

Ode to an Angel's End

PARSHA INSIGHTS - B'SHALACH (5759)

UZA'S BAD DAY

“*Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] lifted their eyes, and behold, Egypt (“*Mitzraim*”) was traveling after them, and they were very afraid...” (14:10). Who was pursuing them? The simple interpretation is that the Egyptian army was. The word for traveling (*nosai'a*), however, is in the singular form, implying that a singular entity was hot in pursuit. Let us study only one of the explanations today.

Shmos Rabba 21:5 remarks that the Jews looked up toward the sky and saw an individual named “*Mitzraim*” coming to fight against them. He was none other than the guardian angel of the nation of Egypt. The *Midrash* comments that “Hashem does not cause a nation to fall until he topples its heavenly representative first.” Consequently, the angel of Egypt was allowed to aid his nation in attacking us, only to meet his final destruction. This *Midrash*, cited by *Rashi* on the *pasuk* [verse], says explicitly that the angel of Egypt was named “*Mitzraim*.” A different *Midrash*, quoted by the *Ba'al Haturim* on 14:10, states that his name was “**Uza**”. This is a *Midrash* called the *Midrash Vayosha*.

“Hashem drowned *Mitzraim* in the midst of the sea” (14:27). On the surface, this is talking about the Egyptian soldiers who had been chasing us. But based on what we have seen today, it can also refer to the heavenly advocate of Egypt, named “*Mitzraim*” or “*Uza*”, as established before. The above-mentioned *Midrash*, a few lines later, declares that the angel actually drowned! “The heavenly protector of Paroh was called *Mitzraim*. He was flying to chase after them (after the Jews). When Hashem sank the Egyptians in the sea, he sank their guardian angel first.”

The *Or Hachaim* on 14:27 wonders about this. How can a spiritual entity perish in water? Did one ever hear of angels being harmed by physical forces? True, Hashem is capable of anything. The *Or Hachaim* explains, though, that Hashem probably transformed this angel into a physical being before drowning him. “He made him *gashmi* [material substance], and caused the physical nature of the water to affect him.”

Using the *Midrash Vayosha* quoted by the *Ba'al Haturim* mentioned earlier, plus the *Midrash Rabba* and this *Or Hachaim*, one can express today's ideas in poetic form:

*Uza, Uza, Uza, you gave chase,
You wanted every Jew, to be a mais,¹
So Hashem, He made you gashmi,²
And then you could not potch³ me.*

*Uza, Uza, Uza, you sank down,
Instead of a big smile, you did frown,
You wanted us, to all be slaves,
So you perished in the waves!*

May Hashem protect us from all our adversaries the way He delivered *Bnai Yisroel* from the evil clutches of the Egyptian army.

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

¹ [dead person]

² [physical, so you would drown]

³ [smack; slap]