

Redemptions, The Difference Between Ben Yosef and Ben David

By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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"G-d will fight for you and you will be silent." (Ex. 14:14)

These are really great words! How I wish that such a reality as the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea could again become manifest for us. This was one of the few times that G-d intervened supernaturally to fight a war for the nation of Israel. Although the text mentions that some of the people were frightened and that they complained. One should not think that this state of fear existed amongst everyone. This is not so. Indeed, those who complained and expressed fear were considered to be the members of the "mixed multitude" and not those of proper Israelite stock.



It is not that the men of Israel could not or would not fight. It is just that this was not their time to do so. The time for the men of Israel to take up arms and to fight for their survival came only days later when they were attacked by Amalek. In this battle, G-d did not intervene supernaturally as He did with the Egyptians. The men had to go out and fight for their lives and the lives of their families. Although G-d blessed them and was with them, nonetheless, the men still had to go out and do their share.

These two episodes of the drowning of the Egyptians and the war with Amalek became the archetypal expressions of the two types of redemption that Israel is blessed with by G-d. The two forms of redemption each have their own respective messiahs. The drowning of the Egyptians represent the type of redemption brought about by Mashiah ben David and the war with Amalek represents the type of victory to be won by Mashiah ben Yosef.

There is a time and a purpose for all things under Heaven (Kohelet 3:1). There is a time to fight and there is a time for G-d to do the fighting for us. It is important that we do not confuse these two. If the men of Israel in ancient days were to have confused this, then they would have rose up to fight Pharaoh's army at the Sea and then sit back and wait for G-d to fight Amalek for them. In both cases, this would have led to disaster. There is a time for movement and there is a time for stillness. There is a time for noise and a time for silence. Knowing the times and acting properly for the moment is an essential ingredient for life.

Prophecy states that Mashiah Ben Yosef comes before Ben David. The job of Ben Yosef is to wage the wars of Heaven against the enemies of Israel. His conflict is to be a bloody one. In the end, Ben Yosef is destined not to be successful. This is not due to any lack of righteousness on his part, or due to any blemish in him whatsoever. Rather, the final war against ancient Amalek must in the end be won as was the first war against the armies of Pharaoh. G-d is destined to strike the final blow to utterly destroy His own enemies. We are destined to just sit back and watch.

If Ben Yosef were to be successful in the fight, then we might assume that the final redemption can come about through our own hands. However, this is not the case. It is definitely our job, through Ben Yosef, to bring close the final redemption through the natural means of warfare. However, the final blow that will forever kill our enemies is destined to be delivered by Heaven itself.

At the Sea, we were given orders to stand down and let the fight be taken to the enemy by a Higher Hand. Days later, the orders were different; we were told to take up arms and bring the fight to the enemy ourselves. Both were ordained by G-d. Both were blessed by Heaven. Both require of us obedience, commitment and discipline. Both require of us to listen to the Heavenly directive and to follow orders with military precision.

There is a time and purpose for all things under Heaven. However, nowhere does it say that there is a time and place for making mistakes or for rebelling against the Divine Word. These things are not considered "under Heaven;" better for us to say that they are beneath man; in other words, beneath our dignity as being human beings. It is not natural and thus to be expected for us to make mistakes or to rebel against the Divine edict. Such ideas contradict the very idea of life and liberty.

Throughout the centuries many Sages have pointed out the moralistic applications of the message of the two messiahs, Ben Yosef and Ben David. The Sages speak how metaphorically we each have within us a spark of them both. What this means is that psychologically speaking, each of us must cultivate the corresponding attitudes that enable us to rise up at the appropriate times and fight like a Ben Yosef; whereas we must also cultivate the attitude of surrender and faith and apply it at its appropriate moment, to allow G-d to finish for us the fight, as He will with Ben David. Knowing these attitudes and when to apply each one properly is essential for living a healthy and balanced life; one that will guarantee freedom and redemption.

The parting of the Sea was performed by the Hand of G-d. The Bible does say that the people were afraid. However, as seen just a few days in the future in the war against Amalek, they were able to fight and to hold their own. If they did fight at the Sea they might have also held their own there. Yet, G-d had other plans in mind. The Torah clearly states (Ex. 13:17) that G-d led the Israelites through the southern route by the Sea and desert and not through the more direct northern route into Israel because if the people immediately saw war they would break in fear and not desire to proceed further. Yet, this concern over human fears certainly did not come into play with the Amalek attack.

G-d could have prevented the Amalekites from attacking. He could have caused an earthquake to swallow them up or countless other miracles to avoid the fight. Yet, Heaven did no such thing. G-d guided the Israelite nation to the south to avoid war in the north and the first thing they faced in the south was war. Is this not a strange and peculiar contradiction?

This is not contradiction at all. Everything has its time and everything has its place. There is a time for each of us to act like a Ben Yosef and there is a time for each of us to act like a Ben David. There is the right moment for each of us to raise up our fists to fight, and then there is the right moment to open one's mouth and heart to raise up

one's voice in prayer. Both of these are necessary for life and redemption. Aside from their physical applications, both of these are internal parts of us; they must be integral to our personalities. Those who only know Ben Yosef and all they do is fight are destined to die. They cannot win by force of arms alone. Those who know only Ben David and all they do is pray are destined to suffer for a long time, without any form of redemption either internally or externally, because Ben David is only victorious due to a miracle that comes at the very end of days.

Until the end of days is actually upon us, both the actual historical time period and the psychological periods corresponding to them that we each face daily, we must embrace redemption as a Ben Yosef. We have to fight; we have to take up arms and bring the battle to the door of the enemy, and even inside their own houses. Yet, we must also know when enough is enough and what natural limits we have when conducting warfare in this way. We must never confuse the weapons of war in one hand and the weapons of prayer and faith in the other. When the two are combined, then we have united Ben Yosef and Ben David, fulfilling the ancient prophecy of Ezekiel (Ez. 37:15-28) who spoke that in the end of days how G-d would unite together the stick of Yosef with the stick of David. When the two are combined, with each doing their appointed tasks, only then do we have true redemption, proper and full and in its time and place.

Ben David is our King; Ben Yosef is only our general. Both need to be heard, each in their time and each in their place. Redemption comes when there is obedience. Exile and slavery come when orders are disobeyed and confusion and chaos reign. Redemption and exile are both inside of each of us. Until we embrace the inner redemption and give rise to the inner Ben Yosef how then can we ever expect for the outer redemption to come?

Until Ben Yosef comes both internally and externally it will not yet be time for Ben David. Therefore, those who wait daily for Ben David should hasten his coming by embracing the force of arms embodied in Ben Yosef. Only when we fight for our personal redemptions, both psychologically and physically, can we expect to get to the moment when we will again be told to stand silently and to allow G-d to finish the battle.

If we do not begin the fight, how can we expect G-d to finish it? Always remember this; we must always do what we can. Only once we have accomplished all that we can through natural means, will G-d then finish the job through supernatural means, to accomplish all that we cannot.