



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY

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ISRAEL Parsha Picture

כִּי בָא סוֹס פִּרְעוֹה בְּרִכְבּוֹ
וּבִפְרָשָׁיו בֵּימֵי וַיֵּשֶׁב ה' עֲלֵהֶם
אֶת מֵי הַיָּם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
הִלְכוּ בַיַּבְשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם:









שמות טו:יט

INSIDE








TORAT MIZRACHI

-  Rabbi Doron Perez 2
-  Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
-  Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
-  Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
-  Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
-  Sivan Rahav Meir & Yedidya Meir 8
-  Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9

PARSHAT HASHAVUA

-  Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l 12
-  Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a 14
-  Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a 15
-  Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l 16
-  Rabbi Shalom Rosner 17
-  Michal Horowitz 18
-  Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 19
-  Rabbi Eli Mansour 20

INSPIRATION

-  Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 21
-  Rabbi YY Jacobson 22
-  Rabbi Judah Mischel 23
-  Mrs. Shira Smiles 24
-  Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi 25
- ISRAEL CONTENT**
-  Hebrew Language: David Curwin 26
-  Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 26

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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Cherry Tomato Champions

Tu BiShvat and the Love of a Land for a People



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

The story of the regeneration of the Land of Israel – its soil and shrubs, plants and trees, flora and fruits, is one of the greatest stories of human accomplishment. An ecological marvel, unrivaled in the annals of recorded history.

Two great American gentiles attest to this fact; the renowned author, Mark Twain, and soil conservation expert, Walter Clay Lowdermilk.

In 1867, 11 years before the first modern agricultural settlement in Palestine was attempted – Petach Tikva – Twain visited the land for the first time and was deeply shaken by the great desolation.

“There was hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country. No landscape exists that is more tiresome to the eye than that which bounds the approaches to Jerusalem. The only difference between the roads and the surrounding country, perhaps, is that there are more rocks on the roads than in the surrounding country. Palestine is desolate and unlovely.”¹

About 70 years later, in 1939, Lowdermilk would arrive in Palestine on a mission to search for similar soil and climates to the

California Dust Bowl he was aiming to develop. He was shaken by what he saw – both by the desolation of the land and soil but equally by the remarkable regeneration begun by the Jewish pioneers of Palestine who he notes had little or no background in agriculture.

He attests: “When Jewish colonists first began their work in 1882... the soil was eroded to bedrock over fully one-half of the hills – streams across the coastal plain would choke with erosional debris from the hills to form pestilential marshes infested with dreaded malaria... Those who can read the record that has been written in the land know that this state of decadence is not normal... Rural Palestine is becoming less and less like Trans-Jordan, Syria and Iraq and more like Denmark, Holland and parts of the United States.”²

Lowdermilk was so deeply impacted that he and his wife eventually settled in Israel in the 1950s. His world-class knowledge in the science of soil gave him a unique appreciation for the extent of this miraculous transformation and a desire to use his expertise to contribute to it. He would be a proactive part of the team that built Israel's national water carrier and has a

department named after him at the Technion in Haifa. A true lover of Zion.

He felt so moved by the Israel phenomenon that he opined: "If we were interested in the regeneration of Man, let all the righteous forces on earth support these settlements in Palestine as a wholesome example for the backward Near East, and indeed for all who seek to work out a permanent adjustment of people to their lands."

What would Lowdermilk say today, more than 70 years after the establishment of the State, when Israel has done the seemingly impossible across the whole Land – transforming a water-scarce country into an abundant oasis through cloud seeding, desalination, drip irrigation and water recycling; converting the once-barren soil into a remarkable lush fruit-yielding area despite the arid climate.

And with over 250 million trees planted in the Land over the last 120 years, what would Twain say today had he had the opportunity to return to the very same barren road that 'bounds the approaches to Jerusalem' and cast his eye on the once treeless countryside now home to a forest-like landscape?

What is the explanation of this phenomenal transformation? It seems that the answer lies not only in the realm of the rational and scientific, but also in the mystical and metaphysical – in a Divine promise, an ancient prophecy.

The Torah refers many times to the promise of the Land as an *אחוזת עולם* – "an everlasting possession."³ How can it be everlasting and eternal if we have spent so many long centuries outside it? What type of possession is that?



There is a remarkable reciprocal relationship between the Jewish people and the Land – an inexplicable love affair between a people and a place, and counterintuitively between a place and those very same people.

Rabbeinu Bachya offers a breathtaking insight when he says that "this is a great sign for Israel that from the day they were exiled from it – the Land – no other nation has been able to inhabit and settle it, but it remains destroyed and desolate, until her fledglings return."

There is a remarkable reciprocal relationship between the Jewish people and the Land – an inexplicable love affair between a people and a place, and counterintuitively between a place and those very same people. Just as the Jewish people have never forgotten the Land, always praying to return to her and dreaming incessantly about reuniting, so too has the Land never 'forgotten' her people – her children. She remained loyal, somehow never 'allowing' others to cultivate her soil and bring out the best in her. She has constantly and consistently remained barren and unresponsive to all foreign conquests and attempts at settlement over the last two millennia, from the Romans until this very day. As loyal as the People have been to the Land so too, inexplicably, has the Land been loyal to the People.

The tragic story of Gaza today is a tangible example of this, where only 18 years ago Jewish farmers and their hothouses

were international-award-winning innovators of hydroponic planting and world cherry tomato champions. The very same hothouses lie desolate despite numerous attempts to recreate the same success.

There is a type of Divine chemistry, a spiritual alchemy at the heart of the reciprocal relationship between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. Like all love stories, there is an element of wonder and mystery never easy to fully grasp but blatantly real for all to see.

Tu BiShvat has become Israel's national tree planting day. Many thousands of new trees are planted on this day every year by preschoolers and the elderly alike. Tree planting in Israel represents both the hope and the belief in a better future for all and the celebration of the ongoing miracle of the unique, everlasting bond between a land and a people, a people and a land.

Tu BiShvat Sameach!

1. Innocents Abroad, published in 1869 – two years after his return – about his pilgrimage to Europe and the Holy Land. It was his best-selling book during his lifetime.
2. The Promised Land, Lowdermilk 1944.
3. Bereishit 17:8, as part of the covenant of *Brit Mila* – circumcision. The verse states, "I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the Land of your sojournings, all the Land of Canaan for an everlasting possession and I will be your G-d."
4. Rabbi Bachya Ben Asher, in his commentary on the Torah to the above verse in Bereishit. Interestingly, another medieval commentator, Ramban, Nachmanides, makes the exact same point on a verse of the curses in Vayikra 26:32, where he sees the 'loyalty of Land' as a blessing within the curse.

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Tu B'shvat: Appreciating The Goodness of Israel



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi
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Chag Tu B'shvat

At first glance, Tu B'shvat seems to be a mere technical *halachic* marker for the new year of fruits (as pertaining to fruit-oriented *mitzvot*).¹ Surprisingly, though, we treat Tu B'shvat as a holiday by skipping *tachanun*² and avoiding fasting.³ What are we celebrating?

In addition to the holiday atmosphere, we also have the *minhag* to eat Israeli fruits on Tu B'shvat.⁴ What is the reason for this custom? What is the significance of eating Israeli fruit?

Yearning For Israel's Fruit

The *Al Hamichyah berachah* recited after eating grain products or one of Israel's special fruits also attributes significance to eating Israeli fruit. In the *berachah*, we ask Hashem to return us to Israel so we can "eat its fruit and be satiated by its goodness." The Semag⁵ finds this language problematic. Is the goal of eating its fruits the reason we yearn for Eretz Yisrael? Is that why we pray to return?

As support for his position, the Semag quotes a gemara⁶ which explains that Moshe yearned to enter Eretz Yisrael in order to fulfill the *mitzvot* associated with it, not to enjoy its fruits. Should we not aim to have similar interests?

Though challenged by the Semag, the *berachah's* language finds basis in the *Nevi'im*⁷ and Talmudic sources that emphasize the significance of eating Israel's fruits. Yirmiyahu, who lived during Bayit Rishon, and Nechemyah, who lived during Bayit Sheini, both portray eating from the land's fruit and "goodness" as why Hashem brought us to Eretz Yisrael. The Yerushalmi⁸ goes even further by listing eating Israeli fruit *b'taharah* (in a state of purity) as one of the components that earn us entry into Olam Haba: "*Kol mi shekavu'ah b'Eretz Yisrael, u'midaber b'lashon hakodesh, v'ochel peroshav b'taharah, v'koreih kriyat shema baboker u'ba'arev, yehi*

mevutar sheben Olam Haba hu — Anyone who resides steadily in Israel, speaks the holy language (Hebrew), eats the fruit in a state of purity, and recites *shema* morning and night will be informed that he has a portion in the next world."

We understand the importance of living in Israel, reciting *kriyat shema*, and maybe even speaking Hebrew. But why is eating Israel's fruits so important?

The Goodness of Eretz Yisrael

The Ben Ish Chai⁹ explains that eating Eretz Yisrael's fruit is important because it helps us appreciate the land.¹⁰ Though Eretz Yisrael's true value is (of course) on the spiritual plane, its value expresses itself on the physical plane as well.

This is why Hashem presents Eretz Yisrael to Moshe and the Jewish people, both in Mitzrayim¹¹ and before their entry into Eretz Yisrael,¹² as an "*eretz tovah* — a good land." Eretz Yisrael is precious not only because it is Hashem's land and the land of our ancestors. It is also inherently good — physically as well.

This helps us understand Rashi's explanation of the meaning of Hashem's "*lech lecha*" commandment to Avraham Avinu.¹³ Rashi¹⁴ explains that the word "*lecha*" emphasized that Avraham's journey would be for his own good and pleasure. This emphasis is surprising. Why was this important to stress? Didn't doing so reduce the level of the test Avraham was facing? Why did Hashem not emphasize the importance of heeding His command as opposed to Avraham's self-interests?

In light of the importance of appreciating the goodness of Eretz Yisrael, we can explain that Hashem spoke to Avraham this way in order to teach him (and us) that Eretz Yisrael is a good land, a land he should move to for his own benefit. Moving to Eretz Yisrael should never be viewed as a sacrifice. Though we move there in order to fulfill Hashem's will, we should realize that we also gain from the move.¹⁵

Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop,¹⁶ Rav Kook's main *talmid*,¹⁷ applied this idea to the *mitzvah* of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* (settling Israel) as well. He explained that this *mitzvah* is unique in that the enjoyment one derives from it is inherent and intended. The intention to enjoy the land does not detract from the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*. On the contrary, it is (part of) its goal.

We can now explain why eating Israeli fruit merits entry to Olam Haba. Eating Israel's sweet fruits helps us appreciate Hashem's gift of Eretz Yisrael. This should inspire us to live our lives in Eretz Yisrael properly. This, in turn, earns us a place in the next world. This is why the gemara also emphasizes the importance of reciting *kriyat shema*. *Kriyat shema* is how we are *mekabel ol malchut shamayim*, how we recognize Hashem as our G-d and express our commitment to fulfilling His *mitzvot*. Eating Israel's fruits is only important if it inspires a life of commitment to Hashem.

Rav Yechezkel Weinfeld explains that this is why the gemara asserts that Moshe yearned to enter Eretz Yisrael in order to fulfill *mitzvot* and not (merely) in order to eat its fruits. Eating the fruits is not, in and of itself, meaningful. The meaning lies in our appreciation of the land that produces the fruit and the *mitzvah* opportunities life there offers.

B'Kedusha U'veTaharah

This is why the Yerushalmi stresses that fruit consumption must be done *b'taharah*. In order to merit Olam Haba, we need to associate Eretz Yisrael's physical sweetness with its underlying purity¹⁸ and holiness, and live our lives accordingly.

The source for this idea is the context of the aforementioned *pasuk* from Sefer Yirmiyahu: "*V'avi et'chem el eretz hakarmel le'echol piryah u'tuvah, vatavo'u vatitam'u et artzi, v'nachalati samtem lato'eivah* — I brought you to the forest land to eat its fruits and goodness, and you came and contaminated my land and made my heritage an abomination."¹⁹

Continued on page 10

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

Songs of Water, Women & Hands of War



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

This Shabbat on which we read Parshat Beshalach is called Shabbat Shira, in honor of the song of praise sung by Bnei Yisrael upon crossing the *yam suf*. The name “Shabbat Shira” also alludes to the haftarah which also contains a song of praise. According to the Sefaradi custom, the entire haftarah consists only of the song (Shoftim c. 5), and although for Ashkenazim the song is only the second half of the haftarah (Shoftim 4-5), it is the climax of the story, containing many allusions and parallels to *shirat hayam* in the parasha.

Both songs of praise are written אָרִיחַ עַל גְּבִי לְבִינָה וְלְבִינָה עַל גְּבִי אָרִיחַ – “**a half brick arranged upon a whole brick and a whole brick arranged upon a half brick**” (i.e. each line of the song is divided into a stitch of text, referred to as a half brick, which is separated by a blank space, referred to as a whole brick), they are both national military victory songs, celebrating triumph in war orchestrated by Hashem. These songs of praise came after extended periods of subjugation and harsh oppression, when the suffering had been almost unbearable. From the depths of depression, miraculous victories ensued and the oppressed broke forth in song. Both songs contain similar details – victory over an enemy who sought to destroy, the flooding of water (Red Sea, Kishon river), the destruction of chariots, the rhythm, the scope and breadth of vision of the song, combining past, present and future. Both songs are sung in unison with the leaders of the time – men and women – Moshe and Miriam, Devorah and Barak, highlighting their different styles of leadership.

Though Moshe leads the people in song by initiating “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to Hashem”, Miriam’s song is of a different nature – “Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, picked up a hand-drum, and all the women went out after her in dance with hand-drums. And Miriam responded to them: Sing to Hashem for he has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled to the sea!” Miriam did not lead the people in song by singing herself; she raised her drum/tambourine¹, encouraging the women to come out and dance on their own. Only then did she respond! Miriam was motivating the nation to rise from their stupor and sing; to transform them from a reactive people to a proactive one!

Devorah the prophetess initiates her song in a similar manner, perhaps to teach a similar message of leadership. She, like Miriam, lives under the oppression of a chariot-based army and calls upon the men to respond with a military attack. Barak, the military general, is afraid to wage war against the Canaanite menace alone and Devorah agrees to join him atop Mt. Tabor and instruct him when to begin the battle. She explicitly states, however that “there will be no glory for you (Barak) in the course you are taking, for Hashem will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman” (i.e. Yael). Her song, like Miriam’s, was composed to inspire the nation to unite, defend themselves and follow the lead of “women of the tent” such as Yael, with courage and belief!

The comparisons are not only found in the poetic songs, but already alluded to in the respective narratives of the battles: “... and G-d looked to the camp of Egypt... and he struck the camp of Egypt with confusion”

(14:24), corresponding to “And G-d struck Sisra and all the camp with confusion” (4:15); “There remained not even one of them” (14:28) corresponding to “Not even one was left” (4:16); and “The enemy said... I shall divide the spoils” (16:9), corresponding to “have they not found and divided the spoils?” (5:30).

Another motif which characterizes both narratives and songs is that of the “yad” (hand), mentioned 20x in Shemot 13-17, and 6x in Shoftim 4-5. In the former, the “hand” expresses the strength of Hashem; even when Moshe’s hand is outstretched to split the Sea, and raised heavenward during the battle of Amalek, it represents the “Hand of Hashem” which may only be complete as Hashem wages war with our primary nemesis. What characterized the people of Israel in their first war as a nation was the way in which they observed as spectators: “G-d will fight for you and you will hold your peace” (14:14). Even though “with raised hands did Bnei Yisrael go up from the land of Egypt” (13:18), nevertheless they themselves did not actually fight, and the only soldier who fought the battle against Egypt was G-d Himself: “G-d is a Man of war” (15:3) – His strong hand led us out of Egypt!

The war in the days of Devorah and Barak, on the other hand, was a war fought by Bnei Yisrael; They were commanded to present themselves for battle: “Did not the Lord G-d of Israel command, Go and gather men at Mount Tavor... and I shall draw Sisra out to you to the river Kishon... and his chariots and his multitude...” (4:6-7). Therefore, when Barak expressed reservation, Devorah responded: ‘I will surely go with you; notwithstanding the journey that you take shall not be for your

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Question: In our community in the winter, many people who host smachot split the Shabbat day meal into two. The men leave to daven mincha in between, and when they come back, everyone starts a new meal which is seudat shlishit (based on SA 291:3). Some have spoken out against this for two reasons. 1) The Rosh writes that this ruling should not be publicized, and 2) the men walking to a different room within the same building is not considered a proper hesech hada'at (interruption, necessary to warrant a new meal), and the women often do not even leave the table. On the other hand, not allowing this may lead to logistical and financial stress for those hosting the simchas, especially during the winter. What is the correct approach? Lastly, if this is done, how should sheva brachot be taken into account?

Answer: It seems there is no need to argue with those who rely on this, especially in the winter when it is difficult to have a third meal and there are financial factors at play. The Shulchan Aruch (SA 291:3) writes that this is permissible because people will either eat achila gasa (vulgar overeating) or not eat a third meal altogether.

The Rosh does, indeed, write not to publicize this ruling (quoted in the Beit Yosef), because splitting the meal into two cannot be done before midday, and the public is not fully proficient with the timing. However, this seems to be a far concern especially when mincha is being said in between the meals, as mincha certainly cannot be said that early.

Regarding women, it is proper to advise that they get up and walk around the house a bit or clear/reset the table as the Mishnah Berurah describes (291:14). He does not write that it is necessary to go outside. Based on the Rosh, it appears

that even getting up a little is unnecessary, although it appears the Mishneh Berurah did not accept that. In practice, getting up for a bit is sufficient.

Regarding sheva brachot, the Shulchan Aruch writes (SA EH 62:8) that some opinions believe no panim chadashot (new people who were not at the wedding or previous wedding celebrations) are needed on Shabbat in order to say sheva brachot. Nevertheless, even according to those opinions, the Shulchan Aruch writes that seudat shlishit does require panim chadashot.

The Rema, however, brings two reasons why panim chadashot are not necessary even at seudat shlishit. The first reason is because new people are invited to the meal. This answer does not work in our case, as the same people are at the post-mincha meal. The second answer the Rema gives is that the drasha given at the meal serves as panim chadashot. Based on this, as long as there is a drasha at seudat shlishit, Ashkenazim can say sheva brachot at this meal even without panim chadashot. Sephardim should try to find two new people, and if they cannot find, they can only say "asher bara."

Question: There are many minyanim that take place in our shul, and very often, people who daven in earlier minyanim come into later minyanim to wish mazal tov to those celebrating a simcha. Would this be prohibited in light of Siman 151 in the Shulchan Aruch, which discusses when one is allowed to enter a shul/beit midrash? If this is permissible, must they say a pasuk when they enter?

Answer: One may not use a shul as a shortcut (based on Mishnah Brachot 54a). In our case, they are entering to say mazal tov and

not using it as a shortcut, and therefore it is permissible. Nevertheless, it is best to say a pasuk when you are not entering for matters of tefillah.

Question: A child who is learning how to read from the Torah has a hard time keeping the place using a yad (pointer). Is he allowed to keep his place by using a piece of paper on the sefer Torah to cover the lines underneath?

Answer: There is a dispute in the poskim in a case where wax falls on the words of a sefer Torah but the text is still discernible (Halachot Ketanot 1:99). In our case, the text from which he reads is completely uncovered, and the paper underneath simply helps him keep the spot. Therefore, this would be permissible.

Question: When learning Chumash, does one need to say the words out loud? Does one need to read the text with ta'amei hamikra? If one reads along with the ba'al korei during Megillot, could this be counted as part of a siyum Tanach?

Answer: There is a machloket whether or not dibur (speaking) is an essential part of the mitzvah of learning Torah, or if hirur (thinking) is sufficient. In practice, we assume that hirur suffices. When learning, it is proper to say at least some lines aloud and combine hirur and dibur. Therefore, this would be enough to suffice for a siyum.

There is a basis to reading with ta'amim, however it is not obligatory and sometimes easier to focus without them.

● Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

תקציר פרשת בשלח

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



ההתמודדויות עם ישראל לומד כי ה' הוא המסייע לו בכל הקשיים וכי אין סיבה להישאר תלויים במצרים. בתלונה האחרונה של עם ישראל במדבר, הקב"ה משלח בעם את הנחשים ואת השרפים. הקב"ה לא זימן במיוחד את הנחשים - הם היו שם כל הזמן, הוא פשוט הסייר את ההגנה הנסית שהייתה עד עכשיו. רק אז, עם ישראל מבין כי ה' הוא זה שהגן עליהם במהלך כל ההליכה במדבר: "וַיֹּאמְרוּ חֲטֵאוּנוּ כִּי דִבְרָנוּ בְּה' וְנִבְּרָ" (במדבר כא, ז). רק לאחר שעם ישראל מסייר את התלות הנפשית במצרים, ושמים את ביטחונם בה' שהוציאם ממצרים והוליקם במדבר, רק אז הם מוכנים להיכנס לארץ ישראל.

רצונו של פרעה, אך הוא רוצה ללמד את פרעה כי הוא שולט אפילו ברצונו של האדם. הוא זה שגורם לפרעה להתעקש שלא לשלח את עם ישראל: "וַיִּחַזַּק ה' אֶת־לֵב פְּרַעֲהוֹ" (ט, יב), והוא זה שגם גורם לו לשלח את עם ישראל למרות שהוא החליט שלא לעשות כן. לכן התורה פותחת דווקא בלשון "וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעֲהוֹ" - ללמדנו שה' שולט בכל ההתרחשות הטבעית אפילו בבחירתו של האדם.

הוצאת עם ישראל בהוראתו של פרעה, גרמה לעם ישראל להישאר עדיין בתחושת תלות למצרים. זו הסיבה שהקב"ה בחר להוביל את עם ישראל דווקא בדרך המדבר הארוכה ולא בדרך ארץ פלשתים הקצרה. הקב"ה כיוון לכך שעם ישראל יצטרך להילחם כנגד המצרים, כך ילמד העם שניתן לנצח את המצרים כל זמן שה' נמצא איתו. ההליכה של עם ישראל במדבר לא נועדה למנוע מלחמה וקשיים, אלא להיפך - השהייה וההליכה במדבר הן אלו שיוצרות קשיים הדורשים מהעם להתמודד. על ידי

רשת בשלח פותחת במילים: "וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעֲהוֹ אֶת הָעָם" (יג, ז), פתיחה זו מתמיהה מאד - התורה בעצמה מדגישה לאורך כל סיפור יציאת מצרים, כי ה' הוא זה שהוציא את עם ישראל ממצרים. מדוע אם כן התורה כותבת דווקא שפרעה הוא זה ששילח את עם ישראל?

מטרת יציאת מצרים איננה רק להציל עם ישראל, אלא גם לגרום לעם ישראל ולפרעה להאמין בה'. מסיבה זו הוצאת ישראל ממצרים צריכה להיעשות ביד חזקה - כך יהיה ברור שה' הוא זה שהוציא את ישראל ממצרים ולא פרעה. אלא שמעיון בכתובים נראה כי הקב"ה מעוניין שיציאת עם ישראל תהיה בסופו של דבר על ידי פרעה, בעקבות היד החזקה שה' יפעיל כנגדו: "וְשַׁלַּחְתִּי אֶת יְדֵי הַכִּיתִי אֶת מִצְרַיִם... וְאַחֲרֵי כֵן יִשְׁלַח אֶתְכֶם" (ג, כ). מדוע ה' 'נאלץ' לחכות להסכמתו של פרעה?

פרעה תופס את עצמו כשולט על כל המתרחש, הוא חושב שהוא זה שיחליט אם לשלח את עם ישראל או לא. הקב"ה היה יכול להוציא את עם ישראל כנגד

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Facts are Facts



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

It's the same people. Exactly the same people, and it's almost impossible to grasp. In this week's Torah portion of Beshalach, we observe people singing the Song of the Sea. From their mouths, we hear majestic words such as "The Lord will reign forever and ever" and "Who is like you among the mighty, O Lord?" Yet later in the same Torah portion, from the mouths of the very same people, we hear the following words: "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt when we sat over pots of meat," and also: "Why have you brought us up from Egypt?" How can those who a moment ago went out from slavery to freedom and sang about it with tremendous joy suddenly claim that Egypt was just "pots of meat?" How do they dare to say that Moshe and Aaron are taking them to die in the desert and that it would be preferable to return to Egypt and die there?

The Torah, by intention, does not only tell us only the uplifting side of the story. It rather throws the truth in our faces, even when it's unpleasant: a person can leave

שבמהלך ההליכה, ממש בעיצומו של האירוע המרגש וההיסטורי, התנהלה שיחה בין שני יהודים. שניהם התלוננו על כל הבלגן, המים והחול שיש סביבם, ואמרו אחד לשני: מה בעצם ההבדל בין הים לבין מצרים? כאן ושם היה אותו דבר:

"כיוון שירדו לים, היה מלא טיט. והיה אומר ראובן לשמעון: במצרים טיט, בים טיט. במצרים בחומר ובלבנים, ובים חומר מים רבים."

זה מנגנון מסוכן. אדם יכול ללכת באמצע ים סוף ולהיות נוכח ביציאת מצרים, אבל לא לשים לב לניסים הרבים שמתרחשים. לא להיות מודע לכך שהוא יוצא מעבודות לחירות, כי הוא עסוק בהשוואות ובקיסטוריום.

פרשנינו קוראים לנו לשים לב לתופעה הזו, ולא להיות כמו אותם מתלוננים בשיא הנס של קריעת ים סוף. לא לחפש רק את הרע והמר, ולא להתבלבל חלילה בין רגעי שמחה וגאולה בחיינו לבין רגעי עבדות. להכיר תודה, להכיר בטובה, ולהיות ערים לשפע הברכה שבחיינו. שלא נפספס את יציאת מצרים שלנו.

Egypt and witness the splitting of the Red Sea, yet ignore the miracle that happened a moment earlier, seeing only what is lacking and complaining. We can always choose upon what to place our focus, whether to sing the "Song of the Sea" or to mutter the "Complaint of the Sea." This was true for our ancestors during the Exodus from Egypt and remains also true for us, at this very moment.



There's almost always a song that's playing in our heads. "Shabbat Shira," as this Shabbat has been designated, draws attention to the songs that accompany our lives. The soundtrack we play can strengthen or weaken us, elevate us or bring us down.

This Shabbat, as part of the Beshalach Torah portion, we read the "Song of the Sea." The children of Israel went out of Egypt, the sea split, and the Egyptian army drowned. Amidst these historic events, witnessed with their own eyes, the people burst out in an emotional song of thanks for what had just transpired, together with

זה קורה. יציאת מצרים יוצאת לדרך. פרשנינו מזכירים לנו שהפרשות שקוראים כעת לא מתארות סיפור היסטורי, אלא אקטואלי. אם עברנו את פרעה, נעבור גם את זה. הנה שני משפטי מפתח, שאפשר לצאת איתם ממצרים בעצמנו, בימים המתאגרים שעוברים עלינו כעת:

הרב אברהם יצחק הכהן קוק כתב: "יציאת מצרים תישאר לעד האביב של העולם כולו". כלומר, זה סיפור שיתן לנצח השראה לעמים רבים, לאנשים רבים, לעבר האביב של חיייהם.

ובספר "נתיבות שלום" כותב הרב שלום נח ברזובסקי: "כל השליחות למענה ירד האדם לעולם היא למען יוציא את עצמו ממצרים". כל אחד והשעבוד שלו, כל אחד והגאולה שלו.



דבר מזעזע קרה במהלך קריעת ים סוף. בשביעי של פסח, אנחנו חוגגים את העובדה שהים נבקע ושבני ישראל עברו ביבשה. אבל חז"ל מתארים לנו

a prayer for the future. The song describes how the entire world was rattled by the Exodus from Egypt, and how the people were filled with newfound strength as they journeyed toward the Land of Israel. The words of this song were eternalized as part of Shacharit, our daily morning prayers.

Wherein lies the power of song? Speech is limited since it relies on the mind. Song is eternal since it comes from the soul.

Singing also brings us together. When someone is speaking, others need to keep quiet or there will just be noise and confusion. People must speak one at a time. But when there is singing, many people can join harmoniously together, even while encouraging many more voices to join them.

Let's examine what happened at the Red Sea: The people took the facts (the sea split) and elevated them in song ("I will sing to the Lord!"). And so we see how song elevates both the individual and the entire nation, uniting them through a rousing common story.

So what song will accompany you today?

האם אנחנו מצפים לטוב בחיינו ומכינים לו מקום, או רק מתכוננים לגרוע מכל? במעמד המרגש של שירת הים, אחרי קריעת ים סוף, מסופר שמרים הנביאה שלפה מייד את התוף: וַתִּקַּח מִן־הַיָּם הַקִּיָּאָה אֶחָת אֶהָרָן אֶת הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתִּצְאָנָה כָּל הַנְּשִׂים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתִפִּים וּבַמְחֹלוֹת.

רגע, מאיפה היה לה שם פתאום תוף? מרים לא התחילה לחפש את התוף במזוודה. הוא כבר היה איתה, צמוד, כי היא התכוננה וציפתה לרגע הזה במשך שנים. היא גם חינכה את כל הנשים של אותו דור שהגאולה עוד מעט מגיעה, וצריך להיות מוכנות. אפשר ללמוד הרבה מאותו דור של נשים עוצמתיות, מאמינות ואופטימיות.

הרעיון הזה הזכיר לי שיר מקסים של הזמר אהרון רזאל: "האם פיניית בליבך מקום לטוב שעוד תגלה? האם אתה מוכן לחסד שיביא איתו היום הזה?". מרים מלמדת אותנו לחיות בתודעה כזו של ציפייה. האם אנחנו מכינים מקום לחסד ולטוב שיגיעו?



For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Behold I shall cause bread to rain for you from the heaven, and the people shall go out and collect each day’s portion on its day, so that I can test them, if they follow my teaching or not’” (Shemot 16:4).

Following the crossing of the sea and the subsequent rejoicing, the Israelites enter the desert and we read of how they were to be miraculously sustained. Whereas mankind usually receives food from the ground and water from the sky, the Israelites received their water from the ground (Miriam’s well) and their food rained down from the sky (manna).

When informing Moshe about the manna and its rules, Hashem describes it as a test, “...so that I can test them, if they follow my teaching or not”. At first glance, this seems to be the easiest test of all time. The Israelites did not have to make the slightest effort in producing or preparing their food. They did not even have to make a living, for Hashem Himself ensured there was bread on their tables and roofs over their heads. All they had to do was walk out each morning and collect their Divine meals. In what way was the manna a test

Continued from page 5

honor; for Hashem will give Sisera over into the **hand** of a woman.’ Disappointed that Barak did not initiate war as commanded by Hashem as testimony to belief in Hashem’s power, Devorah focuses on Barak’s leg-pursuit and shifts the spotlight to Yael’s hands of salvation!

The selection of the haftarah narrative and song serves as *parshanut* for the war of the Red Sea which broadcasted the mighty Hand of Hashem. In future wars of conquest, however, the nation of Israel would



Free of distractions and potential excuses, would the Israelites immerse themselves in futile pursuits or would they utilize their time for learning, observing Hashem’s teachings and bettering the world?

of observance? Where is the challenge in living a life of luxury and relaxation?

Or HaChaim answers:

“Because food from heaven needs no fixing, they (the Israelites) will be free of everything and then I will see if they follow... (my teaching or not)” (Or HaChaim Shemot 16:4).

According to the Or HaChaim, it was the carefree and relaxing lifestyle created by the manna that provided the real test. Without any of the concerns of food production, preparation or livelihood, the Israelites had an abundance of free time. Therein lay the test. Free of distractions

be required to initiate with their hands, and only then would Hashem intercede on their behalf and assist them. The war of Devorah and Barak against Sisra may also then be compared to the war of Yehoshua against Amalek, mentioned in Devorah’s song: “They came from Efraim, rooted in Amalek” (5:14). These wars will never be complete until we initiate with our hands to fight battles with G-d! Then we may continue to sing in future tense – “Then

and potential excuses, would the Israelites immerse themselves in futile pursuits or would they utilize their time for learning, observing Hashem’s teachings and bettering the world?

The miraculous existence in the wilderness was never meant to be a long-term solution and we no longer rely on manna to fall from heaven. Nor do we rely on being otherwise miraculously sustained. The realities of this world dictate that there will not be food on our tables or roofs over our heads if we do not invest a significant amount of time in making a living. Nevertheless, whilst we do not have the abundance of time the Israelites had in the wilderness, the test of the manna remains true.

Once we have worked enough hours to ensure a fair standard of living, how do we use the rest of our time? Do we spend our spare time in selfish endeavors or do we give time to others? Do we fill our remaining hours with meaning? Do we set aside time for learning Torah?

By setting our priorities straight and wisely utilizing our spare time, may we successfully pass the test.

Shabbat Shalom!

sang (yashir) Moshe...”, the song of ultimate redemption.

1. Mekhilta D’Rabbi Yishmael Beshalach, Mes-sechta DeShira 15:20 – “the timbrel in her hand”: Whence did they have timbrels and dance (instruments) in the desert? Being tzaddikim, and knowing for a certainty that the Holy One Blessed be He would perform miracles and mighty acts for them when they left Egypt, they readied timbrels and (dance) instruments for themselves.

Continued from page 4

Instead of appreciating Hashem's gift to them, the Jews defiled Eretz Yisrael. Sadly, the goodness of the fruit did not inspire them to live proper lives and they were, therefore, exiled.²⁰

Fruit consumption is not mystical magic. It is significant when done *b'taharah*, out of respect for and appreciation of the holiness of the fruit and the land that produces it. Only eating this way sustains our place in Eretz Yisrael in this world and earns us one in the next. A lack of this perspective causes us to defile the land and eventually leads to our exile.

This is also why the *Al Hamichya berachah* links our prayer to return to Israel and enjoy its fruits to our intention to then thank Hashem for these fruits in a spirit of **kedushah** and **taharah**: "*v'nochal mipiryah vnisha mituvah, u'nevarechicha alehah b'kedushah u'v'taharah.*" We pray to return and eat Israel's fruits in a way that helps us appreciate Eretz Yisrael's true significance and inspires us to live holy and pure lives there.

This need to complement purity with holiness is also hinted at by the Yerushalmi, which mentions speaking "*lashon hakodesh*" as one of the components of the kind of Israeli life that earns one a place in the next world. Living in Eretz Yisrael merits Olam Haba when it is guided by *tahara, kedushahah, and kabalat ol malchut shamayim*.

Relationship and Redemption

Interestingly, our physical separation from Eretz Yisrael in exile did not distance us from it or it from us. On the contrary, it reinforced our mutual relationship. We showed our appreciation and longing for the land by continuing to eat and yearn for its fruit, and the land showed its loyalty to us by not producing (enough) fruit to sustain the other nations who occupied it.

Sefer Vayikra²¹ predicted that the land would stop producing when we were exiled from it. This prevented other nations from taking our place on the land and served as a reminder (to both us and the world) of our eternal relationship with the aptly named Land of Israel.²²

Understandably, the Neviim²³ foresaw our redemption as including the land's reflowering. The gemara quotes Rebbi Abba who labeled this occurrence as "the clearest sign of redemption."²⁴ Israel stopped producing fruit when we went into exile. It started producing again when we returned.

Based upon these sources, Rav Kook saw Israel's fruit production in his time as proof

that the redemption process had begun.²⁵ In a beautiful, poetic piece, Rav Kook celebrated the return of Israel's fruit and described its significance:

It is a mitzvah to completely enjoy the refreshed holy sweetness of Israel's fruits... We need to inform the whole world, to those suffering in exilic darkness, that the conduit of full life infused with the blessed light of the sweet holiness of our desirable land has begun to reopen... (By producing fruit) the sweet land seeks its children, it extends its arms to them with love... calling out to them to return to their mother's bosom, to return and remember their original life-form and the sweetness of Hashem's love felt in our mother's home and the room of our conception...²⁶

Rav Kook saw the land's blossoming as far more than just a reflection of our return. It is also a call for us to do so. The land's reflowering is a way of letting us know that the time has come for us to return.

Tu B'shvat 2023

Though far from the land for two millennia, our ancestors used Tu B'shvat to reaffirm our relationship with and belief in the future potency of the Land of Israel. They celebrated by eating Israeli fruits and prayed to return to the land. Today we, of course, have much more to celebrate. The land has welcomed us back and is once again producing fruit and offering its blessings — fruit, natural gas, and iy"H more to come.

We reside in Israel today as beneficiaries of generations of Jews who maintained their faith in the Land of Israel. This faith enables us to enjoy the goodness of Israel's fruits today as residents of a Jewish State founded in our ancient homeland.

It is critical that we appreciate Eretz Yisrael's physical goodness as well as the spiritual significance the physical goodness reflects. May this appreciation inspire us to live lives worthy of Eretz Yisrael and Olam Haba.

1. See Mishnah Rosh Hashana 1:1-2 with the commentary of Rebbi Ovadia MiBartenura.
2. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 572:3 based upon Shu"t Maharam MiRotenberg 4:5. See also the Bach, who holds that we delay a *taanit* even once a series of fasts has begun.
3. Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 131:6. See the Mishnah Berurah (S'K 32) who notes that our custom is to skip *tachanun* at Minchah on Erev Tu B'shvat as well.
4. See Magen Avraham (ibid) S'K 16.

5. *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, Aseh 27. See Tur (Orach Chayim 208) who encourages omitting it.
6. Talmud Bavli, Mesechet Sotrah 14a.
7. Yirmiyah 2:7 and Nechemya 9:36.
8. Shekalim 14b.
9. See Shu"t Torah Lishma 418 where he uses this appreciation to explain the importance of touring Israel to eat its fruit.
10. For a different approach, the Bach (Orach Chayim 208 D"H V'katav Od) explains that we yearn to eat Israel's fruit because they are infused with the holiness of the land they grow from. See also Chatam Sofer Sukkah 36b who mentions the fruits' holiness as the basis of the importance of producing them.
11. Shemot 3:8.
12. Devarim 8:7.
13. Bereishit 12:1.
14. Ibid.
15. See also Avnei Nezer (Yoreh Dei'ah 2:454) who explains that Chassidish Rebbes did not make aliyah because they could not find a way to support themselves in Eretz Yisrael (without receiving donations from overseas). The mitzvah is not just to move to Israel, but to live a natural, self-sustaining, good life there.
16. *Mimaynei Hayeshu'a*, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop.
17. Rav Charlop's usage of the terms "*tovah*" and "*hana'ah*" are similar to the words used by Rashi.
18. See Tosefta Sotah (15:2) which links to taste of fruit to the degree of *taharah*. This explains the assertion of the Mishnah (Sotah 9:12) that the true taste of fruit was lost with the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash.
19. Yirmiyahu 2:7.
20. Eretz Yisrael is not like other lands. Its functionality hinges on the conduct of its residents. As opposed to Mitzrayim, which is watered by the Nile, Eretz Yisrael lacks natural rivers and depends fully upon the rain Hashem provides. When the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael live properly, Hashem blesses the land with rain and it produces sweet fruits. When they do not, Hashem holds back the rain, the ground hardens up and the land "spits the residents out."
21. Sefer Vayikra 26:32.
22. Sifra Bechukotai 6:5 and Ramban Vayikra 26:16. The desolation of the land as late as the end of the 19th century was described vividly by Mark Twain (*Innocents Abroad* Vol. 2) and later by Prof. Sir John William Dosson (*Modern Science in Bible Lands*, pg. 449) who also explained the implicit message as "it seems that they (the land and the itinerant tribes who live there) await the return of the permanent residents of the land."
23. Zecharya 8:12, Micha 4:1-4, Yeshayahu 65:21-22, and Yechezkel 36:7-36.
24. Sanhedrin 98a.
25. Igrot HaR'iyah 3:155.
26. Orot Yisrael 9:9.



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Renewable Energy



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

The first translation of the Torah into another language – Greek – took place in around the second century BCE, in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy II. It is known as the Septuagint, in Hebrew *HaShivim*, because it was done by a team of seventy scholars. The Talmud, however, says that at various points the Sages at work on the project deliberately mistranslated certain texts because they believed that a literal translation would simply be unintelligible to a Greek readership. One of these texts was the phrase, “On the seventh day God finished all the work He had made.” Instead, the translators wrote, “On the sixth day God finished.”¹

What was it that they thought the Greeks would not understand? How did the idea that God made the universe in six days make more sense than that He did so in seven? It seems puzzling, yet the answer is simple. The Greeks could not understand the seventh day, Shabbat, as itself part of the work of Creation. What is creative about resting? What do we achieve by *not* making, *not* working, *not* inventing? The idea seems to make no sense at all.

Indeed, we have the independent testimony of the Greek writers of that period, that one of the things they ridiculed in Judaism was Shabbat. One day in seven Jews do not work, they said, because they are lazy. The idea that the day itself might have independent value was apparently beyond their comprehension. Oddly enough, within a very short period of time, the empire of Alexander the Great began to crumble, just as had the earlier city state of Athens that gave rise to some of the greatest thinkers and writers in history. Civilisations, like individuals, can suffer from burnout. It’s what happens when you don’t have a day of rest written

into your schedule. As Ahad HaAm said, “More than the Jewish people has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jewish people.” Rest one day in seven and you won’t burn out.

Shabbat, which we encounter for the first time in this *parsha*, is one of the greatest institutions the world has ever known. It changed the way the world thought about time. Prior to Judaism, people measured time either by the sun – the solar calendar of 365 days aligning us with the seasons – or by the moon, that is, by months (“month” comes from the word “moon”) of roughly thirty days. The idea of the seven-day week – which has no counterpart in nature – was born in the Torah and spread throughout the world via Christianity and Islam, both of which borrowed it from Judaism, marking the difference simply by having it on a different day. We have years because of the sun, months because of the moon, and weeks because of the Jews.

What Shabbat did and still does is to create space within our lives and within society as a whole in which we are truly free. Free from the pressures of work; free from the demands of ruthless employers; free from the siren calls of a consumer society urging us to spend our way to happiness; free to be ourselves in the company of those we love. Somehow this one day has renewed its meaning in generation after generation, despite the most profound economic and industrial change. In Moses’ day it meant freedom from slavery to Pharaoh. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century it meant freedom from sweatshop working conditions of long hours for little pay. In ours, it means freedom from emails, smartphones, and the demands of 24/7 availability.

What our *parsha* tells us is that Shabbat was among the first commands the Israelites received on leaving Egypt. Having complained about the lack of food, God told them that He would send them manna from heaven, but they were not to gather it on the seventh day. Instead, a double portion would fall on the sixth. That is why to this day we have two *challot* on Shabbat, in memory of that time.

Not only was Shabbat culturally unprecedented. Conceptually, it was so as well. Throughout history people have dreamed of an ideal world. We call such visions, utopias, from the Greek *ou* meaning “no” and *topos* meaning “place.”² They are called that because no such dream has ever come true, except in one instance, namely Shabbat. Shabbat is “utopia now,” because on it we create, for twenty-five hours a week, a world in which there are no hierarchies, no employers and employees, no buyers and sellers, no inequalities of wealth or power, no production, no traffic, no din of the factory or clamour of the marketplace. It is “the still point of the turning world,” a pause between symphonic movements, a break between the chapters of our days, an equivalent in time of the open countryside between towns where you can feel the breeze and hear the song of birds. Shabbat is utopia, not as it will be at the end of time but rather, as we rehearse for it now in the midst of time.

G-d wanted the Israelites to begin their one-day-in-seven rehearsal of freedom almost as soon as they left Egypt, because real freedom, of the seven-days-in-seven kind, takes time, centuries, millennia. The Torah regards slavery as wrong,³ but it did not abolish it immediately because people were not yet ready for this. Neither Britain nor America abolished it until the

nineteenth century, and even then not without a struggle. Yet the outcome was inevitable once Shabbat had been set in motion, because slaves who know freedom one day in seven will eventually rise against their chains.

The human spirit needs time to breathe, to inhale, to grow. The first rule in time management is to distinguish between matters that are *important*, and those that are merely *urgent*. Under pressure, the things that are important but not urgent tend to get crowded out. Yet these are often what matter most to our happiness and sense of a life well lived. Shabbat is time dedicated to the things that are important but not urgent: family, friends, community, a sense of sanctity, prayer in which we thank G-d for the good things in our life, and Torah reading in which we retell the long, dramatic story of our people and our journey. Shabbat is when we celebrate *shalom bayit* – the peace that comes from love and lives in the home blessed by the *Shechinah*, the presence of G-d you can almost feel in the candlelight, the wine, and the special bread. This is a beauty created not by Michelangelo or Leonardo but by each of us: a serene island of time in the midst of the often-raging sea of a restless world.

I once took part, together with the Dalai Lama, in a seminar (organised by the Elijah Institute) in Amritsar, Northern India, the sacred city of the Sikhs. In the course of the talks, delivered to an audience of two thousand Sikh students, one of the Sikh leaders turned to the students and said: “What we need is what the Jews have: Shabbat!” Just imagine, he said, a day dedicated every week to family and home and relationships. He could see its beauty. We can live its reality.

The ancient Greeks could not understand how a day of rest could be part of Creation. Yet it is so, for without rest for the body, peace for the mind, silence for the soul, and a renewal of our bonds of identity and love, the creative process eventually withers and dies. It suffers entropy, the principle that all systems lose energy over time. The Jewish people did not lose energy over time, and remains as vital and creative as it ever was. The reason is Shabbat: humanity’s greatest source of renewable energy, the day that gives us the strength to keep on creating.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- What is your favorite aspect of Shabbat?

- How do you think the Jewish idea of Shabbat has changed the world for the better?
- Is it hard to sort the urgent from the important? What things in your life are more important than the urgent things you usually find yourself worrying about?

1. Megillah 9a.
2. The word was coined in 1516 by Sir Thomas More, who used it as the title of his book.
3. On the wrongness of slavery from a Torah perspective, see the important analysis in Rabbi N. L. Rabinovitch, *Mesilot BiLevavam* (Maaleh Adumim: Maaliyot, 2015), 38–45. The basis of the argument is the view, central to both the Written Torah and the Mishna, that all humans share the same ontological dignity as the image and likeness of G-d. This was in the sharpest possible contrast to the views, for instance, of Plato and Aristotle. Rabbi Rabinovitch analyses the views of the Sages, and of Maimonides and Me’iri, on the phrase “They shall be your slaves forever” (Lev. 25:46). Note also the quote he brings from Job 31:13–15, “If I have denied justice to any of my servants... when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when G-d confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One form us both within our mothers?”



Bini Maryles,
Head of Coaching at CauseMatch
info@causematch.com
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Klal Yisrael as a Tzibbur



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him, for he had firmly adjured Bnei Yisrael saying, 'Hashem will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones from here with you.' (Shemos 13:19)

Rashi notes, “[Yosef] made [his brothers] swear that they would make their children swear” to take his remains with them when they would leave Mitzrayim. Yosef knew that his brothers would not live until the time of yetzi’as Mitzrayim, and he therefore did not make them swear to take his remains along with them when they themselves left Mitzrayim. Instead, he made them swear to make others swear. This is the meaning of the repetitive use of the verb, *השבע השביע*.

In the 1920s, students all over Europe would send questions on postcards to the Rogatchover Gaon, who would respond to them in writing. Subsequently, many of these postcards were collected and printed in *She’eilos U’Teshuvos Tzafnas Pa’anei’ach*. In one inquiry (143:2), a student asked for the Rogatchover’s opinion about the shalosh shevu’os (Three Oaths), one of which relates to the establishment of a Jewish government in Eretz Yisrael before the days of the Final Redemption.

The Gemara in Kesubos (111a), teaches that Klal Yisrael and the nations of the world took three oaths. The Gemara bases itself on the thrice-repeated passuk in Shir HaShirim: “I have adjured you, O daughters of Yerushalayim, by gazelles or by hinds of the field, should you wake or rouse the love until it pleases.” (2:7, 3:5, 8:4) The Gemara then interprets these pessukim as follows: “In regard to what

were these three oaths administered? One, that the Jewish People should not converge [upon Eretz Yisrael] in a wall [of force]; one, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the Jewish People not to rebel against the nations of the world; and one, that the Holy One, Blessed be He, adjured the idolators not to subjugate the Jewish People more than is sufficient.”

The Rogachover responded that he was always bothered by how these shevu’os could be binding on the Jewish People living today, since they were taken so long ago. A shevuah is only binding on the one who personally took the oath. This is illustrated by the fact that in the case of the shevuah taken by Yosef’s brothers, it was necessary for each generation to make the subsequent generation take its own shevuah in order for the oath to be binding. If not for this, the original shevuah taken by Yosef’s brothers would not have been binding upon the Jews leaving Mitzrayim generations later.

The Rogachover suggested that the difference between these shevu’os is that the one taken by Yosef’s brothers preceded Matan Torah, whereas the one described in Shir HaShirim followed Matan Torah. Matan Torah served as the metzaref (coalescer) of Klal Yisrael, making it into “one, eternal entity.” The passuk uses the singular verb in describing Bnei Yisrael’s encampment at Har Sinai, “And Yisrael encamped there, opposite the mountain” (Shemos 19:2), and Chazal famously teach that the huge multitude of people encamped “as one man, with one heart” (Rashi). Klal Yisrael attained the status of a Nation only through the Torah.

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of quoting the line in Rav Sa’adyah Gaon’s *Emunos VeDe’os* (ma’amar 3), “Our Nation is not a Nation, but through her Torah.” The Rav thus explained the practice that the chazan holds onto the sefer Torah as we proclaim, “All Yisrael as comrades,” at the time of birchas hachodesh. Basing himself on the words of the Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, the Rav explained that kiddush hachodesh must be performed by the Beis Din HaGadol because they act as representatives of Klal Yisrael. Now that there is no Beis Din HaGadol, the mitzvah reverts back to the body of Klal Yisrael. By holding onto the metzaref of Klal Yisrael, the sefer Torah, and proclaiming *חברים כל ישראל*, the united Jewish Nation throughout the world declares the day of the coming Rosh Chodesh.

The Rogachover similarly explained that when Klal Yisrael took the shevuah spoken of in Shir HaShirim, it was as a tzibbur, and as such, that shevuah remains binding on all future generations who are part of that timeless tzibbur. In contrast, the shevuah taken by the brothers of Yosef took place before Matan Torah. Since there was no entity of Klal Yisrael at that time, it was a shevu’as hayachid (oath of an individual), which is only binding on the one who actually took the oath.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha.

How to Turn the Bitter into Sweet



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

The most famous thing that happens in Parshat Beshalach is of course Kriyat Yam Suf and Shirat Hayam but another very significant, and perhaps second most well-known, part of Parshat Beshalach is the fact that Bnei Yisrael were given Mitzvot at Marah. In fact, the first Mitzvot that the Bnei Yisrael received was at a place called Marah. As it states in 15:25, וַיִּצְעַק אֶל ה' וַיִּיָּרֶהוּ ה' - "There [G-d] made for them a fixed rule; there they were put to the test."

The verse that this appears in is actually a very packed posuk, and requires explanation as to how each part is linked to the other. The full posuk states, וַיִּצְעַק אֶל ה' וַיִּיָּרֶהוּ ה' עֵץ וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ אֶל-הַמַּיִם וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם שֵׁם שָׁם לֹא חָק וּמִשְׁפָּט וְשֵׁם נִסְהוּ - "So he [Moshe] cried out to Hashem, and Hashem showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There [G-d] made for them a fixed rule; there they were put to the test." When the Bnei Yisrael came to Mara, they complained about the bitter water they found there which was not drinkable. In this Posuk, Moshe cries out to Hashem, Hashem provides Moshe with the solution and then the Torah informs us that this was the place Bnei Yisrael received their first Mitzvot. What's the connection between all these things?

Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi in his Sefer Birkat Mordechai provides a beautiful explanation. There is a debate regarding the wood that Hashem told Moshe to put into the bitter water. The Ramban says it was a bitter wood. There was a miracle that something bitter was thrown into bitter water and was able to turn that

water into something sweet. The Targum Yonatan says that the wood had Hashem's name written on it. Was it the bitterness or the wood or the fact that Hashem's name was on the wood that caused the water to become sweet?

The Birkat Mordechai explains that Hashem wasn't teaching Moshe a one-time trick. This wasn't a solution in isolation to the complaints at Mara. Hashem wanted to teach Bnei Yisrael a valuable lesson that would be needed for generations to come - וַיִּיָּרֶהוּ ה' - "And Hashem showed/taught him". Hashem is telling us that there are moments in people's lives which are particularly bitter, when life is particularly challenging. Bitter thoughts and ideas, unhappy moments and disappointments are all part of life. Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to teach Bnei Yisrael that when you write G-d's name on the bitterness, when you connect the bitterness to a recognition of Hashem, then things turn sweet. Without a recognition of Yad Hashem, without a recognition that everything that comes our way is something that is a challenge from Hashem, then life remains very bitter. When challenging times come our way and we have an understanding that we are here to accomplish, we are here to do and we connect Hashem to the bitterness, the bitterness will very easily turn sweet.

Imagine Moshe talking to Bnei Yisrael at this moment. It's shortly after they've witnessed Kriyat Yam Suf and they start to complain that Hashem gave them bitter water. Moshe Rabbeinu says to Bnei Yisrael, "Did you forget what has taken place over the last six or seven

months? Did you forget that Hashem split the Yam Suf for you to walk through? Did you forget that Hashem put clouds of protection so that the arrows of the Egyptians did not reach you? Did you forget that Hashem provides, that you have what to eat? What are you thinking, why are you complaining?" You should understand that when something challenging comes your way you look to Shamayim, you look to heaven, you look for guidance, you Daven. Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to go to Klal Yisrael, and teach them something. Show them that when you have something bitter, you put the Sheim Hashem on it and you throw it into your life and things become sweet. Because if a person becomes sick or a person has a financial loss, if these things are just arbitrary things that happen to you, it is very bitter. However, if there are challenges that are put in front of you by Hashem to help you be able to make it to where you have to get, that is a very different story. Then there is sweetness in the bitterness. Moshe Rabbeinu turned the water sweet.

Says Rav Ezrachi, that Moshe asked Klal Yisrael, what is sweeter, this water or the normal water that you had before you came to Marah? What is sweeter, the everyday water that you drink without much of an appreciation or the water that was bitter but through connecting it to Hashem it became sweet. Remember, in life when the bitter moments come, the fixing of those bitter moments leads to even sweeter times ahead.

● Edited by Yehuda Kaufold and Josh Harris.

Paro's Regret



Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef zt"l
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

This week's parashah states, "It was when Paro sent the people away" (Shemot 13:17).

The Midrash asks who said the Hebrew letters "Va'ye"? They answer that Paro said "Va'ye!" (this is what is meant by the Hebrew words "Va'yehi Beshalach" ("It was when he sent"), which are divided as follows "Va'ye" "hi" "Beshalach". This means that Paro said "Oy Vavoy" (Woe to me for delivering Am Yisrael. In fact, every time the passuk says "Va'yehi" this is explained by our Chachamim). Why was Paro distressed because he had liberated Am Yisrael?

There is a passuk in Mishlei (24:30-31): "I passed by the field of a lazy man, and by the vineyard of a man whose heart was missing, and behold, he was all overgrown with thorns; nettles covered his surface, and his stone wall was broken," and our Chachamim explained the passuk as referring to Paro.

This is similar to a person who owned a field and did not take proper care of it.

He did not take care of the field and was too lazy to exert effort to work and cultivate it. In time, the field became a pile of rubble, a heap of stones and earth. The man saw that the field was worthless and that he had to pay taxes on it every year. He decided that he had no use for the land, so he sold it to someone else. This person was industrious and invested a lot in the field. He cleared it, removed all the stones and discovered a spring underneath. He planted rows and rows of vines, pomegranates, palm trees in the field, as well as rows for roses, myrrh and aloes with all the important spices that give off a strong fragrance far and wide. Everyone who passed near the field enjoyed the sight of it and praised the one who had cultivated the field that had been neglected for so many years.

The seller of the field came by and couldn't believe his eyes. He hit his head, wept, and said, "Woe is me for selling this field!"

It was the same with the wicked Paro. As long as they were captives in Egypt, they

were lowly and contemptible slaves, and he didn't recognize their unique qualities, and Paro didn't have the common sense to use their valuable qualities. Therefore, Am Yisrael were comparable to a heap of earth and stones, of which it's said, "As chaste as a garden locked, My sister, O bride" (Shir HaShirim 4:12). But after they left Egypt and entered the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu, it says of them, "Purified in a garden spring, a well of waters alive and flowing clean from Lebanon" (ibid. 4:15), for then they received the Holy Torah and the word of Hashem began to bubble within them. Then all of Am Yisrael saw Divine visions and they became famous worldwide for their precious qualities. Their wisdom and intellect became known throughout the world, and then the wicked Paro exclaimed, "Va'ye, Va'ye, (Woe, woe) that this precious people has left my dominion!" This is what is meant by "It was when Paro sent the people away": he lamented that Am Yisrael had left his land.

Believe In Oneself!



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו.

“They believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant.” (Shemot 14:31)

After witnessing Kriyat Yam Suf, and all the miracles that transpired, the Torah informs us that Bnei Yisrael finally expressed their Emunah (belief) in Hashem and in Moshe Rabbeinu.

Rabbi Tzadok (Tzidkat HatZadik 154) – explains that the reference to belief in Moshe is actually more encompassing and extends to belief by each and every individual in oneself! As the Gemara in Bava Batra (121B) states, when Bnei Yisrael were distanced from Hashem, there was no communication between Hashem and Moshe. Moshe and Am Yisrael are considered one and the same.

Therefore, Rabbi Tzadok interprets this pasuk as follows: Just like man believes in G-d, so too does one have to believe in oneself. We are not viewed by G-d as day laborers that can be dismissed on a daily basis if our work is not necessary. So long as each morning one's *neshama* is returned, it is because that individual has a purpose – a mission to accomplish that day. The ultimate tragedy is not when we don't recognize our faults, but rather when we don't recognize our *strengths*: the potential of what we can accomplish.

We begin each morning with the prayer of מודה אני (*Modeh Ani*) - where we thank Hashem for returning our *neshama* to us. At the end of that phrase we state: בחלה רבה אמונתך – “with great compassion, Your faith.” One would have surmised that the last word would be אמונתי – **my** faith – ending our statement with our belief in G-d. Yet, we use the term אמונתך – **your** faith. Essentially, we are referring to G-d's faith in **us**! We thank Hashem for returning our soul and for his faith in us – that



The ultimate tragedy is not when we don't recognize our faults, but rather when we don't recognize our strengths: the potential of what we can accomplish.

we are worthy of living another day. That we have a mission to accomplish and are essential to the world.

One must possess this self confidence in order to be able to accomplish one's mission. Yet, one needs to be careful not to let such confidence lead to arrogance. There is a well-known *machloket* between the worldviews of the great *musar yeshivot* Novardok and Slabodka. Novardok believed that man, *adam*, derives his name from *adama*, earth. This point constantly reminds us that we were created from the dirt of the earth. Slabodka believed that *adam* is related to *adame* – “I will resemble” Hashem. This interpretation reminds man that he was created in Hashem's image. Are we to think highly of ourselves as G-d's creation, or lowly of ourselves, like the dirt from which we were formed? Perhaps the resolution of this argument is to combine both of these understandings into a balanced approach.

Often, we believe that self-worth and self-confidence are antitheses of humility. However, being a humble person doesn't mean we think we are nothing and can't accomplish anything in life. That is not

humility, because if it was, Moshe would not have accomplished anything in his life, and Moshe was *anav mikol adam*, the humblest of all men. Being humble does not have to translate into being a quiet person who minds his own business. Quite the opposite. Being humble means acting on behalf of others, without the need of recognition. Moshe's actions were pure. He did not seek popularity in a social network or credit for his achievements. He acted out of a sense of justice – for the sake of the people without any ulterior motive or desire for personal benefit.

May we be able to find the proper balance between self-confidence and humility so that we can maximize our potential and fulfill our mission!

Parshas Beshalach: Of Manna and Miracles



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

This week's Dvar Torah is dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandfather's daughter, Devora bas Yitzchak a'h HY"D, who was born in Poland in 1941, R"L, the week of Parshas Beshalach. She was named Devora for the weekly haftorah of Beshalach, after the prophetess Devora. One child of 1.5 million who were murdered al kiddush Hashem, innocent in life and pure in death. May her memory be for a blessing.

In Parshas Beshalach the newly freed Israelite nation finds itself facing the trials of desert life. First, the Egyptian army chases after the nation, led by Pharaoh who has had a change of heart and wants his slaves back. Then the people travel for days without water. Then they travel longing for food, remembering the fleshpots and bread they ate to satiation in Egypt! As if! And as the *parsha* closes, they face an attack by our arch-enemy, Amalek.

In regard to the threat of the pursuing Egyptians, G-d splits the Reed Sea, and the people pass through the sea on damp land, while the Egyptians drown in the churning waters behind them.

In regard to the lack of drinkable water, G-d instructs Moshe to throw a tree into the bitter waters and they will become sweet; the people will have fresh, palatable water to drink.

In regard to the lack of meat, G-d sends the *selav* (a type of quail), and in regard to the lack of bread, Hashem sends down manna from heaven, which will ultimately sustain them for their forty years of desert wanderings.

And in regard to the battle with Amalek, Moshe, Aharon and Chur (Miriam's son)

pray, while Yehoshua leads the people in battle.

The trials of desert life are real and daunting, yet the nation quickly learns that nothing is beyond Hashem, His reach and His ability to save His people.

In regard to the manna, the *pasuk* says: This is what G-d has commanded: *Gather from it (the manna) for every man, according to what he eats - an omer (measurement) per person - according to the number of your people, everyone according to whoever is in his tent shall you take (Shemos 16:16).*

R' S. R. Hirsch writes (ibid), "They were to gather it, each man according to the needs of his household, according to the number of souls, one omer for each person. If, at the time when the manna melted away, some had gathered more than the correct amount, and some had gathered less, nevertheless, when they came to measure it, it was found that he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no deficiency: they had gathered (only) as much as they needed to eat.

"However, the *intention* to gather the appropriate quantity was apparently an *essential, indispensable condition*; otherwise, after the first experience, they needed not have bothered to gather more than a minimal amount, since, in any case, everyone would receive what he needed, and certainly no more than his share.

"In this lay the important lesson on the value of *working hard while relying on the blessing of Providence* in seeking a livelihood for oneself and one's family."

The gathering of the manna teaches a fundamental lesson for generations. Whether we are facing the trials of the desert or the trials of the city, whether we gather manna with the morning light or shop for our provisions in the supermarket, whether we are the Israelites of antiquity or the Jews of today... Providence requires us to put forth our effort to help ourselves. And yet - *excess hishtadlus* (effort, toil, trying) will yield no more than that which G-d decrees we are destined to have.

Perhaps this is why the falling of the manna was intertwined with so many laws and lessons regarding Shabbos (see Shemos 16). The Torah is teaching us that no matter how much extra we "gather" and no matter how many extra hours we work, our efforts will not yield greater bounty if G-d does not will it.

Hence, the laws of Shabbos are introduced with the manna. For it is a great myth and deception to believe that desecrating the holy day of Shabbos, gathering more, working more, and amassing more will yield results. On the contrary, going against the will of G-d will only be detrimental and never beneficial.

In regard to our verse (16:16), the Ba'al Ha'Turim fascinatingly teaches: *This verse contains all the letters of the alef-beis* (Hebrew alpha-bet), *to teach you that whoever keeps the Torah* (which was written with the 22 letters of the alef-beis), *Hashem provides his livelihood for him without difficulty, as (He provided) for those who ate the manna.*

There are only *two* verses in the entire Five Books of Torah that contain *every letter* of the *alef-beis*; and this is one of them (the other is Devarim 4:34).

Continued on page 20

Amalek – V'Lo Yaray Elokim



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

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The details of Amalek's attack on Israel in Parshat Beshalach are quite scant. However, by considering when this battle takes place, as well as the parallel source in Sefer Devarim, a more complete picture emerges - that can help us understand why Amalek remains Israel's 'eternal' enemy.

Note how the Torah begins the story of Amalek, immediately after the story of "massa u'meriva": "And Amalek came, and attacked Israel at REFIDIM..."

From this pasuk alone, it would seem as though ALL of Bnei Yisrael are encamped in Refidim when Amalek attacked. However, when we consider what took place during the previous event (i.e. the story of "massa u'meriva"), a very different picture emerges. Let's review those events: "And Bnei Yisrael traveled from MIDBAR SIN... and encamped in REFIDIM, and there was **no water** for the people to drink... and they quarreled with Moshe..."

To solve this water shortage, G-d instructs Moshe to take his staff hit the rock etc. However, recall **where** that rock is located: "G-d said to Moshe, **PASS BEFORE** the people, **TAKE** with you **SOME OF THE ELDERS**, and take the staff... I will be standing before you at the **ROCK** at **CHOREV**; strike the rock [there] and water will issue from it..."

The rock that Moshe hits is NOT in Refidim - rather, it is located at Har Sinai! Therefore, to drink this water, the entire nation will now need to travel from Refidim to Har Sinai.

Imagine the resulting situation: The entire nation, who had suffered several days of life-threatening thirst in a hot desert, must now first quench its immediate

thirst, and then move its camp to the new water source at Har Sinai. Those who still had strength probably went first to the water source to bring supplies back to those who were too weak to travel.

One could also assume that this journey was not very organized, with the stronger men advancing ahead to set up the new campsite, while those who were 'weak and tired' lingered behind.

It is precisely at this point when Amalek attacks: "Amalek came, and attacked Israel at REFIDIM...". But who is in Refidim? - Only a remnant of the camp - the weak and the tired - most probably, primarily the women and children.

Agreed, our interpretation thus far has been based on conjecture and 'reading between the lines.' However, in the parallel account of this story in Sefer Devarim, we find precisely these missing details: "Remember what Amalek did to you **BA'DERECH** (on your journey) when you left Egypt - for he surprised you **BA'DERECH** [i.e. while you were traveling] and cut down **ALL THE STRAGGLERS IN YOUR REAR**, while you were **FAMISHED & WEARY...**"

Amalek capitalizes on Bnei Yisrael's disadvantage. Even in war there are accepted norms of conduct; men fight men, armies engage armies. Amalek's attack is outright unethical, even by wartime standards.

The commandment to remember what Amalek did seems to apply to every generation, even after the original ('genetic') Amalek is wiped out. The eternal nature of this law - to 'remember Amalek' - suggests that Amalek may also represent any similar ('generic') type of enemy that may emerge in future generations.

To support this understanding, note how Amalek emerges in mass numbers during the time of David only a short time after they were 'totally wiped out' by Shaul.

Note as well how Amalek attacked the 'women and children' of David's camp in Tziklag, taking them captive - at the same time when David and his men had left on a mission. Here, we find not only the name Amalek, but a very similar manner of ('unethical') warfare.

Yet in all of these battles, we never find Amalek living in any specific land, rather a nomadic tribe - roaming the desert, looking for easy prey. Furthermore, we never find a mention of their god. Even when Sefer Shoftim mentions the gods of the other nations that Bnei Yisrael worshiped, we find the gods of Aram, Tzidon, Edom, Moav, Amon, and Phlishtim, we never find even a mention of the god of Amalek.

Amalek emerges as a nation with no god, and no land. Their primary goal appears to be the denial of Israel's right to exist. At any time of Israel's weakness, they swoop in and attack.

Another proof that Amalek must be destroyed because of their deeds, and not only because of their 'genes' is found in Sefer Shmuel when G-d commands Shaul to destroy them. Note how Shmuel describes Amalek (at that time) as a nation who had sinned against G-d.

Furthermore, from the commandment not to take any booty from that battle, we find a parallel to Avraham's attitude to the city of Sodom. Recall from Breishit 14:22-23, how Avraham shunned the very thought of taking anything that once belonged to Sodom - the city of iniquity.

Continued on page 25

We're Never Too Busy To Say "Thank You"



Rabbi Eli Mansour
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The first section of Parashat Beshalah tells one of the most dramatic stories in the entire Torah – the story of Keri'at Yam Suf, the miracle of the splitting of the sea. Beneh Yisrael were trapped between the sea and the pursuing Egyptian army, and Hashem miraculously rescued them by splitting the sea, allowing them to cross on dry land.

Toward the beginning of the Parasha, there is one verse that appears to be somewhat out of place, recording an event that seems, at first glance, to pale in comparison to the rest of this section in terms of drama. The verse tells us that as Beneh Yisrael left Egypt, Moshe took with him the remains of Yosef, in fulfillment of the vow made by Yosef's brothers to bring his remains out of Egypt so they could be interred in Eretz Yisrael.

But while this Pasuk may strike some as "uninteresting," the truth is that we have much to learn from this aspect of the Exodus. The Hemdat Yamim (attributed to a student of the Arizal) noted that in telling of Moshe's efforts to bring Yosef's remains, the Torah adds the word "Et": "Va'yikah Moshe Et Asmot Yosef Imo." The word "Et" generally alludes to something in addition to that which is mentioned



Even in today's fast-paced world, and with the hectic life that we all live, we cannot be too preoccupied to show gratitude.

explicitly in the text. In this instance, the Hemdat Yamim explains, the Torah alludes to another deceased person whose remains were brought by Moshe out of Egypt – Moshe's stepmother, Batya. As we read in Parashat Shemot, Batya – Pharaoh's daughter – was bathing in the river when she saw an infant floating in a basket. Recognizing that this was an Israelite child, she took the baby and adopted him as her son. This baby, of course, was Moshe. Now, some eighty years later, as Beneh Yisrael left Egypt, Moshe made a point of taking her remains so she could be buried in the Land of Israel. Moshe recognized the enormous debt of gratitude he owed to Batya, who rescued him from the river and from her father's decree that all baby Israelite boys should be killed. He, therefore, saw it as his responsibility to

tend to her remains and ensure her burial in Eretz Yisrael.

We can hardly imagine how busy and burdened Moshe Rabbenu was on the day of the Exodus. He was in charge of some two million slaves who were suddenly given their freedom and were now leaving Egypt. He was their leader and prophet, the one who would guide them and care for them as they made their way to their homeland. It would be an understatement to say that Moshe had a lot on his mind on this day. And yet, he did not forget his debt of gratitude to his stepmother, to the one who made this all possible. Even at the busiest, most hectic moment, Moshe remembered to say "thank you."

Gratitude must always be a priority. We must never be too busy to say "thank you," to pick up the phone and express our appreciation to those who have helped us. Even in today's fast-paced world, and with the hectic life that we all live, we cannot be too preoccupied to show gratitude. Regardless of what else is going on, this must always remain at the very top of our priority scale. Even on the day of the Exodus, Moshe did not forget his debt of gratitude to his stepmother. We, too, must never forget to say "thank you," even in life's busiest moments.

Continued from page 18

For one who gathers, one who works, one who lives, one who behaves, as G-d commanded, according to what he eats and what he needs, for he and his family, is one who lives with the reality that all of his sustenance – material, familial, social – is a gift of Providence. This is the truest

realization of the Divine Presence in our lives. And when we live by this truism, and gather with faith, it is as if we have kept the Torah from A to Z; or in our case, from *Alef to Taf*.

May we merit the *koach* (strength), wisdom and desire to put forth our necessary *hishtadlus*, the clarity to know when enough is enough, and the faith and trust to know that, ultimately, all that we have is akin to manna from heaven – sustenance from the Merciful One Above.

Looking Back To the Future



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In the entire span of Jewish history, we attained our highest level in this week's parsha and in next week's parsha. At the Song of the Sea in this week's parsha, the Jewish people said, "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him." Rashi explains, "He revealed Himself in His glory to them and they pointed at Him with their finger. Even a maidservant by the sea saw what the prophets did not see." Every single Jew achieved the highest level of prophecy. It was a moment like none other.

And as we received the Torah in next week's parsha, Hashem's unity was revealed to the entire Jewish people on Sinai.

The most frustrating thing about those highs, though, is how short-lived they were. Immediately after the maidservant achieved the highest level of prophecy, she went back to scrubbing floors. And even after the splitting of the sea, the Jewish people were somehow able to complain (Shmos 17:7), "Is Hashem with us or not?" And even after hearing G-d speak on Sinai and witnessing how He split the seven firmaments so that we would see Him, we worshipped the golden calf and continued complaining at every turn. We may have experienced great highs but to what end? What was the point of experiencing them if there was no remnant of them left over afterward?

The sages of earlier generations compare this dilemma to one walking along a path in the dark. He cannot see anything around him and does not know where to go. But if he sees a flash of lightning, it immediately illuminates his surroundings. Suddenly he sees things in his immediate vicinity and even things that are far away. In that moment, the path before him becomes clear. And even

though the lightning flash only lasts for only a moment, the traveler can keep the image of what he saw in his mind and that memory can guide him so he knows which way he should go.

Similarly, when a person experiences a temporary period of illumination in his life, the memory of what he saw during that time stays with him. It shows him what life can be like. It can serve as a guide and as a reminder of his ultimate goal and what he can achieve again if he walks toward the path that he saw during that flash of enlightenment. The maidservant who passed through the sea might return to her daily routine, but she can never really be the same. She can ignore her recollections of that great moment. But she can also remember them at some point in her life.

The Zohar (69b) explains a pasuk in Tehilim (89:10), "You rule the grandeur of the sea, when its waves rise, you calm them," along similar lines. In context, the simple meaning of the pasuk is that Hashem calms ("תשבחם") the waves when they threaten to overtake the people who live by the sea shore.

But the Zohar translates the word "תשבחם" according to its more common meaning, "praises them," to explain the pasuk on a deeper level. Whenever a wave rises, it gains a higher view of things, but then it crashes back down again. Hashem praises it for nevertheless trying again to regain the heights it reached before. Even though it does not last, the wave does not become discouraged. Instead, it thinks back on the view it had of the world when it was at its height and it attempts to rise again. But "תשבחם" also means "improve them." When a person attains new heights, even temporarily, it improves his life. It opens him up to infinite new possibilities of

greatness and achievement to which he would never have been exposed if he had remained in the pit of sadness and discouragement.

The first embrace for our people was the Song at the Sea and the Sinai experience. That was the moment we stood under the chuppah with G-d. We exulted in the experience of being in G-d's embrace. And even though the "honeymoon" may not have lasted long, it showed us the holiness of the Jewish people and how precious we are to G-d. It allowed us to see what we can attain and who we are. It gave us something we could always look back to, as a reminder of who we are, where we are going, and what we can achieve if we do not give up.

Over the years I have met with a number of addicts who struggle with a variety of substances and activities which threaten to destroy their lives. One of the most heartbreaking things is when someone tells me: I was clean for over a year. I began seeing how I could begin rebuilding my life. I began to feel that I had some hope of being something. But then one thing and another went wrong and I fell back into the lowest depths.

The hardest thing for someone in that position is not only the consequences of his actions. It is the feeling that all the time he was clean was worthless. When someone crashes, he feels as if he had never left. So what was the point of that time under the chuppah; riding the wave; feeling that first embrace of goodness and normalcy?

That time did not go to waste. You may have forgotten what it was like to be healthy. But during that time, you saw what a normal, healthy, exalted life can be like. That was your bolt of lightning in the darkness. Now you can think back on

Continued on page 24

The Day the Women Sang



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The following story became a major news item in Israel, back in September 2011, reflecting the poor communication between religious and secular Jews, allowing for stereotypes on both sides to persist.

At a military event, Jewish female soldiers began singing solo as part of a military band. Nine religious Israeli soldiers chose to leave the auditorium, based on the law in Judaism that men should not listen to women singing. Regiment Commander Uzi Kileger warned them: “If you don't come back inside immediately, you will be refusing orders and will be dismissed from the course.”

Indeed, four of the nine religious cadets who walked out were dismissed from their officers' course.

The Talmudic sage Shmuel said, the voice of a woman (singing) has intimate power; as the verse states: your voice is sweet and your countenance beautiful.

Samuel is referring here to the description in the Song of Songs where the lover talks about his beloved. Listen to stunning words: “Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and go to yourself. For behold, the winter has passed; the rain is over and gone. The blossoms have appeared in the land, the time of singing has arrived, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree has put forth its green figs, and the vines with their tiny grapes have given forth their fragrance; arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and go to yourself. My dove is in the clefts of the rock, in the coverture of the steps; show me your appearance, let me hear your voice, for your voice is pleasant and your appearance is beautiful!”

But wait! Just open up the weekly portion, Beshalach, and you will notice a problem. No smaller a personality than Miriam, the older sister of Moses, and a prophetess in

her own right—sings in front of many men, in the presence of her own brother Moses who has no qualms about her behavior.

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambourine in her hand; and all the women followed her with tambourines and dances. And Miriam called to them: ‘Sing to G-d, for He is most exalted; horse and rider He cast in the sea...’

Here we have it black-and-white: Days after their departure from Egypt, as the Jews cross the Red Sea, just a few weeks away from the Revelation at Sinai, and in the presence of Moses and some one million men—Moses' older sister, the prophetess Miriam, leads all of the women in song. What happened to the admonition against women singing in public?

To be sure, the Torah has not been given yet. Nonetheless, if the Torah would define this as immodest and inappropriate behavior, how is it that at such an elevated moment they would engage in this?

Let's go back a step: Why does Jewish law not want the man to hear a female sing?

It is not because women's singing is somehow not up to par or unholy. On the contrary, the feminine song has an electrifying power to it, it captures her beauty, majesty and soulfulness. True, in our society we don't pay enough homage to a woman singing because our overexposure to everything and anything often dulls our senses to the sensations of intimate power. Whenever you are overexposed to something, your senses become dulled to the grandeur involved.

The Torah attempts to fine-tune us to subtlety; to cultivate within us an appreciation of deep energy and soulful emotion, to detect the vibrations of the inner heart. The Torah wants us never to

lose our sensitivity to the sensual energy transported in the sweet, pleasant sound of a woman singing.

The Torah always maintained that every human being, woman and man, has the right and duty to respect, safeguard and cherish their intimacy, their inner sacred space.

A woman must own her inner intimate power; it is her secret from G-d that she ought to treat with the utmost dignity. Never should a girl or woman feel pressure that she needs to impress strangers through her body and voice. Her soul, body and voice belong to her alone, and no one else. The pressure on of so many wonderful people to use their most precious selves to entice and engage deprives them of a peaceful, wholesome and confident life. Woe to a society that indirectly teaches young women that their value and self-esteem come when members of the opposite gender are infatuated with their physique. A woman's beauty, like every person's beauty, must be owned by her, and must be preserved, protected and nurtured with sensitivity and delicacy. It is too fine, too sacred, too subtle, to be pulled through the gutter. It is not cheap. The laws of Judaism focusing on modesty are not intended to repress the woman; they are intended to create an environment where she can be most natural and real without someone manipulating and misusing her intimacy for his selfish needs.

Women and girls should sing; their music has unique energy and power. When women begin singing, the men ought to leave the room as a sign of respect toward the woman. The man is making the statement that her intimate soulfulness does not belong to him. Music is spiritual; singing comes from the soul. And if he is going to use her singing as a tool for his

Continued on page 24

Beshalach: Blessed



Rabbi Judah Mischel

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The great *tzadik* Rebbi Chaim haGadol (d. 1845) of Mogador (Essaouira), Morocco, was a link in the illustrious, holy chain of *chachamim* in the Pinto Family. He was talmid *chacham* who rose for *Tikun Chatzot* in the middle of each night, and then learned Torah until dawn. He was renowned for his love and sacrifice for others, he maintained an ongoing *chavrusashaft* with Eliyahu haNavi, and was the head of a family that spawned generations of spiritual leaders. His grandson, the holy Rebbi Chaim haKatan of Casablanca (d. 1937), was named *haKatan* / ‘the Small’ in order to distinguish him from his grandfather, *haGadol* / ‘the Great’. Yet, he inherited the family legacy of *kedushah*, *chesed*, love of Am Yisrael — and the ability to give miraculous blessings.

A local fisherman in Mogador struggling with his livelihood once came to Rebbi Chaim haKatan to pour out his heart, share his burden and receive the *tzaadik’s* blessing. Rebbi Chaim listened quietly to the man’s pain. He then removed his shoes and handed them to the fisherman, saying, “When you go to the dock, place these shoes in the water. May Hashem bless you with *parnassah b’shefa!*”

The fisherman left with Rebbi Chaim’s shoes in his hands, went to the shore and submerged them in the water. Within seconds, they were surrounded by swarms of fish, well beyond any amount that he could net and carry home.

That evening, the fisherman went to the *tzaddik* with a basket full of fish as a gift. Filled with awe, he recounted the events of the day. Rebbi Chaim refused to accept any gifts: “Baruch Hashem! My friend, these fish are yours. I had nothing to do with this *shefa* — they are for you.”



Our sedra recounts how, arriving thirsty at the bitter waters of Marah, Hashem instructs Moshe to take a piece of wood and throw it in the water. Miraculously, it turns the bitterness into sweetness.

וַיִּצְעַק אֶל ה' וַיֹּרֶהוּ ה' עֵץ וַיִּשְׁלֶךְ אֶל-הַמַּיִם
וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם שָׁם שָׁם לֹא חֹק וּמִשְׁפָּט וְשָׁם נִסְהוּ:

“So he cried out to Hashem, and Hashem showed him a piece of wood; he threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There Hashem made for them a fixed rule; there they were put to the test.” (15:25)

Midrash Tanchuma (24) offers several opinions regarding the nature of the wood utilized by Moshe. The suggestions include the wood of the *aravah* or willow tree, ivy, olive or cedar wood, or the root of a fig or pomegranate tree. The consensus among Sages is that the wood was itself bitter. Moshe thought or assumed that Hashem would tell him to sweeten the waters with something sweet, like honey or pressed figs. Instead, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* leveled with Moshe: מִשָּׁה, אֵין דְּרָכֵי כְּמִדַּת בְּשֵׁר וְדָם. עֲכָשׁוּ אֶתְהָ צָרִיר לְלַמֵּד, “Moshe, My ways are not like man’s ways, and now you must learn this fact. The Torah therefore says, עֵץ וַיֹּרֶהוּ ה', “Hashem showed him a tree.” The Midrash points out that in actuality, וַיִּרְאֶהוּ לֹא, “The pasuk does not just mean *vayir’ehu*, ‘and Hashem showed him,’ but also *vayorehu*, ‘and Hashem taught him (His Divine ways)...’”

Rebbi Shimon ben Gamliel, too, tells us that the episode at Marah accentuates the supernatural ways of Hashem. Man improves the taste of something bitter with something sweet, but *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* performs a miracle and improves the taste of something bitter by adding something bitter.

A grandson of the saintly Baba Sali, zy’a, Rav Avraham Yehudayoff is the Rosh Kollel haRem”a, named for Rebbi Masoud Abuchatzzeira, the Baba Sali’s father. He says in today’s generation young people consider the miracles of *tzadikim* to be unreal, however, in earlier generations, people knew how to accept the words of a *tzaddik* with pure *emunah*. And because of that *emunah*, they witnessed miracles.”

Perhaps this is the *yesod*, the ‘foundation’ for understanding the extraordinary episode of the fisherman, above. *Sod Hashem li-reyav*, “The Divine secret is (in relation) to the one who is in awe of Hashem.’ Beyond whatever hidden mystical intentions Rebbe Chaim haKatan may have had in asking that his shoes be placed in the water, it was just a *פעולה דמיונית*, a symbolic or ‘representative action’ used to channel the Divine blessings, and the miracle was really revealed in the merit of the fisherman’s pure, simple faith: “I had nothing to do with this *shefa* — the fish are for you.”



ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו

“They had faith in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.” (14:31)

Whether we find ourselves, metaphorically, at the Yam Suf, Mara, Mogador — or anywhere else on our *derech* — the blessings of the true *tzadikim* await us. Shabbos Shirah invites us to renew our *emunah* in the fact that Hashem is just waiting to reveal that all we experience as bitter may be sweetened. May our baskets overflow with the ‘fish’ of miraculous blessings; may we ‘learn’ to recognize Hashem’s mysterious ways, and sing to Him songs of awesome praise.

Tribute to the Trio

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

In a deeply powerful scene, Moshe Rabbeinu is found with his hands held high on top of the mountain praying for the people gripped in a raging battle with Amalek below. Ahron and Chur stood on either side of Moshe Rabbeinu holding his hands aloft (Shemot 17:10). Rashi teaches that Chur was the son of Moshe's sister, Miriam. What more do we know about Chur? What is the symbolism of his joining with Ahron to support the hands of Moshe Rabbeinu?

Rabbi Roberts in *Through the Prism of Torah* explains that Ahron and Chur personified contrasting character traits. Ahron was a peacemaker, he constantly looked for ways to create harmony among his people. Indeed, he was ready to compromise his own values to achieve this goal, as we see in the story of the sin of the golden calf. Chur, on the other hand, was a person who stood strong in his values, unbending and resolute in his

beliefs. Chazal teach that Chur tried to challenge the people when they wanted to build the calf and they subsequently killed him. Chur, a descendent of Yehudah, was a person who was inflexible and strong like a lion. Truly, a combination of both qualities is necessary. In interpersonal relationships it is wise to follow Ahron's path, to compromise and make peace whenever possible. However, in the service of Hashem and reinforcing kevod shamayim, one needs to follow Chur's example and be resolute in his values. These two special people joined Moshe Rabbeinu to activate the merits of these approaches as he implored Hashem to have mercy on His people and vanquish Amalek, physically and spiritually.

Rav Schwab in *Maayan Beit Hashoeva* notes that the word 'echad' is repeated in describing each person standing on either side of Moshe Rabbeinu (Shemot 17:12). This emphasis reflects the unique middah

of each one, singular to their personalities. Moshe Rabbeinu, standing between them, synthesized the two.

Rav Druk in *Aish Tamid* understands this three-way dynamic from quite a different angle. Amalek was the personification of evil, driven to destroy the spiritual world of the Jewish People. This war was about keeping the Hashem's nation and their world intact. A Jew's sphere revolves on three major principles, Torah, avodah and gemilut chasadim. Rav Druk maintains that each of these was represented by Moshe, Ahron and Chur. Moshe Rabbeinu symbolized the world of Torah, as he was the one who brought Torah down to Am Yisrael. Ahron HaKohen officiated in the avodah of the mikdash. Chur, son of Miriam the midwife, embodied chesed. In this episode, the Torah teaches us to unite these three pillars to protect and solidify our worlds, both on a national level as well as on a personal one.

Continued from page 21

the view you had before your fall. You now see that your goal is within your reach and you can achieve it again if you "get back on the horse" and work, one day at a

time, to return to become the person you saw you can be.

May Hashem please help us remember not to lose hope when we fall, but to use the

memory of the light to keep us moving forward till all of us collectively reach the days of Moshiach with the coming of the complete redemption soon in our days.

Continued from page 22

own physical enjoyment, never mind for a promiscuous thought, he is violating her dignity.

In the song that Moses sang with the men before Miriam, they declared: "This is my G-d!"

Says Rashi: *This is my G-d: He revealed Himself in His glory to them [the Israelites], and they pointed at Him with their finger [as denoted by the word: "this is my G-d"]. By the*

sea, a maidservant perceived what prophets did not perceive.

It was a unique moment. The inner spiritual core of the universe came to the fore. At such a moment, there is no room for distortion. When the presence of G-d is felt, when the organic unity of the universe is experienced, each of us experiences not our brute, selfish superficial self, but our innate holiness and love.

Then the intimate voice of the woman will only inspire people to greater moral and spiritual heights. Gone is the concern that someone will use a female voice for superficial and immoral pursuits. On the contrary, the voice of Miriam and some one million girls and women sublimated souls and kindled hearts.

Although it was Nearer



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

This is what mourning looks like in the periphery. The houses of mourning in Neve Ya'akov are half empty after this heavy Shabbat. The murdered do not belong to any group of peers. A poor ultra-Orthodox family, a Ukrainian, a popular DJ, an elderly couple who finally found peace and a home, a Gabai. The backyard of the Israeli Shabbat.

But with G-d, there is no center or periphery before Him, He will comfort all, “for no one is rejected by Him.” Even those who are marginalized are not rejected by Him.

Parshat Beshelach is about redemptions. In those who take a new path. “With a new song the redeemed people have praised Your name,” they will sing this Shabbat in the synagogue in Neve Ya'akov. But G-d will not only be thinking of the redeemed. Regarding the words “Now when Pharaoh let the people go, G-d did not lead them through the land of the Philistines, although it was closer,” the Midrash says: “A parable of a king who had sons who went into captivity and were enslaved by them and died. The king went down and saved what was left of them, and he

rejoiced because he had saved his sons, but he would not be comforted because of those who had died. And it is said, “And G-d receives no comfort! For He is near!” With the Lord of the world, He is near. There is no periphery or center, no more or less esthetic mourning. It is a dead mitzvah and therefore everything is His kinsman. And G-d cannot be consoled, He forbids to be consoled for His sons, because they are gone.

And so we will sing this Shabbat.

Only the song will remind us of the whole lineage that has brought us this far. Only it will turn death into life, slavery into redemption, those who were the “bringers” before the “planters”. Amalek will retreat to the periphery, all those backward on the edges, not because they are weak, but because he is sure that we will not remember them in our great journey to the promised land. He will rely on the fact that we are not a unified entity that cares about the periphery.

This Shabbat, Shabbat Shira, reminds us all that when there is no security outside, when we are exposed to so much evil,

what will save us is internal security. Our concern for the fate of others, the ability to be a Nachshon who bravely parts the sea, even for the pregnant woman and her baby, for the elderly who have gone through all this, for the bereaved who have left their dead there in Egypt. Such a person, to whom everyone is as important as his soul, will unite in an instant with what has just separated on the sea, each convinced of the correctness of his strategy. They sing together, for the first time in history, the fear, the persecution, the redemption. In this song there is a unique and strange expression: “You will bring and plant them”. The linguistic meaning of these words is the connection of the individual redemption with the general redemption. “Bring him + bring them = You will bring them”. Without them we will not reach a new land, we will not, G-d forbid, feel rooted in our land without giving a place to everyone.

המקום ינחם את אבלי הפריפריה של ירושלים, ולא יוסיפו לדאבה עוד.

Continued from page 19

Therefore, it is not incidental that it becomes the mitzvah of the King of Israel to defeat Amalek. Recall how the king of Israel should be known for his ability to establish a nation characterized by acts of “tzedaka and mishpat”. From that perspective, it also becomes his responsibility (when capable of doing so) to pursue

nations such as Amalek, who wage war in unethical ways – taking advantage of the weak and helpless.

In summary, there definitely appears to be something ‘genetic’ about Amalek, at least in Am Yisrael’s first encounter with that nation. However, the unethical nature

of that attack, and the Torah’s immediate command to remember that event for all generations, suggests a ‘generic’ understanding as well, for by remembering what Amalek had done wrong – Am Yisrael is encouraged to remember their own national goal – to do what is ‘right and just’.



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