines?

The Netziv (עמק דבר פרשת האזינו) states that Hashem wanted to clarify for the Bnei Yisrael that there is no power other than He. Traveling through the Midbar would ingrain this belief, seeing as there is no natural form of sustenance to be found there. When Hashem rained down bread from the Heavens and brought forth water from a rock, the nation was instilled with a complete and total belief in Hashem alone.

Similarly, the Rabbeinu Bachaye in his introduction to Parshas Beshalach explains that Hashem led the Bnei Yisrael through the Midbar in order to test their hearts and challenge them. He explains that all of the miracles that occurred in the Wilderness were built in such a way that they would be a perfect litmus test to see if the Bnei Yisrael really believed in Hashem with all their heart. This was in order to make belief in Hashem their second nature, so that their eyes would constantly be raised towards their Father in Heaven.

The Rabbeinu Chananel likewise understands that all that befell the Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar was a pure test for the purpose of strengthening their Emunah and Bitachon – Faith and Belief. The extended journey was a trail by fire to prepare them for מתן תורה. Hashem did not split the sea all at once, rather as the Bnei Yisrael passed through, it continued to split in real-time before them. The Manna bread fell and required gathering each and every day as opposed to large influxes at one time that would leave enough to squirrel away. These were all tests designed to fix Bitachon into their souls.

Pharaoh finally sent the nation out of Mitzrayim and Hashem led them directly into a fearful wilderness full of snakes and scorpions. Hashem could have taken the Bnei Yisrael straight through the Land of the Philistines and into their Promised Land, but instead He headed them into the heart of the desert. The Bnei Yisrael in the דור המדבר held strong to their beliefs and ultimately merited קבלת התורה and to enter Eretz Yisrael. Will we pass muster when put to the test?