



The Loss of the Children

“[And Hashem saw...] our burden” – this refers to the children, as it states, “Every son which is born you shall cast into the Nile and every daughter you shall let live.”

Q: Why does the Torah state prior to the redemption that Hashem looked down and saw the drowning of the children? This decree was rescinded eighty years earlier, with the birth of Moshe (Talmud Sotah 12b)!

A: It seems clear from the Haggadah that even a full eighty years after Pharaoh’s decree, the Children of Israel were still hurting from the loss of their drowned children. Hashem saw our suffering on that account and redeemed us.

This too, however, is surprising. Until relatively modern times with health-care and vaccinations, parents practically did not expect all of their children to grow to maturity. Could it really be said that we were still hurting from such a loss so many years later?

We could perhaps answer simply that with Israel’s spectacular birthrate, any loss was unexpected and tragic. Yet perhaps a more profound issue

was at stake. The issue of the drowning of the babies was not only a matter of the loss of life, as serious as that was. It contained a message far more sinister – that Jewish lives are worthless and expendable. Our lives could simply be terminated for convenience and population control. This ultimate degradation was painful beyond words – and caused the Jewish people suffering until their redemption.

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