

**BS"D**

Hannah and I will be unavailable during February 5-20. During this time, I won't have access to a computer and won't be able to prepare my weekly Devrei Torah. Our close friend Bill Landau, our pc guru, has generously offered to post Devrei Torah for me for February 8, 15, and 22 (Beshalach, Yitro, and Mishpatim). M"H, I expect to be back weekly starting with Terumah on February 29. **NOTE:** The Internet Parsha Sheet becomes available after midnight very early Friday mornings. The downloadable version for this period contain advance (not necessarily final) copies of Likutei Torah and archived Internet Parsha Sheets. On Fridays you may find the new Internet Parsha Sheet at [www.parsha.net](http://www.parsha.net).

**During our absence, you may download Devrei Torah for Beshalach, Yitro, and Mishpatim at <http://orthodoxpotomac.com/>**

BS"D  
February 4, 2020

**Potomac Torah Study Center**  
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**NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent untimely death.**

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**LATE MAARIV AT BETH SHOLOM THIS WEEK MONDAY - THURSDAY AT 8 P.M. RSVPs appreciated. To receive weekly updates or send RSVP: [pcguru.landau@gmail.com](mailto:pcguru.landau@gmail.com).**

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Since I shall not have computer access during February 5-20, I am writing a message now for Beshalach, Yitro, and Mishpatim. Much of my perspective comes from Rabbi David Fohrman. I am treating the material for these three weeks via what I see as a common theme.

As with much in Judaism, the story goes back at least to Avraham and Sarah. An early Paro took Sarah into his harem when Avraham and Sarah went to Egypt during a famine. When Paro saw that God protected Sarah and that she was Avraham's wife, he gave his daughter Hagar to Sarah as a servant. Since the Torah has no vowels, one can read the daughter's name as HaGer, the foreigner. Sarah and Hagar abused each other, and Sarah eventually had Avraham send Hagar away. Four generations later, the Jews ended up back in Egypt, and after the third generation all died, the Egyptians enslaved and abused the Jews. Chazal state that slavery started with the death of Levi and lasted 116 years until the Exodus. (During the 116 years of oppression, many Jews forgot and stopped davening to God.)

B'Nai Yisrael eventually cried out to God (davened). God responded and remembered His promise to the Patriarchs. God selected Moshe to be his instrument to redeem the Jews. Moshe noticed what others missed (such as a burning bush where the fire did not consume any part of the bush). Moshe also he had compassion for fellow Jews and other disadvantaged people (and animals). God appeared to Moshe with three different names. "Ehyeh," or "I was, am, and always will be," means that God was, is, and always will be with the Jews. This name also means that God cares for and protects all Jews. "Kel Shaddei" is the aspect of God that the Patriarchs knew – a shepherd who leads from behind (like a shepherd) and nudges the world, but in a way that is only obvious to those (like the Patriarchs and Matriarchs) with strong faith in God. God told Moshe that now, He was about to appear as Hashem, the Lord, one who leads from up front, performing obvious miracles. This third aspect of God is what would teach Paro, the Egyptians, Jews, and other nations who Hashem was – that is, that God is the one, true God, in charge of the world.

When Moshe and Aharon went to Paro, he responded that he knew all 70 gods and had never heard of Hashem. God brought a series of ten plagues, overwhelming Egyptian gods or god symbols (such as blood and the Nile), controlling nature, fine tuning so the plagues went on and off when Moshe announced to Paro that they would do so, and affecting the Egyptians but not the Jews each time. With the help of Moshe and Aharon, God was providing a graduate level course for Paro, the Egyptians, other nations, and B'Nai Yisrael in who Hashem was and how powerful He was. In **Beshalach**, God provided B'Nai Yisrael with a series of tests. God's presence in a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night led the Jews for several days. God did not provide water or food until the Jews were thirsty and hungry – tests to see whether they would ask God to provide provisions. The people could relate to a God of war who could plunder Egypt and defeat armies, but not to a God of love and compassion who cared for each individual. (None of the Egyptian gods had compassion for individuals.) The Jews complained to Moshe about thirst and hunger, not to God. The lesson of asking God (not a human) for help and including God in their mundane lives took a lot longer than the lesson of believing in God's power to overcome physical enemies.

Since Paro had only given the Jews permission to go for three days, when they were a few days late returning, Paro realized that they were not returning. He sent his army to follow. God had the Jews camp with a sea (Sea of Reeds) on one side and the desert on the other side. When the Egyptian army approached, God would only part the waters of the sea once the Jews bought in and entered the water. Once the Jews started, God made the sea part and provided a safe passage for the Jews, but with a barrier keeping the Egyptians from following until the Jews had all crossed the sea. When the Egyptians followed, God made the waters return, drown the Egyptian army, destroy their chariots, and kill their horses. The Jews could hear what was happening, but God did not permit them to see the destruction, because they were not at a high enough spiritual level to deserve seeing the destruction of their enemies. When morning came, the Jews could see the signs of the destruction, and they broke out in song. Miriam realized that her prophesy had come true – that her younger brother would redeem the Jews. Miriam therefore led the women in second song. (The Jews crossed the sea, and God destroyed the Egyptian army, on the seventh day, so we read the song on the seventh day of Pesach.)

Moshe's father-in-law (**Yitro**) heard that God had taken the Jews from Egypt and destroyed the Egyptian army, so he brought Moshe's wife and sons to him. When Moshe told Yitro that God cared for and protected each Jew, by providing water and food every day, he was over whelmed that the Jewish God was compassionate as well as powerful. Yitro therefore prepared a feast to celebrate all the God had provided. Yitro, however, disapproved of Moshe spending many hours every day meeting with any Jew who had questions – teaching every Jew how to include God in his daily life. Yitro suggested the system of leaders of groups that became the model of the court system in our country. After three days of preparation, God presented the Aseret Dibrot (ten statements or commandments) with thunder, lightening, and various sound effects. The presentation frightened the people so much that after hearing the first two statements from God, they moved back and asked Moshe to listen and tell them the remaining statements. Hillel summarized the ten statements (as rest of the 613 mitzvot) in his famous remark: "That which is hateful to you, don't do to your friend."

The Torah changes style suddenly with Mishpatim. To this point, the Torah has been primarily narrative. In Mishpatim, the Torah presents 53 mitzvot (23 positive and 30 negative commandments). Mishpatim reads like a law book. Many of the mitzvot have a link to Yosef's life. The pattern for many mitzvot in the Torah is that stories from our past reappear as mitzvot. For example, the first laws concern an Eved Ivri, or a Jewish slave. The only other place the Torah mentions an eved Ivri is Yosef. We have laws about an ox falling into a pit. Yaakov refers to Yosef as an ox, and the brothers put him in a pit. The battles between Sarah and Hagar return as laws regarding proper treatment of gerim, or strangers/foreigners.

**Mishpatim** focuses on laws that relate to the ten statements – the most central laws in Judaism. The Torah is basically (but not entirely) chronological for narratives, but the Torah presents laws thematically. In short, laws next to each other in the Torah have some thematic connection. The laws in Mishpatim are here specifically because they relate to the ten statements. Most of the other of the 613 mitzvot appear later in the Torah.

As Hannah and I prepare to leave for Israel, we recall the connections that our beloved Rebbe, Leonard Cahan, z"l, had to our homeland. Rabbi Cahan's parents and sister all made aliyah, and he traveled there regularly (always returning with Judaic treasures that he made available to congregants). We visited with Rabbi Cahan's family on each visit, and we look forward to visiting his sister Naomi on this trip. As we read of the sputtering trip of our ancestors from Egypt until they finally reached Israel 40 years later, we can cherish the fact that Jews in our lifetime can go to Israel – something denied to our people for 2000 years, until our generation.

Note: from lack of time and access to computer and photocopying, I am unable to provide the usual Devrei Torah that I normally prepare in the remainder of this introduction. M"H, look for these materials for Terumah.

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Note: The Jews were in Egypt for 210 years and actively in slavery for 116 years after the death of Levi. Yaakov was born in 2108. Yosef was born when Yaakov was around 91 years old, or around 2199. The Jews came to Egypt when Yosef was 40 years old (2238). Yosef died at age 110 (2309). The Exodus was in 2448 (Chabad). These dates indicate that the Jews were in Egypt for 210 years, of which 116 years were after Levi's death – the years considered to be active slavery ([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3915966/jewish/Timeline-of-Jewish-History.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3915966/jewish/Timeline-of-Jewish-History.htm)). Beshalach opens during Nissan 2448.

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**Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Nossan ben Pessel, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel Ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Kaddish Yehuda ben Golda, Dov Ber ben Sima, Tuvia Zev ben Chaya Rivka, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Elisheva Chaya bas Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Miriam Malka bat Leah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Beyla bat Sara, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, Ruth bat Sarah, and Tova bat Narges, all of whom greatly need our prayers.**

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Shabbat Shalom, Hannah & Alan

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# Likutei Divrei Torah

## Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah

### via the Internet

Sponsored by Judy & Stuart Rosenthal  
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Robert D. Katzoff, a"h, (Reuven David ben Shneur Zalman) - 14 Shevat,  
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Volume 26, Issue 16

Shabbat Parashat Beshalach

5780 - B"H

#### Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

#### The Divided Sea: Natural or Supernatural?

The splitting of the Reed Sea is engraved in Jewish memory. We recite it daily during the morning service, at the transition from the Verses of Praise to the beginning of communal prayer. We speak of it again after the Shema, just before the Amidah. It was the supreme miracle of the exodus. But in what sense?

If we listen carefully to the narratives, we can distinguish two perspectives. This is the first: The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left... The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. (Exodus 14:22, 28-29)

The same note is struck in the Song at the Sea: By the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up.

The surging waters stood firm like a wall; The deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. (Ex. 15:8)

The emphasis here is on the supernatural dimension of what happened. Water, which normally flows, stood upright. The sea parted to expose dry land. The laws of nature were suspended. Something happened for which there can be no scientific explanation.

However, if we listen carefully, we can also hear a different note: Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. (Ex. 14:21)

Here there is not a sudden change in the behaviour of water, with no apparent cause. God brings a wind that, in the course of several hours, drives the waters back. Or consider this passage: During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. The Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." (Ex. 14:24-25).

The emphasis here is less on miracle than on irony. The great military assets of the Egyptians—making them almost invulnerable in their day—were their horses and chariots. These were Egypt's specialty. They still were, in the time of Solomon, five centuries later: Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve

thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem... They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. (I Kings 10:26-29)

Viewed from this perspective, the events that took place could be described as follows: The Israelites had arrived at the Reed Sea at a point at which it was shallow. Possibly there was a ridge in the sea bed, normally covered by water, but occasionally—when, for example, a fierce east wind blows—exposed. This is how the Cambridge University physicist Colin Humphreys puts it in his *The Miracles of Exodus*:

Wind tides are well known to oceanographers. For example, a strong wind blowing along Lake Erie, one of the Great Lakes, has produced water elevation differences of as much as sixteen feet between Toledo, Ohio, on the west, and Buffalo, New York, on the east... There are reports that Napoleon was almost killed by a "sudden high tide" while he was crossing shallow water near the head of the Gulf of Suez.[1]

In the case of the wind that exposed the ridge in the bed of the sea, the consequences were dramatic. Suddenly the Israelites, traveling on foot, had an immense advantage over the Egyptian chariots that were pursuing them. Their wheels became stuck in the mud. The charioteers made ferocious efforts to free them, only to find that they quickly became mired again. The Egyptian army could neither advance nor retreat. So intent were they on the trapped wheels, and so reluctant were they to abandon their prized war machines, the chariots, that they failed to notice that the wind had dropped and the water was returning. By the time they realised what was happening, they were trapped. The ridge was now covered with sea water in either direction, and the island of dry land in the middle was shrinking by the minute. The mightiest army of the ancient world was defeated, and its warriors drowned, not by a superior army, not by human opposition at all, but by their own folly in being so focused on capturing the Israelites that they ignored the fact that they were driving into mud where their chariots could not go.

We have here two ways of seeing the same events: one natural, the other supernatural. The supernatural explanation—that the waters stood upright—is immensely powerful, and so it entered Jewish memory. But the natural explanation is no less compelling. The Egyptian strength proved to be their weakness. The weakness of the Israelites became their strength. On this reading, what was significant

was less the supernatural, than the moral dimension of what happened. God visits the sins on the sinners. He mocks those who mock Him. He showed the Egyptian army, which revelled in its might, that the weak were stronger than they—just as He later did with the pagan prophet Bilaam, who prided himself in his prophetic powers and was then shown that his donkey (who could see the angel Bilaam could not see) was a better prophet than he was.

To put it another way: a miracle is not necessarily something that suspends natural law. It is, rather, an event for which there may be a natural explanation, but which—happening when, where and how it did—evokes wonder, such that even the most hardened sceptic senses that God has intervened in history. The weak are saved; those in danger, delivered. More significant still is the moral message such an event conveys: that hubris is punished by nemesis; that the proud are humbled and the humble given pride; that there is justice in history, often hidden but sometimes gloriously revealed.

This idea can be taken further. Emil Fackenheim has spoken of "epoch-making events" that transform the course of history.[2] More obscurely, but along similar lines, the French philosopher Alain Badiou has proposed the concept of an "event" as a "rupture in ontology" through which individuals are brought face to face with a truth that changes them and their world.[3] It is as if all normal perception fades away and we know that we are in the presence of something momentous, to which we sense we must remain faithful for the rest of our lives. "The appropriation of Presence is mediated by an event." [4] It is through transformative events that we feel ourselves addressed, summoned, by something beyond history, breaking through into history. In this sense, the division of the Reed Sea was something other and deeper than a suspension of the laws of nature. It was the transformative moment at which the people "believed in the Lord and in Moses His servant" (Ex. 14:31) and called themselves "the people You acquired" (Ex. 15:16).

Not all Jewish thinkers focused on the supernatural dimension of God's involvement in human history. Maimonides insisted that "Israel did not believe in Moses our teacher because of the signs he performed." [5] What made Moses the greatest of the prophets, for

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Maimonides, is not that he performed supernatural deeds but that, at Mount Sinai, he brought the people the word of God.

In general, the sages tended to downplay the dimension of the miraculous, even in the case of the greatest miracle of all, the division of the sea. That is the meaning of the following Midrash, commenting on the verse, "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its full flow [le-eitano]" (Ex. 14:27):

Rabbi Jonathan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, made a condition with the sea [at the beginning of creation], that it should split asunder for the Israelites. That is the meaning of "the sea went back to its full flow" – [read not le-eitano but] letenao, "the condition" that God had earlier stipulated.[6]

The implication is that the division of the sea was, as it were, programmed into creation from the outset.[7] It was less a suspension of nature than an event written into nature from the beginning, to be triggered at the appropriate moment in the unfolding of history.

We even find an extraordinary debate among the sages as to whether miracles are a sign of merit or the opposite. The Talmud[8] tells the story of a man whose wife died, leaving a nursing child. The father was too poor to be able to afford a wet-nurse, so a miracle occurred and he himself gave milk until the child was weaned. On this, the Talmud records the following difference of opinion:

Rav Joseph said: Come and see how great was this man that such a miracle was wrought for him. Abaye said to him: On the contrary, how inferior was this man, that the natural order was changed for him.

According to Abaye, greater are those to whom good things happen without the need for miracles. The genius of the biblical narrative of the crossing of the Reed Sea is that it does not resolve the issue one way or another. It gives us both perspectives. To some the miracle was the suspension of the laws of nature. To others, the fact that there was a naturalistic explanation did not make the event any less miraculous. That the Israelites should arrive at the sea precisely where the waters were unexpectedly shallow, that a strong east wind should blow when and how it did, and that the Egyptians' greatest military asset should have proved their undoing—all these things were wonders, and we have never forgotten them.

[1] Colin Humphreys, *The Miracles of Exodus*, Continuum, 2003, 247-48. For a similar analysis see James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p199-215.

[2] Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World*, New York, Schocken, 1982, p14-20.

[3] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, Continuum, 2006.

[4] Ibid. p255.

[5] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Yesodei ha-Torah 8:1.

[6] *Genesis Rabbah* 5:5.

[7] In general, the sages said that all future miracles were created at twilight at the end of the six days of creation (*Mishnah*, *Avot* 5:6).

[8] *Shabbat* 53b.

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### The Person in the Parsha Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

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#### Horse and Rider

Pharaoh was just the first. One way of looking at Jewish history is as a series of encounters with evil rulers. Pharaoh, whom we have been reading about these past several weeks, was just the first tyrant who persecuted us. Over the millennia, he was followed by Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Antiochus, Titus, Hitler, Stalin, and others too numerous to mention.

Each of those men, without exception, did not act alone. Rather, they represented an entire culture, a comprehensive ideology, which opposed the Jewish people and its religion.

They enlisted the assistance of huge constituencies who believed in their teachings, and who followed their example. Without the support of the masses they led, they could not have wrought the havoc they did.

An excellent illustration of this is the book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. In this book, the author demonstrates clearly that only because Hitler had the cooperation of so many of his followers, all of whom believed as he did in the need to exterminate our people, was he able to be so tragically successful.

Pharaoh, at the beginning of our history, and Hitler, in our more recent past, were each able to create a culture, a belief system, which pervaded their societies and which enabled them to execute their heinous schemes.

Throughout our history, the enemy was not just one individual, king, or dictator. Rather, it was an entire culture that opposed each of us and everything we stood for.

One lesson of our history is that just as these individual leaders were vanquished, so too did their ideologies fall into oblivion. This is the meaning of the statement of our Sages, "The holy one, blessed be He, does not bring about the downfall of the enemy until He first defeats its gods."

The gods of a nation, and in some versions, the ministering angels of that nation, represent what we would call today a nation's culture, its *weltanschauung*.

Where is this idea expressed in this week's Torah portion, *Beshalach*? Long ago, I heard a lecture from the late Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik on *Beshalach*. He based it on the phrase near the very beginning of the Song of the Sea (*Exodus* 15:1):

"I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted;  
the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

## Likutei Torah

What is the significance of the horse being thrown into the sea? Why do the Israelites, led by Moses, open their song of praise to the Lord, the theme of *Shabbat Shira* which we celebrate this week, by singing of the horse's downfall?

Rabbi Soloveitchik answered that the horse was the symbol of the culture of Egypt. When the Israelites sang of the downfall of both horse and rider, they were expressing their appreciation of the fact that not only were Pharaoh and his slave masters being removed from the scene, but so too was the culture of Egypt coming to an end.

Throughout the Bible, we find the culture of Egypt identified with the horse; the horse is a symbol of militarism, of the ideology that might makes right. The horse is also a symbol of arrogance and pride, fitting companions for militarism.

When God brought down Pharaoh and his cohorts, He was also in effect removing from the world stage a belief system which justified crushing and enslaving other human beings.

The removal, not only of the dictator but of his doctrine, and not only of the tyrant but of his theology, is part of the pattern of history from a Jewish perspective. On Purim, we do not just celebrate Haman's hanging, but rather the triumph over a culture that had arbitrarily planned to commit genocide. On Hanukkah, we honor a victory over Hellenism and the Greek way of life, not just a victory over an alien occupier of our land.

In more modern times, the triumph over Nazism was not just the defeat of hordes of brutal and sadistic men and women. It was a triumph over a racist and bigoted worldview, and for a short while, many believed that that triumph was permanent.

An excellent example of the horse and the rider both being thrown into the sea is the fate of the ideology of Communism. True, the communist foe was personified in Joseph Stalin and his henchmen, and his several successors. But what eventually came about was the sudden and unexpected total abandonment of the communist approach to economics, to the organization of society, and to the religious and spiritual aspects of humankind.

It is so instructive to read the writings of men who were once avowed communists but later abandoned that philosophy when they realized how corrupt it really was. There is a book edited by Arthur Koestler, who had Jewish roots, entitled *The God That Failed*. He and the other famous thinkers who contributed essays to that book all saw Communism as a kind of god. Long before their god met his final defeat, they foresaw that defeat was not far away.

When our Sages say that the holy one, blessed be He, first brings about the downfall of the gods of our enemies, they are already using a term for a failed ideology that Arthur Koestler and others used centuries later.

Our Sages spoke of the downfall of the enemy and of its gods, and in this week's Torah portion, the Bible speaks of the downfall of the rider and of the horse. Different metaphors, but the same idea.

Today, we confront not only "evil kings" and "evil kingdoms" but evil ideologies. Systems of belief, masquerading as sacred religion, which call for murder and mayhem, torture and genocide. We pray to be able to witness both the horse and the rider being cast into the depths of the sea.

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**Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand**  
**From Here We Learn the Idea of Resurrection**

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The pasuk in this week's parsha says, "Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem..." [Shemos 15:1] The words "Az Yashir," which begin this famous section of the Torah are very peculiar. Literally, they mean, "Then he will sing" (future tense). Technically, the Torah should have written, "Az shar Moshe..." — then Moshe sang (past tense). The Medrash comments "From here we see the idea of Resurrection (Techiyas haMeisim) in the Torah."

It seems strange that one of the fundamental beliefs of our religion — one of Maimonides' 13 Basic Principles of Faith — namely Techiyas haMeisim is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. Instead, we learn it homiletically from several places, one of which is our pasuk, "Then Moshe and the Children of Israel will sing..." The question is — why is this the venue to teach us about Techiyas HaMeisim?

The Chidushei HaRim shares a very interesting thought. There is a concept called Emunah[Faith] — which is fundamental to our religion. These beliefs are listed in the "Ani Ma'amins" ("Ani Ma'amin" means I have Emunah — i.e., belief). We must believe in the Almighty; we believe that He is only One; etc., etc. We must have Emunah.

Bnei Yisroel experienced the Exodus from Mitzrayim [Egypt] and then the Splitting of the Yam Suf [Reed Sea], about which it is said that the most simple handmaiden at the Sea had prophetic visions greater than the great prophet Yechezkel. The first chapter of the Book of Yechezkel delineates the great vision Yechezkel saw, including Angels and the Heavenly Chariot, and the Master of the World Himself.

Chazal say that the simple handmaiden by the Yam Suf had greater understanding and a greater appreciation of spiritual matters than the prophet Yechezkel. However, when Klal Yisrael saw great truths with such clarity, paradoxically, that removed their ability to have Emunah. Contrary to the popular saying that 'Seeing is Believing', theologically, that is not the case because what someone sees in front of his face is not something to which we can apply the term 'Emunah.' Emunah is Faith — something I believe in despite the fact that I

cannot see it and I cannot prove it. If you see me holding up five fingers, you do not need to believe that I am holding up five fingers, you know it! If Divine Truth was clear as day to everyone at the Sea, how is it possible to have any Emunah there?

Yet, the Torah says that at the Yam Suf, the Jewish people had Emunah — "Va'yaminu b'Hashem..." [Shemos 14:31]. That is why this is the source for the concept of Techiyas HaMeisim. Their Emunah did play a role. Their experience at the Yam Suf did not include witnessing the idea that there comes a time when everyone dies, but they will come back again. Consequently, at this point they still had an opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of having Emunah regarding the concept of Resurrection. Belief in all the other essential fundamentals of faith was obvious to them at this point, to even the lowest members of society. Their Belief could only be in something that was not in front of their faces. That something was Techiyas HaMeisim, so it is appropriate for the Torah to allude to this concept right at the beginning of Shiras HaYam with the words 'Az Yashir Moshe' (then Moshe will sing.)

**The Message of Shiras HaYam in Pesukei D'Zimra**

I saw the following observation in the sefer Chikrei Lev by Rabbi Laibel Hyman, shlit"a.

Have you ever wondered why Az Yashir is included in Pesukei D'Zimra (the preliminary section of the morning prayers)? Pesukei D'Zimra is all about praise and thanksgiving for the greatness of Hashem. This is our preparation for Shachris. Before we can approach the Master of the Universe and ask him for our needs, we need to have an understanding of who the Ribono shel Olam is. The entire Pesukei D'Zimra is about His praises.

Az Yashir does not fit into that formula. It is a historical event, something that happened, for which Shira was recited. Why did they choose to put Az Yashir into this section of prayer?

Rabbi Hyman raises a second question: How many times do we mention Mitzrayim in Az Yashir? The answer is zero. Az Yashir only mentions Pharaoh. This is seemingly a poem about the destruction of the Egyptian nation and the Egyptian army, yet there is not any mention of Egypt.

Rabbi Hyman suggests that what happened at the Yam Suf was not really about Mitzrayim. It was a battle, so to speak, between the Hashem and Pharaoh. This was — if we can say such a thing — "personal," between the Almighty and Pharaoh. Why? It is because Pharaoh at this point still was of the belief that he was a god. He felt that he was more than just king. He felt, and he wanted everyone else to feel, that he was a Deity. "To me is the Nile and I am the Creator." [Yechezkel 29:3]. That is why Pharaoh had this problem about

## Likutei Torah

going to the bathroom, because gods do not go to the bathroom. Therefore, he had this charade of everyone believing that he did not need to relieve himself, which ostensibly proved that he was a god.

At Krias Yam Suf, when Pharaoh was still of this impression and still attempting to hoist it upon the Egyptian people, the Almighty's intention was "And Egypt shall know that I am Hashem." [Shemos 14:4] The purpose of Krias Yam Suf is to make known that there is only one G-d. Pharaoh, the Egyptian people, and indeed the world had to be disabused of the notion that there was the possibility of another god in the universe.

Therefore, Mitzrayim is not even mentioned in this song, because it is, so to speak, between Hashem and Pharaoh alone. The bottom line of the Shira is Hashem Yimloch l'Olam Va'ed — Hashem will rule forever and ever; there is only One Ribono shel Olam.

Now we understand, he says, why the Shira is located in Pesukei D'Zimra. This is really not part of Pesukei D'Zimra in the classic sense. Rather, this is a prelude to Krias Shema and to the Blessings of Krias Shema. In Krias Shema (Listen O' Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One), we accept upon ourselves the exclusivity and the unity of G-d. The prelude to that is "See what happened in Mitzrayim; see what happened at the Yam Suf." By Krias Yam Suf, the Ribono shel Olam said, "I am going to show the world that there is no such thing as another god. There is only one Ribono shel Olam."

Therefore, the words "Hashem Yimloch l'Olam Va'ed" contain the final message of the Shira. The reason the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah [Men of the Great Assembly] decided to put Shiras HaYam into Pesukei D'Zimra is not because this is just another way of praising the Almighty. We did that already with all the chapters of Tehillim [Psalms] that we read prior to Shiras HaYam. This is a different message — preparing us for Birkas Krias Shema and Krias Shema, by reinforcing the idea of Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad.

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**Dvar Torah**  
**Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis**

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What is the best way to thank Hashem for enabling us to survive?

In Parashat Beshalach the Torah describes the miraculous redemption of the Israelites. Having emerged on the other side of the Red Sea they sang the famous 'Az Yashir' — The song of Moshe. They exclaimed, "Zeh Keili V'Anveihu — This is my God, and I will glorify Him." This was their expression of gratitude to Hashem.

But what does that actually mean? How do you glorify God?

The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat, Daf Kuf Lamed Gimmel Amud Bet, explains I 'glorify Hashem' by beautifying the commandments

that I perform. It could be the Tefillin I wear, Tzitzit, Tallit, or the candles that I light just before Shabbat or Yom Tov, the Arba Minim and so on. We shouldn't treat these Mitzvot as opportunities to just about pass the line, to be 'yotzeh,' to do what is right and no more. Rather we should take pride in them to show how much we appreciate the beauty of Mitzvot. In that way we glorify Hashem's name.

There is another 'peirush' that is given by many of our medieval commentators, such as Onkelos, Rashi, Ibn Ezra and the Ramban.

They say that the word 'V'Anveihu' comes from the root 'Naveh' which means a home. Therefore 'V'Anveihu' means, 'I will build a home for Hashem'. Here, from the dawn of the existence of the Jewish nation, as it emerged from Egypt, they aspired to build a Temple – a home for Hashem.

The 'Peirush' I like most is that of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch. He said that 'V'Anveihu' literally means 'I will become a home for Hashem'. Indicating that the very essence of my being will be one through which I reflect the existence of the Almighty in the world.

This is something we achieve through the spirituality that hopefully we will attain and also via the 'Chessed' – the loving-kindness that one can extend to others.

When Avraham Avinu stood before the children of Chait, wanting to purchase land to bury Sarah, they declared, "Nasee Elokim Ata Betocheinu – You are a prince of God in our midst."

In Avraham Avinu they saw somebody who embodied the very existence of Hashem through his ways. He was somebody who achieved the 'Vanveihu'. They recognised a great person of Kedusha – of spirituality and also a great master of 'Chessed' – somebody who genuinely cared for others.

This is how we thank Hashem for enabling our people to survive. This is how we glorify him through being veritable princes and princesses. Having Hashem in our hearts and minds all the time.

### **OTS: Jewish Unity is not Jewish Uniformity**

People generally expect to achieve unity by thinking and doing the same thing. But even during the splitting of the Red Sea, the children of Israel didn't walk in a single path.

"If only we were to come together"... "If only there were unity in this nation"... We hear gripes like these almost every week, especially with elections approaching. After hearing about another round of fighting between different parties, we begin to daydream of an idyllic "unity" that, one day, will reunite the people of Israel.

It is quite fascinating to read, in countless sources, that when Hashem split the Red Sea, an event recounted in this week's Parasha, He

didn't split the sea once, down the middle. Rather, he split it so that twelve separate paths were created! The Holy One, Blessed Be He led the Jewish people through the Red Sea on dry ground, but they didn't all take the same path.

Maimonides comments that "... ten miracles were performed for our forefathers in Egypt, and another ten were performed at the [Red] Sea. The fifth miracle was that the sea was split into as many paths as there were tribes."

Numerous other commentators agree with Maimonides [e.g. Ibn Ezra's commentary on Exodus 14:29, Pirkei Derabi Eliezer (ch. 41), Mechilta Derabi Ishmael on Parashat Beshalach (ch. 4). They all confirm that the sea had been split into twelve paths, so that each tribe could cross the sea independently of the others.

Why was it so important for each tribe to cross the sea independently? After all, we are all members of the same nation. Pharaoh pursued all of the Jewish people, and the Holy One, Blessed Be He truly saved the ENTIRE nation when the Red Sea was split. If so, why separate them?

In fact, just a few weeks ago, we read the parshiot Vayeshev, Vayishlach, Vayigash, Miketz and Vayechi, which dealt extensively with the terrible rift between the progenitors of the tribes, who were all sons of Jacob. It was a divide that nearly led to Joseph's murder, though he was eventually "merely" sold into slavery in Egypt. The sale of Joseph caused his loving father Jacob immense heartache. Jacob had to endure twenty-two years during which he hadn't seen his son, believing he was dead. So why now, when the entire nation of Israel is about to be saved from the throes of Egypt, do we read of such a strong tradition that maintains that the sea was split into 12 parts?

I feel that these midrashim mean to teach us an important lesson on Jewish-style "unity": unity isn't the same as uniformity! Hashem had never wanted us to be one and the same. To the contrary, he divided the Jewish people into twelve nations to clarify and expound upon the difference between them! Everyone is a Jew, and everyone must operate within the framework of the Torah and the commandments, but each of us does so in a unique way.

Indeed, quite a few halakhot teach us of the importance of preserving diversity within the Jewish people. We are commanded to appoint "judges and officers in all of your gates" [Devarim 16/18] upon reaching the land of Israel. The Gemara in tractate Sanhedrin [16b] teaches us that "it is a commandment for the tribes to judge their tribesmen", and, as we see in Rashi's commentary on this verse, "the men of one tribe shall not go to the court of another tribe."

A judge from the tribe of Reuben wouldn't understand what two litigants from the tribe of Issachar are going through, since he doesn't dwell among them, within the environment

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they live and function in. Therefore, although all judges base their rulings on the teachings of the Torah, the viewpoint held by a judge from tribe X isn't like that of a judge of tribe Y.

When the children of Israel reach the Land of Israel, the land is divided into tribal portions, and the prophet Ezekiel prophesized that when Israel returns to the land a third time, it will again be divided by tribe (Ezekiel 47/13), expressing yet again the need for diversity.

The Magen Avraham, in his preface to Ohr Hachayim Siman 68, says that we should be thankful for that variation in the Jewish prayer books – i.e. the differences in the prayers said by eastern Jewish, Ashkenazi Jews, Yemenite Jews, etc. "The local traditions followed in the performance of prayer should not be changed, since there are twelve gates in heaven, corresponding to the twelve tribes, and each tribe has its own gate and traditions."

Unity is not uniformity, and the Holy One, Blessed Be He did not want us to put everyone into the same "mold" of Judaism. We all dress differently, and we even pray differently, just as long as all of these practices come under the framework of Torah and the commandments. The frame itself is well-defined, while the picture within varies from tribe to tribe, from community to community, from family to family, and, of course, from party to party.

To quote the Netziv of Volozhin: ... for the steady performance of the worship of Hashem is not the same for all people, one studies Torah and performs its commandments all day, another takes leave to work, and another performs acts of kindness, all of these are for the sake of heaven, and in the Torah itself [we read]: "Torah study isn't uniform, so goes it for the performance of the mitzvot and acts of kindness." Those who do these things are not all the same in the ways of their world. And if someone wishes to inquire which righteous path he should choose in his study method, or what to be particularly scrupulous with, regarding this, Ecclesiastes stated "and goes in the ways of your heart", i.e. whatever his heart is drawn to, for it is a good matter, according to the strength of his soul". (Harchev Davar on Parashat Bamidbar, 15:39)

Therefore, as the Jewish people took their first steps after being freed of bondage in Egypt, the Holy One, Blessed Be He "tore" the Red Sea in many places, and He did so to emphasize that we can disagree with each other, argue with each other, and have different opinions, but still, we are to be called the nation of Israel – the nation that sprung forth from the same grandfather, Israel, the same person whose children were rather distinct, and the same nation that adheres to the same foundation, the Torah and Jewish law.

In this way, and only in this way, can we be "one nation". For this, we may thank the Holy One Blessed Be He, every day, every time we stand before Him in prayer, ending the last blessing with the words: "... the One who blesses His people, Israel, with peace".

As Rabbi Kook wrote in his commentary: The proliferation of peace will occur when all of the sides and all of the methods of study become apparent, and it becomes clear how everyone has a place, each person according to his worth, his place, and his subject. For everyone will recognize that those who go in opposite ways and follow opposite methods, as it seems, they have all studied, and in every truth of those [truths] there is a side that will reveal the knowledge of Hashem and the light of His truth. (Rabbi Kook, Ein Aya, the end of Tractate Berachot)

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#### **Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org**

**Rabbi Michael Rosensweig**

#### **Kibud Av ve-Eim: A Core Foundation of Torah Life**

The experience of maamad Har Sinai and the transmission of the Aseret ha-Dibrot constitute a pivotal moment in world and Jewish history and is the centerpiece of Parshat Yitro. The gemara (Berachot 5a), commenting on the pasuk in Mishpatim (24:12) - "vi-etenah lecha et luchot ha-even ve-haTorah ve-hamitzvah asher katavti ledorotam"- establishes the aseret hadiberot (luchot ha-even, the first on the list) as a distinct genre of Torah, alongside mikra, mishneh, Talmud and Nach, notwithstanding the fact that it is also part of mikra! The fact that this special section is also sometimes read be-taam elyon (as dibrot rather than pesukim, see also Magen Avraham's comments in the beginning of Hilchot Shavuot), and that according to Rav Saadia Gaon and Ramban it encapsulates all taryag mitzvot reinforces this conclusion. Hence, the content and order of the dibrot demands scrutiny even beyond the regular microscopic reading of mikra.

While the list begins with self-evident, core theological principles and spiritual imperatives- belief in Hashem's existence and sovereignty, an emphatic rejection of idolatry, the demand that one relate respectfully to Sheim Hashem (ki lo yenekeh Hashem eit asher yisa et shemo la-shav) and Shabbat observance (see Chulin 5a- mumar lechalel et ha-Shabbat mumar le-kol ha-Torah kulah, and Rashi's comment ad loc, and Rambam's stirring conclusion of Hilchot Shabbat), the inclusion of kibud horim (reverence for parents), is less obvious. While proper execution promises long life, violation does not trigger a severe punishment. Moreover, kaved et avicha is followed by another series of crucial and consequential violations - lo tizrach (shefichat damim-murder), lo tinaf (marital betrayal-gilui arayot) etc. that seemingly eclipse the importance of kaved et avicha.

Ramban, following the midrash, suggests that kaved et avicha plays a transitional role in the dibrot, a bridge between bein adam la-makom and bein adam lechaveiro. He notes that this transition to a human focus begins with parents because on a human plane they parallel Hashem's role as a creator- "ki Hashem avinu ha-rishon' ve-hamolid avinu ha-

acharon." Implicit in the Ramban's sustained analysis of this transition, it becomes evident that beyond the parallel, kibud av also overlaps into the first group, and integrates both bein adam lechaveiro and bein adam la-makom. He posits that the reference employed in the Devarim version of aseret ha-dibrot-"kasher tzivcha Hashem Elokecha"- actually refers to the obligation to revere and exhibit respect to Hashem ("kaasher tziviticha be-kevodi kein anochi metzavecha be-kevod hamishtatef imi be-yitziratecha"), even suggesting that there is no need to explicate the details or methodology this reverence entails inasmuch as the components can be applied from the Divine model! He concludes his assessment by invoking the gemara's (Kiddushin 30b) formulation that "hukash kevodo lekevodo ha-Makom". While the overriding halachic importance of hakarat ha-tov (gratitude) explains much of this parallel and overlap [I hope to expand upon the multiple implications of this ubiquitous halachic-hashkafic concept elsewhere], the equation to Divine respect strains theological and religious propriety, and certainly consists of a significant expansion that requires further justification and clarification. A better understanding of the scope and nature of the kibud av imperative will also likely further explain its strategic placement in the aseret ha-dibrot among the cardinal doctrines of Jewish life.

Two interrelated dimensions of kibud av are relevant to the issues we have identified [each of which demands extensive analysis that I hope to pursue, iy"h, in another context].

Kibud av ve-eim appropriately parallels and models kevodo Kono precisely because in the formative stages of human development, parental authority, influence, and admiration is the most effective paradigm and thus, also the proper halachic vehicle for cultivating the capacity for belief, faith, idealism, and a sense of confident dependence and reliance upon a more powerful being. These elemental impulses are indispensable for basic cognitive, psychological and spiritual human development. It is the chinuch obligation of parents to pave the way for a transference of kibud, morehand the other features associated with the aforementioned values to the omnipotent, omniscient, transcendent Creator. Thus, Kibud av ve-eim, beyond hakarat ha-tov, is a critical mechanism to facilitate halachic commitment that stems from emunah peshutah. The fact that Rambam codifies these laws in Hilchot Mamrim underscores that parental authority is a paradigm of rabbinic and even Divine authority, certainly not a competing or detracting force. This perspective explains why kibud av ve-eim overlaps both bein adam lechaveiro and bein adam la-Makom, and serves as the point of transition in the luchot between these two motifs.

Moreover, Rav Chasdei Crescas links (Or Hashem) kibud av ve-eim's halachic

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prominence to the fact that parental authority, teaching, conduct, and orientation are the primary basis for mesorah, an indispensable factor in halachic life. "Sheal avicha ve-yagedcha' zekeinecha ve-yomru lach" begins with what every child imbibes through osmosis in their parental home, and continues with more formal parental guidance, instruction and inspiration. Halachic values and perspective that transcend but stem from halachic behavior is firmly rooted in one's family core.

The striking and severe laws of the incorrigible rebellious child, the ben sorer u-moreh (who is nidon al sheim sofo), reflect the importance of the reverential parental bond in Jewish life. Although the circumstances are either exceedingly rare or, according to one Talmudic position, entirely hypothetical and abstract (lo hayah velo nivra...derosh ve-kabel sechar), these laws are extensively codified and the violation is singled out in the Torah as requiring a formal national hachrazah (Sanhedrin 89a). This is undoubtedly because of the absolute incompatibility of this egregious conduct with any semblance of avodat Hashem- bein adam la-makom or bein adam le-chaveiro.

According to Chazal (see Mechilta, Rashi and Maharal in Gur Aryeh on Shemot 15:25, Sanhedrin 56b), kibud av ve-eim was already included with the select imperatives of Shabbat, dinim, and parah adumah at Marah (Shemot 15:25) as an educational (see Rashi and Ramban, Shemot ad loc) prequel to maamad har Sinai. Ramban (Devarim 5:16) notes that while Rashi reflects this view in Devarim, he surprisingly omits kibud av when he enumerates the Marah additions in Shemot. Maharal posits that kibud av may have been included in this elite grouping but not explicated (by remez) in the pesukim. Perhaps, Rashi's view was that kibud av precisely played a coordinating rather than an intrinsic role in this prequel. Kibud av ve-eim contributed a crucial reinforcement of the fundamental halachic concepts of belief, authority, and mesorah that required immediate national attention and focus. For the same reason, kibud av ve-eim, a halachic linchpin that promotes long quantitative and meaningful qualitative spiritual existence (see also Ramban Yitro ad loc on "leman yaarichun" ) bridges and integrates the two components of avodat Hashem in the aseret ha-dibrot.

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#### **Torah.Org Dvar Torah by Rabbi Label Lam**

#### **HASHEM is With Us!**

His glorious honor was revealed to them and they pointed with a finger. (Shemos Rabbah) A maidservant by the sea saw what was not shown to the prophets. (Mechilta – Rashi)

For many years I have been involved with seminars demonstrating with lockdown logic the veracity of Torah. Many people have walked away with a conviction that the Torah is true and there really is a G-d! They may



have adopted Shabbos and Kashrus based on their new understanding of things. However, I know that deep inside lurks a gnawing question, “Sure I know there’s a G-d, but does He think about me?” We all certainly feel it to a greater and lesser degree! That is not something that can be proven in the abstract. It must be experienced and learned on a personal level.

More than 33 years ago I heard something stunning directly from the mouth of the Tzadik of Monsey, Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl. Quoting Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, it is written in Adon Olam, “Master of the Universe before any creature was created ... He was, He is, and He will be in glory. He is One and there is no second to compare to Him to associate (with Him). Without beginning, without end, Power and dominion are His. He is my G-d and my living Redeemer!” Rabbi Schwab emphasized that last line and etched into my psyche! “He is My G-d” he said touching his own chest. That is how one relates to HASHEM, not as a distant entity but as a great and personal G-d who is deeply interested in the details of your life. So how do we know?

A month ago, while teaching a class in seminary, I deviated from the planned topic and swerved into the subject of Hashgacha Pratis- Divine Providence. I shared some of my most incredible stories, personal episodes that I lived through, experienced, and witnessed.

Now I know they were thinking like my kids always say, “How come these things only happen to you?” My answer is that that happen to everyone but you have to be alert to notice it when it happens. I told the girls that if they will look they will see amazing things. I promised them that I would purchase for each of them these little personal notebooks for recording Hashgacha Pratis.

Right after the class I looked at my phone and saw I had received a message from my wife during the class. I listened to the recording right away, “Label, can you do me a favor and

pick up for me one of those Hashgacha Pratis journals.” Wow! That’s exactly what I was talking about. Now we became tuned in again to keep our eyes open for Hashgacha Pratis.

Less than two weeks ago my wife and I were taking a long trek deep into Long Island for the funeral of my beloved mother. I found myself reminiscing about my first Shabbos experience. How after the Shabbos, the mother of the family that hosted me was washing dishes and I was sitting and writing personal notes. She had the radio on in the background. It was a Jewish station and the song was by the Megama Duo Band, with Moshe Yes.

The lyrics struck me. “Zeidy made us laugh and Zeidy made a Kiddush Friday night... Zeidy Oh my Zeidy how I loved him so...” I was thinking about my great grandfather, who fit that bill. The song concludes with Zeidy dying and the refrain, “Who will be the Zeidy of our children? Who will be their Zeidy if not we?” I was crying like and baby.

I turned to my wife and told her that now that my mother, Bubby, is with us no more, then you are now the grand “Bubby” of our grandchildren. Just then my wife pointed to a car passing us on the left hand side with a license plate that read, “BUBBYZEE” We were both amazed. More than ever we needed to know, even if it’s a brief wink, HASHEM is with us!

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#### **Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah**

#### **How Does Pharaoh Come to be in Nineveh? By Gilad Sasson<sup>1</sup>**

The “Song on the Sea” describes the drowning of Pharaoh’s forces in the Red Sea: “Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; and the pick of his officers are drowned in the Sea of Reeds” (Ex. 15:4); “For the horses of Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, went into the sea; and the Lord turned back on them the waters of the sea” (Ex. 15:19).<sup>2</sup>

In these verses, Pharaoh’s army, horses and chariots are collective references to Pharaoh’s armed forces, but did these expressions include Pharaoh himself? Did he also drown? The

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answer is to be found in the description of the event: “The Egyptians came in pursuit after them into the sea, all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and horsemen... The waters turned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen—Pharaoh’s entire army that followed them into the sea; not one of them remained” (Ex. 14:23-28).

The text emphasizes that there were no survivors, which means that Pharaoh, as well, did not remain alive, even though this is not explicitly stated.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to what is implied by Scripture, a different opinion is voiced in the writings of the Sages (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Tractate de-Va-Yehi, ch. 6):

The waters turned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen (Ex. 14:28)—even Pharaoh, says Rabbi Judah, as it is written, “Pharaoh’s chariots and his army [He has cast into the sea; and the pick of his officers are drowned in the Sea of Reeds]” (Ex. 15:4). Rabbi Nehemiah says: Excluding Pharaoh, for it is written of him, “Nevertheless I have spared you for this purpose: [in order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world]” (Ex. 9:16). Others say: Pharaoh went down last and drowned, as it is written (Ex. 15:19), “For the horses of Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, went into the sea; and the Lord turned back on them the waters of the sea.”

The Tannaim disagree as to Pharaoh’s fate. In Rabbi Judah’s opinion, close to the plain sense of the text, he drowned along with his forces. Rabbi Nehemiah, in contrast, holds that Pharaoh survived because the Lord so willed it: 1) so that he would witness with his own eyes the great might of the Lord, as he sees his entire army drowning in the sea; 2) so that he would retell the story of his defeat, and thus the name of the Lord would be aggrandized.

What accounts for Rabbi Nehemiah’s new reading, diverging from the plain sense? He seems to be of the opinion that Pharaoh’s surviving when all his army was destroyed was a far greater defeat for him. Pharaoh would continue to relive his fall every day of his life. This is a punishment worse than death, where

<sup>1</sup> This is implied by Psalms 106:9-11: “He sent His blast against the Sea of Reeds; it became dry; He led them through the deep as through a wilderness. He delivered them from the foe, redeemed them from the enemy. Water covered their adversaries; not one of them was left.”

<sup>2</sup> A later homily tries to reconcile the position of Rabbi Nehemiah with Exodus 14:28: “‘Not one of them remained’—this refers to Pharaoh, who remained and did not die, in order to recount the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written, ‘Nevertheless I have spared you for this purpose: [in order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world]’ (Ex. 9:16)” (*Midrash Aggadah*, Exodus, *Be-Shalah* 14:28, Buber ed., p. 145). Some Bible commentators have interpreted verse 14:28 in the light of this homily. E.g., *Hadar Zekenim*, and *Da’at Zekenim* of the Tosafists. Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra knew of this interpretation but took exception to it (see his short commentary, *loc. cit.*).

<sup>3</sup> The homilist puts this line in Pharaoh’s mouth by reading as the text as a single consecutive quote from verse 9 through verse 11: “The foe [Pharaoh] said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake... You made Your wind blow, the sea covered them, they sank like lead in the majestic waters, [and then Pharaoh said:] Who is like You, O Lord, among the celestials.’”

the sense of defeat is but momentary. The last view takes a middle-of-the-road approach, between the two that precede it: Pharaoh indeed drowned, but he was last to do so. He both witnessed the might of the Lord and experienced defeat for a more protracted time, yet he also died.<sup>1</sup>

Pharaoh remaining alive also appears in the later midrash, *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* (ch. 43):

Rabbi Nehunya ben Ha-Kanah says: Observe the power of repentance. Learn from the example of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who rebelled exceedingly against the Supreme Rock, as it is written, “Who is the Lord that I should heed Him?” (Ex. 5:2). Using the same expression with which he sinned, so did he repent, as it is written, “Who is like You, O Lord, among the celestials” (Ex. 15:11),<sup>2</sup> and thus the Holy One, blessed be He, delivered him from among those who were dying.

And whence do we know that he did not die? For it is said, “I could have stretched forth My hand and stricken you [and your people with pestilence, and you would have been effaced from the earth]. Nevertheless I have spared you for this purpose: [In order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world]” (Ex. 9:15-16) ...He went and became king of Nineveh...and when the Holy One, blessed be He, sent Jonah to bring to the city prophecy of its destruction, Pharaoh heard, arose from his throne, rent his garments and put on sackcloth and ashes, and he declared that all his people should fast with him for three days; and whoever would not do these things would be burned at the stake.

This homily tells of Pharaoh being saved, but adds two further developments: 1) Pharaoh repents, and the Lord saves him from dying, not as a punishment but as a reward.<sup>3</sup> 2) Pharaoh comes to Nineveh and is king of the metropolis when Jonah brings the tidings that the city is about to be destroyed. This legend prompts us to ask whence came the notion that Pharaoh repented and how was a connection arrived at between Pharaoh and the king of Nineveh, who lived centuries later?

Comparing the story of Moses and Pharaoh with the story of Jonah and the king of Nineveh, on the one hand we observe certain similarities, but on the other, differences.

The points of similarity are: 1) Almost the identical formulation is used to delegate the prophet to go to the gentile king. Moses was told, “Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I will tell you” (Ex. 6:29). Jonah was told, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it what I tell you” (Jonah 5:2). 2) Both prophets refused to go on the Lord’s mission.

The points of difference: 1) The reason given for being opposed to the mission: Jonah was opposed because he knew that the people of Nineveh and their king would repent, and he was opposed to the possibility of the Lord forgiving them. Moses was opposed because he knew full well that Pharaoh would refuse to listen to him. 2) The king of Nineveh was quick to do the Lord’s bidding, whereas Pharaoh stubbornly refused to listen to Him. In short, Pharaoh and the king of Nineveh present opposing figures, so the question of connecting the two only becomes more thorny.

Rabbis and scholars, aware of the problematic nature of this legend, have sought various explanations, but none seems to be adequate. It seems that the answer lies in the chapter incorporating this passage in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*. That chapter begins with the words, “Repentance and good deeds are a barrier against disaster,” and concludes with the words, “Blessed are you, O Lord, who desires repentance.”

The entire chapter deals with repentance and presents various figures who repented, changing their ways dramatically: Ahab, David, Menashe, and Resh Lakish. The last figure to be presented is that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who became king of Nineveh. To illustrate the tremendous power of repentance, the midrash sought to show that even a negative figure such as Pharaoh could repent. Since, as we have said, the contrasting figure to Pharaoh is the king of Nineveh, identifying Pharaoh with the king of Nineveh conveys a sharp and clear message about the great power

## Likutei Torah

of repentance. If Pharaoh can become the king of Nineveh, then there is hope for the betterment of every human being. Identifying Pharaoh with the king of Nineveh is not meant as an historical claim as an illustration of the idea of repentance. [Translated by Rachel Rowen]

<sup>1</sup> This development reached as far as the *Koran* (Sura 10, 90-92): “And We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until, when drowning overtook him he said, ‘I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims.’ Now? And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters? So today We will save you in body that you may be to those who succeed you a sign...” (<https://legacy.quran.com/10/90-92>). On the connection between *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* and Islam, see Joseph Heinemann, *Aggadah and Its Development* [Hebrew], Jerusalem 1974, pp. 181-199.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of Pharaoh coming to Nineveh also appears in *Sefer ha-Yashar*, ch. 20, Yosef Dan ed., Jerualem 2006, p. 319. Also see *Bereshit Rabbati*, *Parashat Va-Yehi*, Albeck ed., p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, *Ba'al Ha-Turim*, on Exodus 14:31, where he explains the connection between these two figures in the light of the fact that the word, *va-ya'aminu* (= they had faith or believed) only occurs twice in Scripture: “They had faith in the Lord and His servant Moses” (Ex. 14:30), and “The people of Nineveh believed in Gd” (Jonah 3:5). Rabbi Eliyahu ben Amozag, in his commentary, *Em la-Mikra*, which appears in *Torat Ha-Shem* (Leghorn 1863, on Ex. 14:10), sought to explain this on the basis of historical knowledge of how Ramses III reached Nineveh in his conquests.

Yair Zakovitz and Avigdor Shinan have suggested that the key is to be found in the verse from Nahum (3:7-8), which predicts a prophecy of destruction to be brought upon the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, and says *inter alia*: “All who see you will recoil from you and will say, ‘Nineveh has been ravaged!’ Who will console her? Where shall I look for anyone to comfort you? Were you any better than No-amon, which sat by the Nile, surrounded by water—its rampart a river, its wall consisting of sea?” (See *Sefer Yonah: Perush Yisraeli Hadash*, Jerusalem 2015, p. 103). In their opinion, this association of Egypt with Nineveh “sufficed to also make a connection between the king of Nineveh and Pharaoh, king of Egypt.”



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**Parshas Beshalach**

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: CD #887 Rejoicing At The Death of Reshoim - Recommended or Not? Good Shabbos!

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**The Orphans Were Not Forgotten**

The pasuk in the beginning of the parsha says that when the Jewish people left Egypt, they were 'chamushim' [Shmos 13:18]. Rashi cites two interpretations of the word 'chamushim'. There are in fact at least 3 seemingly disparate interpretations of this word found among the commentaries.

According to one interpretation in Rashi, 'chamushim' comes from the word 'chomesh' (one-fifth) and indicates that only one fifth of the Jewish population in Egypt merited to leave, while the other eighty percent died during the 3 days of Darkness (Plague #9).

The Targum Yerushalmi interprets the word 'chamushim' to mean they were armed. Rashi alludes to this interpretation, but seems to interpret it to mean that they were literally armed with weapons. The Targum Yerushalmi, on the other hand, interprets it figuratively - they were 'armed with good deeds'.

The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel gives a third interpretation: 'Chamushim' means that everyone went out with 5 children.

Superficially, these are three disparate interpretations: (a) one-fifth of the population left; (b) armed with good deeds; (c) bringing along 5 children each.

The interpretation of the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel is statistically mind-boggling. Shall we presume that everyone had exactly 5 children? In addition, even if that was the family size of each family unit, but the implication is that they were all children, of roughly the same age! What is the meaning of this?

The Be'er Yosef by Rav Yosef Salant gives a beautiful interpretation. He links all 3 seemingly independent interpretations of the word 'chamushim' into a single narrative with a single theme. He writes that if four-fifths of the Jewish people died during the Plague of Darkness, one can likely presume that specifically the adults died. Granted, the adults might have sinned and been unworthy of the Exodus, but how can we speak of the "sins of young children"?

Therefore, Rav Salant suggests that the children of these 'wicked Jews' did not die, which would imply that four-fifths of the Jewish children at the time of the Exodus were orphans. Imagine the scene - tens of thousands of little Jewish orphans wandering around. Who is going to take care of them? What is going to be with them? The answer is that every one of the remaining Jewish families 'chipped in' and said, "We'll take these orphans with us." Thus, mathematically, every remaining family adopted four families worth of orphans.

Therefore, when the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel says "five children", he does not mean that everyone went out with 5 children. He means that everyone went out with 5 families worth of children - their own set and the set of four other families worth of orphans whose parents died during the Plague of Darkness! This then fits in perfectly with the interpretation of the Targum Yerushalmi - they went out armed with good deeds! The good deeds were the fact that they adopted the poor orphans left over from the people killed during the ninth plague.

The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel is suggesting an amazing thing, which was a source of extraordinary merit. Consider that after the Holocaust, there were undoubtedly thousands of orphans. What happened to these kids? This is equivalent to everyone who survived the Holocaust taking in X number of orphans. Anyone who takes in an orphan is doing an amazing act of chessed. However, we must understand that these people were refugees themselves. They were not people who were living a normal life who then decided to "take in a few orphans". These were displaced people themselves. These people did not know where tomorrow's bread was coming from! When Klal Yisrael adopted the attitude "We can't leave these kids in Egypt" and dismissed all the natural concerns about their own welfare and the welfare of their own families in a time of great uncertainty, this was a tremendous act of courage and selflessness. This brought them great merit. This "armed them" with the merit of great acts of kindness.

Thus, all three interpretations: "one-fifth", "five children", and "armed with acts of kindness" dovetail together, according to the insight of Rav Yosef Salant.

Rav Matisyahu Solomon, the Lakewood Mashgiach, adds a beautiful appendage to this insight. The Medrash Rabbah in Eicha on the pasuk, "We were orphans who had no father" [Eicha 5:3] states that G-d tells the Jewish people "Because you cried out to me that you were like orphans who had no father, I will send to you a redeemer who has no father or mother." This refers to Esther in the time of Haman's decree, about whom it is written, "And he raised Hadassah who is the same as Esther the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother..." [Esther 2:7].

Rav Matisyahu Solomon interprets this Medrash: There is a special 'segulah' [virtuous Attribute] in the way the Almighty responds to orphans. The Almighty testifies that He will inevitably respond to the cry of the orphan: "If you will persecute him such that he cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry." [Shmos 22:22] Hashem is the Father of Orphans. When people inflict

pain on orphans, G-d says, "This is My Business!" Watch out for a father or mother when someone dares to startup with his or her children. So too, one must "watch out", as it were, for G-d's punishment if he dares start up with orphans and abuses or persecutes them. The Rambam defines this as a "sealed covenant" (Bris Kerasah) that the Almighty will respond to the cries of help from an orphan. [Matanos L'Aniyim 10:3]

When Klal Yisrael said (in the above quoted pasuk in Eicha), "We are like orphans who have no father" (referring to the Jews crying out in the time of Haman's decree), it guaranteed a response from the Almighty. Hashem agreed that a response had to be forthcoming, but He said (as it were) "I need a catalyst." The catalyst was Mordechai. Since Mordechai raised Hadassah (Esther), who was an orphan and had no parents, this act of kindness triggered the Divine Response that brought about the salvation from Haman's decree. The Medrash says that Mordechai could have escaped the decree and returned to Eretz Yisrael, but he refused to leave Persia because he was concerned about Esther's welfare. This was the 'spark' — the "arousal from below" — that in turn set off the "arousal from Above" which brought the redemption.

Rav Matisyahu Solomon says that with this background, we can now understand why Klal Yisrael in Egypt needed the merit of taking out all these thousands of orphans. When Klal Yisrael (despite all the reasons for not doing so) acted like the "father of orphans" and each took in four families worth of children with no parents, this (as the Targum Yerushalmi comments) was a tremendous merit, which triggered the Divine Response of G-d, the Father of all orphans.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion ranscribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site Project Genesis, Inc. 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 250 Baltimore, MD 21208 <http://www.torah.org/> learn@torah.org (410) 602-1350

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### **The Face of Evil**

#### **Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**

After 9/11, when the horror and trauma had subsided, Americans found themselves asking what had happened and why. Was it a disaster? A tragedy? A crime? An act of war? It did not seem to fit the pre-existing paradigms. And why had it happened? The question most often asked about Al Qaeda was, "Why do they hate us?"

In the wake of those events an American thinker Lee Harris wrote two books, *Civilization and its Enemies* and *The Suicide of Reason*[1] that were among the most thought-provoking responses of the decade. The reason for the questions and the failure to find answers, said Harris, was that we in the West had forgotten the concept of an enemy. Liberal democratic politics and market economics create a certain kind of society, a specific way of thinking and a characteristic type of personality. At their heart is the concept of the rational actor, the person who judges acts by their consequences and chooses the maximal option. He or she believes that for every problem there is a solution, for every conflict a resolution. The way to achieve it is to sit down, negotiate, and do on balance what is best for all.

In such a world there are no enemies, merely conflicts of interest. An enemy, says Harris, is simply "a friend we haven't done enough for yet." In the real world, however, not everyone is a liberal democrat. An enemy is "someone who is willing to die in order to kill you. And while it is true that the enemy always hates us for a reason, it is his reason, not ours." He sees a different world from ours, and in that world we are the enemy. Why do they hate us? Answers Harris: "They hate us because we are their enemy."

Whatever the rights and wrongs of Harris's specifics, the general point is true and profound. We can become mind-blind, thinking that the way we —

our society, our culture, our civilization — see things is the only way, or at least that it is the way everyone would choose if given the chance. Only a complete failure to understand the history of ideas can explain this error, and it is a dangerous one. When Montezuma, ruler of the Aztecs, met Cortes, leader of the Spanish expedition in 1520, he assumed that he was meeting a civilized man from a civilized nation. That mistake cost him his life and within a year there was no Aztec civilization any more. Not everyone sees the world the way we do, and, as Richard Weaver once said: "The trouble with humanity is that it forgets to read the minutes of the last meeting."

This explains the significance of the unusual command at the end of this week's parsha. The Israelites had escaped the seemingly inexorable danger of the chariots of the Egyptian army, the military high-tech of its day. Miraculously the sea divided, the Israelites crossed, the Egyptians, their chariot wheels caught in the mud, were unable either to advance or retreat and were caught by the returning tide.

The Israelites sang a song and finally seemed to be free, when something untoward and unexpected happened. They were attacked by a new enemy, the Amalekites, a nomadic group living in the desert. Moses instructed Joshua to lead the people in battle. They fought and won. But the Torah makes it clear that this was no ordinary battle:

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.' Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. He said, 'The hand is on the Lord's throne. The Lord will be at war with Amalek for all generations.' (Ex. 17: 14-16)

This is a very strange statement, and it stands in marked contrast to the way the Torah speaks about the Egyptians. The Amalekites attacked Israel during the lifetime of Moses just once. The Egyptians oppressed the Israelites over an extended period, oppressing and enslaving them and starting a slow genocide by killing every male Israelite child. The whole thrust of the narrative would suggest that if any nation would become the symbol of evil, it would be Egypt.

But the opposite turns out to be true. In Deuteronomy the Torah states, "Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land" (Deut. 23: 8). Shortly thereafter, Moses repeats the command about the Amalekites, adding a significant detail:

Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God ... You shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget! (Deut. 25: 17-19)

We are commanded not to hate Egypt, but never to forget Amalek. Why the difference? The simplest answer is to recall the rabbis' statement in *The Ethics of the Fathers*: "If love depends on a specific cause, when the cause ends, so does the love. If love does not depend on a specific cause, then it never ends." [2] The same applies to hate. When hate depends on a specific cause, it ends once the cause disappears. Causeless, baseless hate lasts forever.

The Egyptians oppressed the Israelites because, in Pharaoh's words, "The Israelites are becoming too numerous and strong for us" (Ex. 1: 9). Their hate, in other words, came from fear. It was not irrational. The Egyptians had been attacked and conquered before by a foreign group known as the Hyksos, and the memory of that period was still acute and painful. The Amalekites, however, were not being threatened by the Israelites. They attacked a people who were "weary and worn out," specifically those who were "lagging behind." In short: the Egyptians feared the Israelites because they were strong. The Amalekites attacked the Israelites because they were weak.

In today's terminology, the Egyptians were rational actors, the Amalekites were not. With rational actors there can be negotiated peace. People engaged in conflict eventually realise that they are not only destroying their enemies: they are destroying themselves. That is what Pharaoh's advisers said to him after seven plagues: "Do you not yet realise that Egypt is ruined?" (Ex. 10:

7). There comes a point at which rational actors understand that the pursuit of self-interest has become self-destructive, and they learn to co-operate. It is not so, however, with non-rational actors. Emil Fackenheim, one of the great post-Holocaust theologians, noted that towards the end of the Second World War the Germans diverted trains carrying supplies to their own army, in order to transport Jews to the extermination camps. So driven were they by hate that they were prepared to put their own victory at risk in order to carry out the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe. This was, he said, evil for evil's sake.[3]

The Amalekites function in Jewish memory as "the enemy" in Lee Harris's sense. Jewish law, however, specifies two completely different forms of action in relation to the Amalekites. First is the physical command to wage war against them. That is what Samuel told Saul to do, a command he failed fully to fulfil. Does this command still apply today?

The unequivocal answer given by Rabbi Nachum Rabinovitch is No.[4] Maimonides ruled that the command to destroy the Amalekites only applied if they refused to make peace and accept the seven Noahide laws. He further stated that the command was no longer applicable since Sennacherib, the Assyrian, had transported and resettled the nations he conquered so that it was no longer possible to identify the ethnicity of any of the original nations against whom the Israelites were commanded to fight. He also said, in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, that the command only applied to people of specific biological descent. It is not to be applied in general to enemies or haters of the Jewish people. So the command to wage war against the Amalekites no longer applies.

However, there is a quite different command, to "remember" and "not forget" Amalek, which we fulfil annually by the reading the passage about the Amalekites command as it appears in Deuteronomy on the Shabbat before Purim, Shabbat Zakhor (the connection with Purim is that Haman the "Agagite" is assumed to be a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites). Here Amalek has become a symbol rather than a reality.

By dividing the response in this way, Judaism marks a clear distinction between an ancient enemy who no longer exists, and the evil that enemy embodied, which can break out again at any time in any place. It is easy at times of peace to forget the evil that lies just beneath the surface of the human heart. Never was this truer than in the past three centuries. The birth of Enlightenment, toleration, emancipation, liberalism and human rights persuaded many, Jews among them, that collective evil was as extinct as the Amalekites. Evil was then, not now. That age eventually begat nationalism, fascism, communism, two World Wars, some of the brutal tyrannies ever known, and the worst crime of man against man.

Today, the great danger is terror. Here the words of Princeton political philosopher Michael Walzer are particularly apt:

Wherever we see terrorism, we should look for tyranny and oppression ... The terrorists aim to rule, and murder is their method. They have their own internal police, death squads, disappearances. They begin by killing or intimidating those comrades who stand in their way, and they proceed to do the same, if they can, among the people they claim to represent. If terrorists are successful, they rule tyrannically, and their people bear, without consent, the costs of the terrorists' rule.[5]

Evil never dies, and like liberty it demands constant vigilance. We are commanded to remember, not for the sake of the past but for the sake of the future, and not for revenge but the opposite: a world free of revenge and other forms of violence.

Lee Harris began *Civilization and its Enemies* with the words, "The subject of this book is forgetfulness," and ends with a question: "Can the West overcome the forgetfulness that is the nemesis of every successful civilization?" That is why we are commanded to remember and never forget Amalek, not because the historic people still exists, but because a society of rational actors can sometimes believe that the world is full of rational actors with whom one can negotiate peace. It is not always so.

Rarely was a biblical message so relevant to the future of the West and of freedom itself. Peace is possible, implies Moses, even with an Egypt that

enslaved and tried to destroy us. But peace is not possible with those who attack people they see as weak and who deny their own people the freedom for which they claim to be fighting. Freedom depends on our ability to remember and whenever necessary confront "the eternal gang of ruthless men," the face of Amalek throughout history.

[1] Lee Harris, *Civilization and Its Enemies: The next Stage of History*. New York: Free Press, 2004. *The Suicide of Reason*, New York: Basic Books, 2008. [2] Mishnah Avot 5: 16. [3] Fackenheim, Emil L., and Michael L. Morgan. *The Jewish Thought of Emil Fackenheim: A Reader*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1987, 126. [4] Rabbi N L Rabinovitch, *Responsa Melomdei Milchamah*, Maaleh Adumim, Maaliyot, 1993, 22-25. [5] Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War*, Yale University Press, 2004, 64-65.

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from: **Rabbi Berel Wein** <genesis@torah.org> reply-to: do-not-reply@torah.org to: rabbiwein@torah.org date: Thu, Jan 29, 2015 at 10:05 PM subject: Rabbi Wein - Parshas Beshalach

Parshas Beshalach

**Songs Throughout the Generations**

There are many different types of songs familiar to human society. There are songs of triumph and of resignation and acceptance. There are songs of joy and love and anthems of hatred and violence. There are songs of nostalgia and remembrance and songs of hope in future greatness. There are also hymns of faith and melodies of rebellion and change. In short, in human history, one can almost identify with the events of the time by hearing the music and songs that were then prevalent and popular.

In this week's Torah reading, we encounter a song that is all of the above and yet none of the above. It is an ancient song recited or sung by the Jewish people on a daily basis for over 3300. At its heart, it is a song of faith, of belief, and survival and of the promise of eternal greatness and continuing challenge. At the beginning of Jewish history, it already establishes the equation of the relationship of the Jewish people to the rest of the world and to historical events.

Because of its emphasis on the eternity of God and of Israel, it is not confined to any one time period or historical era. It was a song sung at a particular moment in time but its essence and message is timeless and constantly pertinent and relevant. The words of the song delineate the struggle for survival in which Jews will always be engaged, against enemies who never completely disappear but rather morph into new forms and ideologies. The most uplifting message of the song is its timelessness and relevance. The most depressing part of the song is also its timelessness and relevance.

There is another song recorded for us in the Torah that is similar to this type of message and outlook. It is the song that concludes the great oration of Moshe to the Jewish people in the last days of his life in the desert of Sinai. That song, which appears in parshat Haazinu is also a song of survival and eventual success in the never-ending struggle that we call Jewish history. This week's song and that later song of Moshe really constitute the bookends of the Torah and of the Jewish story generally.

We are bidden to know and understand these songs and their import. We are to teach them to our children and to all later generations of the Jewish people. These songs are to be as unforgettable thousands of years from now as they were when first composed and sung. Jews who have somehow forgotten these songs – or perhaps even worse, never knew of their existence – will find it difficult to identify with God's Torah, His people and His holy land.

Song is a tool for remembrance and prophecy – for an appreciation of our wondrous past and a commitment to our promised and even more spectacular, future. That is why we are bidden to recite it day in and day out, in all times and places, for it contains within it the essential kernel of Jewish life and existence. We should therefore pay attention carefully to its words and message and sing along with Moshe in this great anthem of Jewish and world history.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

## In My Opinion FORTUNE AND EQUALITY

### Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the more popular and populist social and electoral issues here in Israel and in the rest of the Western world as well, is rectifying the seeming inequality of the distribution of wealth. The upper five percent of the population, in terms of wealth worldwide, control close to eighty percent of the wealth of the societies that they inhabit. In order to correct this seemingly unfair imbalance, government programs are introduced and legislative laws are passed to redistribute wealth – taking from the wealthy by substantially increasing their tax burden and giving to the less wealthy in the form of government subsidies and welfare programs. This is, in effect, a glorified Robin Hood philosophy that has always proved popular and even heroic. In those countries and societies where this utopian scheme was actually tried and enforced, the net result seems to have been that the wealthy became poor and the poor remained poor. The Soviet Union, which for seventy-five years destroyed the pre-existing wealthy class, only succeeded in creating a new class of bureaucrats and apparatchniks and an economy that bred universal poverty, social dysfunction and eventually collapsed under the weight of its own misguided policies. Here in Israel, the socialist founders of the state also addressed the problem of income inequality with enormous taxation and controls over various forms of private enterprise. This was the legacy of the Marxist mindset that was part of the belief system of the Eastern European Zionist founders of the state. Only over the last few decades has this situation changed, with many more Israelis prospering. Now more than ever before in the history of the country, there is a larger and growing wealthy class. Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly a great gap between the wealthy and the less wealthy. And this gap is trumpeted, by all of the parties, as being an important electoral issue that needs determined correction and government action. The Torah takes a more realistic and measured view of the human situation involved here. We are assured that there will always be a substantial number of people – if not even the vast majority of the population – that will be less wealthy than the rich people of the society. All human beings are created equal but they never are equal in talent, wealth, opportunity and accomplishment. That is simply a fact of human life. The Talmud, in its usual pithy and accurate way, teaches us that success in raising children, achieving longevity of life and becoming wealthy in material terms are all dependent upon good fortune. Seemingly perfect parents and warm and loving households can also produce children that are rebellious and even monstrous. One can rigorously follow the best of health, diet and exercise regimens and still not be guaranteed a long life. And one can work hard, be smart and intelligent, have great deal of knowledge and energy and still be a very poor wage earner. Apparently the Talmud takes for granted that income inequality will always be a part of human life. It encourages and demands that the wealthy constantly help the poor but it offers no magic bullet that will make everyone equally wealthy. There exists an imaginary poverty line that is drawn by statisticians in every society. There will always be a substantial portion of the population that finds itself below that poverty line. The issue is how high that poverty line is drawn on the graph of wealth and income. There is no question that the poor in Israel today are much wealthier than the poor in Israel were a half-century ago. Yet we are constantly reminded of how many in Israel find themselves in the group that is below the poverty line. I wish that there were no poor people in Israel or anywhere else in the world, but that is a hopeless wish. Those of us who find ourselves fortunate to have means and wealth are obligated to help our fellow citizens who need our help. But destroying the wealthy class, taxing them inordinately and attempting to redistribute wealth and income, only weakens the society and its economy. We should not remain passive in the face of the economic and social troubles that confront so many of our neighbors here in Israel and throughout the world. It is interesting to note that people are more resistant to paying taxes to a government than they are to contributing towards charitable causes and

helping other human beings. As with everything in life there must be a balance between private wealth, government welfare, taxation policies and voluntary charitable behavior. Populist slogans rarely if ever contribute to achieving this most necessary balance. Lincoln famously once said: "The Lord must love the poor. He created so many of them". We should attempt to diminish the numbers of the poor but at the same time realize that certain facts in the human condition and in general society are not given to easy and popular theoretical solution. Shabbat shalom Berel Wein

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### Rabbi Yakov Haber

Song of the Sea: Song of Unity, Song of the Future

I

"Az yashir Moshe u'nei Yisrael es hashira hazot laShem vayom'ru leimor" (Shemos 15:1). This introductory phrase to Shiras HaYam, the exalted song of praise to G-d for the miraculous splitting of the Sea and the rescue of the nascent Jewish nation from the formidable Egyptian forces, presents a grammatical anomaly. Literally translated, the beginning of the phrase reads, "then Moshe will sing", in the future tense rather than in the expected past or present tense. Rashi, in explaining the usage of the future tense, presents two explanations. The first, according to p'shat, is that his heart instructed him to sing shira as if saying, "Moshe, arise and you should sing to G-d!" The second, following the Midrash, is that the future tense indicates that Moshe will sing this song again in the future at the time of t'chias hameisim, the resurrection of the dead. What connection is there between the Song of the Sea and the future resurrection?

In order to answer this question, Rav Chaim Ya'akov Goldwicht zt"l, the founding Rosh HaYeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, presented an inspiring insight as to the nature of the miracle of the splitting of the sea and the shira sung there.[1] The Midrash relates (Shemos Rabba 23:3):

Moshe said: "Master of the World, with that which I sinned before You, I shall praise You... I know that I sinned before You with [the word] "az", as it says, "From the time (ume'az) I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he harmed this people, and You have not saved your nation!" (Sh'mos 5:23), and [now] You have drowned him in the sea. Therefore I am praising you with [the word] "az", as it is written: "Az yashir Moshe". Come and see the way of the righteous, with that which they sin, they correct [their actions]. Normally, a correction implies acting in a different way in the same situation. How does Moshe's singing to Hashem when the Jewish people were saved from Pharaoh correct his complaining to G-d when the persecution and servitude became greater?

Shiras HaYam was more than just praise to the Creator for saving the Jewish people. It was a spontaneous outpouring of the soul reflecting the elevated state that Am Yisrael reached at that point. (Note Rashi's comment to verse 2 that the Jewish people "pointed" to the Divine Presence revealed then and the fact that even the babies and fetuses sang to G-d (Yerushalmi Sota 5:4).) In light of that exalted state, they merited for a moment the opening of the "curtain of history" masking the inner workings of Divine Providence.

To explain: On the intellectual plane, we know that "everything the Merciful One does is for the good" (Berachos 60b). But we do not always sense that on the level of experience and feeling. The different blessings pronounced on "good" news and "bad" news reflect this duality. However, in the perfect world of the future, Olam HaBa[2], we will praise G-d with the identical blessing of HaTov v'haMeitiv even for apparent evil. At that point, we will be able to feel and experience as well as cognitively know the latent good that was inherent in the seemingly evil events of Jewish history (See P'sachim 50a.)

The event and accompanying revelation of keriyas Yam Suf enabled the Jewish people, for a moment in history, to reach that same level of perception. They were able to sing to Hashem not only for the Exodus and miraculous salvation but even for all of the apparent evil. Moshe Rabbeinu led Klal Yisrael in this futuristic paean, singing it within the framework of Olam HaZeh - normally masked by the unclarity of our experience - since the "curtain" had been temporarily opened. Therefore, Moshe reflects back on his original usage of the word "az" when he expressed shock over apparent injustice and uses the same word at the time that he perceived how wrong he was to do so since he now realized that the seeming downturn together with all of the rest of the servitude and persecution in Egypt was just Good in disguise.[3]

Therefore the future tense is used. This song, although sung in the past, ultimately reflects a level of revelation that will be the norm in the world of the future, the time of the resurrection.

The ancient pagans, including the Egyptians, solved the problem of the seemingly opposing forces of good and evil by inventing a god of good and a god of evil. Sometimes one was victorious; at other times, the other was. But Bnei Yisrael were shown the truth: that Hashem Echad, the Yotzeir or u'Borei Ra (Yeshaya 45:7),



managed both powers in the world which were all harnessed for the good. The last verse in the Song of the Sea seems not to be part of the song. "When the horses of Pharaoh came with his chariots and horsemen into the sea, Hashem returned the waters of the sea upon them. And the Jewish people walked on dry land in the seabed" (15:19). This verse seems to just describe the timing of the song, but yet it is written in the Torah in the same unique spacing style as the Song itself and is commonly recited in the P'sukei d'Zimra every day together with the rest of the Shira. Why? Rav Goldwicht explained that this event, where simultaneously good was occurring to the Jews and evil was wrought upon the Egyptians, expressed the unity of good and evil, of one Actor bringing about both. This was the main thrust of the song: that even evil is but a tool in G-d's hands to bring about the good.[4]

The final paragraph of Psalms consists of a description of various musical instruments being used to praise the Almighty. I once heard that this is the final song of history, when we will realize that, just as in a symphony, each instrument alone might even sound cacophonous, but, blended in with all of the other instruments, contributes to the beautiful music. So too, at the end of history, even the seemingly discordant notes of apparent evil will be understood and felt in their true form, as part of the good.

Faith and trust in the Master of Providence is a central feature of avodas Hashem. In our individual and national lives we experience moments of triumph, of success, of revealed good. But we also experience hester panim, apparent evil, when the world seems upside down, where evil seemingly succeeds and good seems, at least temporarily, vanquished. Yet we are called upon to constantly place our trust in HKB"H and rely on our cognitively knowing that ultimately all events are for the good. Our rich tradition also teaches us that this knowledge will ultimately be transformed into feeling and experience. Our daily recital of the Song of the Sea highlights the fact that this Song of the Future will once again become a reflection of our experience.

## II

The mann indicated that all parnassa comes from Hashem. Even though the midbar experience was not a "regular" existence it highlighted that even for one whose livelihood is "ordinary", it is as if he is receiving the mann, sustained by G-d. Now, just as then, "the one who took more did not benefit; the one who took less did not lack" (16:18). We all get what G-d ordains for us.[5] In essence, then, the midbar experience taught the Jewish people that even when living an "ordinary" life, there is nothing ordinary about it. It is driven by specialized Divine Providence. In a similar way, even when encountering evil and hardship in the world, the knowledge of the experience of the Shirat HaYam teaches us that that something transcendent and unique is occurring - that one is living through special Divine Providence guiding us toward the perfect world when all will be clear.

The common denominator between Hashem's providential guidance of the good and evil in our lives and His providing our sustenance is that both require reflection and thought to realize and internalize. Perhaps this allows us to link the two interpretations quoted above given by Rashi to the opening verse, "Az yashir". Our hearts have to arouse and awaken us to sing to G-d, to recognize His hand in our lives. In this way, we constantly tap in to an echo of the great Shiras HaYam, the song that will be fully relevant in the future.

These examples of living in this world but realizing that something far greater than ourselves and what we experience is happening should guide us in living a fulfilling, G-d centered life knowing that the All-Knowing Master of Providence is always there guiding everything and holding us in His Divine embrace.

[1] Heard in a shiur at Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh. Also see Asufas Ma'arachos (Shemos), Beshalach (Shira) for much more elaboration. It is presented here with some personal additions.

[2] This might also refer to the Messianic era.

[3] Based on this, Rav Goldwicht homiletically explained the verse, "vaya'er es halayla", "and it [the fire] illuminated the night" (14:20). At that glorious moment, the night of exile was illuminated for the Jewish people. They felt, not just knew, that all the bitter tragedies of the Egyptian bondage were indeed for the good and appreciated the beauty of even the "night".

[4] See Amaleik, Kaddish, and the Unity of G-d's Name for further elaboration of this theme.

[5] See Mann and Parnassa for further elaboration on the lessons of the mann.

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from: **Chanan Morrison** <ravkooklist@gmail.com> reply-to: rav-kook-list+owners@googlegroups.com to: **Rav Kook List** <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date: Thu, Jan 29, 2015 at 3:59 AM subject: [Rav Kook List] **Beshalach: Sanctity in Space**

Beshalach: Sanctity in Space The Israelites, having miraculously escaped death at the hands of the Egyptian army, sang a beautiful song of praise and thanksgiving for their Divine rescue - Shirat HaYam. The song concludes with the national aspiration to be

settled in the Land of Israel, experiencing God's Presence in the Temple on Mount Moriah:

"Bring [the people] and plant them on the Mount You possess. To the place of Your dwelling that You prepared, God - the Temple, God, that Your hands have founded." (Ex. 15:17) The Sages noted that the word Mikdash (Temple) is sandwiched in between God's Name. "Great is the Temple, since it was placed between two Divine Names" (Berachot 33a). What is the significance of this fact?

In general, we need to examine how it is possible that a unique level of sanctity may be restricted to a particular location. What relationship can there be between holiness - a boundless, non-physical quality - and the boundaries of physical space? How can God's Presence be confined to a specific structure?

**Spatial Sanctity**

In truth, we cannot fathom the mystery of holiness limited to a particular place.

However, we can recognize the logical benefit in designating a location as a focal point for people to gather together with the sacred aim of honoring God. Such a center serves to advance humanity's moral and spiritual progress.

Of course, the Creator of the human soul knows its inner workings. God knows that designating sanctity to a particular place is necessary for our spiritual growth.

This perhaps explains the significance of two Names of God surrounding the word Mikdash. God's Name indicates the way we call out to God and how we relate to Him. Our relationship to God, within the context of the Temple, has two aspects. The first is due to the intrinsic sanctity of the Temple, the pinnacle of holiness in the universe. We connect with this inner holiness on a deep emotional level. It inspires our imagination to spiritual greatness, instilling powerful yearnings for goodness and holiness. This is the first Divine Name associated with the Temple.

The second aspect of the Temple stems from its collective benefit for us as social beings. The Temple served as a central location for people to gather together for common spiritual goals, bolstering the moral resolve and aspirations of the entire nation. This aspect of the Temple's spiritual influence - one that is accessible to human logic - corresponds to the second Divine Name.

In fact, the text hints to both of these aspects. Regarding the intrinsic holiness of the Temple, it says, "The place of Your dwelling that You prepared." God Himself prepared the Temple's unfathomable sanctity, inspiring and uplifting those entering its gates.

Regarding the Temple's function as a spiritual center for the nation, the verse continues, "The Temple, that Your hands have founded." This is an indirect process, through 'God's hands' - the consequential benefit of the Temple as a center for our collective aspirations, a focal point to advance humanity's true fulfillment.

(Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, p. 236; Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 157)

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**Manna From Heaven**

**Halachic Musings**

**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman**

It is perhaps the parnassah segulah that has gone most "viral" among segulos.

Numerous Torah websites link to the parashah of the mon and explain that you will become wealthier if you recite this section (Sh'mos 16:4-36) on Tuesday of Parashas Beshallah. It must be said twice in the Hebrew and once in the targum. But where does this segulah come from? Is there truly anything to it? Is it of recent origin or does it date back many centuries?

What is fascinating is that the aspect of reciting it on the Tuesday of Parashas Beshallah is of recent origin. The earlier sources recommended reciting it daily—not just on one day of the year. Rabbeinu Bachya (Sh'mos 16:16) writes, "It is a tradition in the hand of the sages that whoever recites the parashah of the mon each day is assured that he will not lose out in this world of his mezonos."

**Origins**

The Tashbatz (siman 184) cites the daily reading of this parashah and its effect in the name of the Yerushalmi, and add the words, "And I am the guarantor." The Tur (O.C., siman 1:5) also cites this tradition in the name of the Yerushalmi in Berachos. The Mishnah Berurah (1:13) also cites this source. The problem is that it is not to be found in our versions or any manuscripts of the Yerushalmi.

To add to the mystery, the Sefer HaManhig in hilchos Shabbos (44) cites the source as a Yerushalmi in Yuma. Yet it is not in our Yerushalmi Yuma either.

The traditional answer often given when Rishonim refer to portions of Yerushalmi that have disappeared is that the term is used loosely by the Rishon and that Yerushalmi often included Midrashim that were edited in Eretz Yisrael. This won't work here, because the Tur specifically refers to the Yerushalmi in Berachos. It must be that the version of the Yerushalmi that the Tur had is lost to us.

**Why The Mon?**

Why single out the miracle of the mon, more so than the other miracles we experienced? Rav Saadia Gaon, in the introduction to his *Emunos v'Dei'os*, explains that the mon was a miracle of daily occurrence. The other miracles were more transient.

Although not mentioned by Rav Saadia, the mon played an important role even after the 40-year sojourn in the desert. The container of the mon (tzintzenes ha'mon) was placed alongside the Aron in both the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdash until the days of King Yoshiyahu, one hundred years before the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash. It served as a reminder then too.

Not Found In Siddurim

The Aruch HaShulchan points out that in his time, the Parashas HaMon was not found in Siddurim. He explains its absence in the Siddur as stemming from the fact that the parashah mentions a number of times the embarrassing detail that Klal Yisrael nagged and complained, and it would be improper to place that permanently in our Siddurim. Nowadays, many of the Siddurim have printed it, notwithstanding the AruchHaShulchan's reasoning.

How It Works

Many of the meforshim explain the daily recital of the parashah of mon serves to entrench within our minds that our parnassah, our sustenance, comes only from Hashem. The Mishnah Berurah writes that it is not enough to merely say it; its message must be fully embedded within us.

Others (Minchas Asher, for example) write that reciting it will build up our bitachon in Hashem. While some would explain that these are two sides of the same coin, it seems to this author that they are in fact two distinct concepts.

There seems to be a third method, taking a less mystical approach: The reading of the parashah serves to calm a person's anxieties about struggling for parnassah and thus helps him focus better, with the understanding that all is from Hashem. This seems to be the understanding of the Tzemach Tzedek (Parashas HaMon, 5644, referenced in index, page 100).

The Shevet Mussar (chapter 40) cites in the name of the mekubalim that it should be recited, as mentioned earlier, shenayim mikra v'echad Targum—twice in the Hebrew and once in the Aramaic of Onkelos. The Noheg Tzon Yosef (siman 34), however, quotes the shenayim mikra detail as having first been written by Rabbeinu Tam in his Sefer HaYashar. The Shelah's father, in his Yesh Nochlin, also writes this. According to the Shelah's father, however, this is merely the ideal method; from the Noheg Tzon Yosef it seems that it will not be effective at all if not done shenayim mikra v'echad Targum.

The Variant Blessing

Also interesting is that thus far, our sources indicate that a person will simply not lose out or suffer a loss of mezonos. In the Midrash Talpilos (section on Havdallah), however, it states that the entire Parashas HaMon is mesugal for success and wealth. The nature of the blessing is thus ratcheted up a bit.

When Should It Be Said?

Both the Be'er Heitev and the Mishnah Berurah indicate that it should be recited in the morning, before the Korbanos. The Otzros Chaim, however, cites the Rekanti in the name of the Zohar that it should be said after Shacharis, although he does not actually source it. The most likely reference is to the Zohar in Parashas Pinchas (226): d'parnassah lo chazi l'mishal ela basar tz'lusa—requests for one's parnassah are viable only after praying. Since the rulings of the halachicposkim generally outweigh the rulings of the mekubalim, it would seem preferable to follow the Mishnah Berurah, but, as always, each person should consult his own rav or posek.

Other Minhagim

The Mishmeres Shalom (14:2), a sefer written in Yiddish, states that Rav Pinchas MiKoritz cited the minhag and also added that one should say the Thirteen Principles of the Rambam each morning as well.

The Tuesday Of Beshallah

So when exactly did the newer custom of reciting it on one particular Tuesday of the year arise? And who promulgated the new twist on the minhag? Some trace it to Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimonov (1745–1815), one of the five main disciples of the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk. Others trace it to Rav Shalom of Stropkov (1855–1940) (see Yisroel V'Hazmanim, Rav Dovid Rossov, p. 291). It is clear, however, that Rav Shalom was quoting the Rimonover and did not make it up himself. The original sefer of the Rimonover is not easily accessible as only the first volume is extant.

Most people do not have the minhag of saying it on this day, and some remain firm in this minhag. Rav Ovadia also writes that this is not their minhag. There is a fascinating Rabbeinu Yonah in Shaarei Teshuvah (3:17), where he writes that it is a Torah mitzvah to remember the falling of the mon. That being the case, it doesn't hurt to recite it if it will help us focus on this mitzvah.

A Caveat For Everyone

Rav Shmuel Hominer in his Chumash Eved HaMelech (Sh'mos p. 42) brings out a fascinating yet obvious point. When reciting the Parashas HaMon one should take care

not to recite it as segulah. Why? So that he will not be serving Hashem al menas lekabel p'ras—on condition of receiving reward. Let's not forget this yesod of Yiddishkeit, a fundamental point in our serving Hashem, as found in Pirkei Avos. v The author can be reached at [yairhoffman2@gmail.com](mailto:yairhoffman2@gmail.com).

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from: Shabbat Shalom <[info@ounetwork.org](mailto:info@ounetwork.org)> reply-to: [info@ounetwork.org](mailto:info@ounetwork.org) date:

Thu, Sep 4, 2014 at 5:48 PM

OU Shabbat Shalom Weekly

**What Exactly Is it That God Hears?**

**by David Olivestone** | June 16, 2014 in Opinion

What exactly is it that God hears when we daven and simultaneously chat a little with the person next to us in shul? Here's what Ashrei might sound like to God when the shul-goer also has other things he or she needs to say. God, of course, has no problem understanding the mixture of Hebrew and English. But to simplify things for the Jewish Action reader, we present the entire piece in English.

Happy are those who dwell in Your House; they will always praise You, selah.

Happy are such people; happy are the people whose God is the Lord.

A song of praise of David.

I will exalt You, O my God, the King, and oh, it's about time you showed up! I will bless Your name, and if you wait till I move my Chumash, you can sit here, forever and ever.

Every day I bless You, and no one's using that siddur, so you can take it, and praise Your name forever and ever.

The Lord is great, and look who's here! Abba brought you to shul? He's greatly to be praised; His greatness is unlimited. He's a great Abba, lets Ima sleep.

One generation will praise Your works to another—such a big boy!—and tell of Your mighty deeds. You walked all the way to shul?

On the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wonderful deeds I will meditate, and here's a candy.

Hey, did you see the paper? They speak of the power of Your awesome deeds. Awesome game. I will talk about Your greatness; great is the only word for the Yankees these days.

They recite the record—they're now 53-35—of Your great goodness, and sing—oh no, that new gabbai is asking Chaim to daven Shacharit—of Your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and merciful; God have mercy on us! Slow to anger; he's as slow as molasses, and great in loving-kindness.

The Lord is good to all, and by the way, you're a good guy. His mercy extends over all His works, because that stock tip you gave me last Shabbat really paid off.

All Your works shall acknowledge You, Lord, and I've really got to thank you. Your devoted ones shall bless You, but don't let it go to your head.

They shall talk of the glory of Your kingship, and will you look at those two talkers over there! They speak of Your might—from the moment they arrive, right up to Adon Olam.

To inform men of His mighty deeds—and new leadership, that's what this shul needs—and the glorious majesty of His reign.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom . . . how long has Shimmy Cohen been president? Your dominion is for all generations. Forever!

The Lord supports all who falter; wait, I dropped my siddur, and picks up those who are bent over. Got it.

All lift their eyes to You in hope—do you think I might get an aliyah one of these days?—and You give them their food at the right time. At least there's a kiddush today.

You open Your hand, and satisfy every living thing with favor. I hope they have some decent Scotch.

The Lord is righteous in all His ways, but you gotta take what the One Above gives, right? And He is kind in whatever He does.

You know why I daven here? The Lord is near to all who call on Him, because there's a lot of kavanah in this shul, to all who call on Him in truth. Truth is, God runs the world, you know?

He fulfills the wishes of those who respect Him, and we gotta be serious about our davening.

He hears their cry and saves them, but how many people understand that? The Lord looks after all who love Him—Shush yourself!—but all the wicked He destroys.

Hey, they're at Az Yashir already; how did I get so far behind?

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord and let all creatures bless His holy name forever and ever.

We will bless the Lord now and forever. Praise the Lord.

Let's daven!

David Olivestone, former senior communications officer of the Orthodox Union, now lives in Jerusalem where he davens in a very quiet shul.



from: Aish.com <newsletterserver@aish.com> date: Thu, Jan 29, 2015 at 10:27 AM  
subject: Auschwitz Past & Present

Auschwitz: Past and PresentAuschwitz: Past and Present

Now is the time for every Jew to pledge active involvement in confronting the growing threat of anti-Semitism.

by Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Holocaust Memorial Day this week marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. It was yet another moment meant to affirm that we have not forgotten. We were the generation entrusted with the holy task of keeping alive the memory of 6 million who perished. For 70 years we built memorials in their names, we retold their stories, we included them in our prayers and took a small measure of solace in the ways we paid tribute to those who were victims of history's most brutal expression of genocide. But 70 years later it seems clear that our mission has changed. We can no longer afford to be merely a people of memory. As much as the past deserves recognition, it is the reality of the present that cries out for priority. Seventy years, we are told by King David in the book of Psalms, is a lifetime. [Psalms 90:10] In the Talmud we read the story of the Jewish Rip Van Winkle, Honi ha-Magel, who fell into a long sleep of 70 years duration and could no longer recognize the world when he awakened. So much can change in seven decades. But when it comes to the Jews it seems that the more things change, the more they remain the same. What would an Auschwitz survivor liberated from the death camp and gone into hibernation from that time to the present perceive as he made his way through our contemporary world? Picture him walking through the streets of France on his way to a synagogue he learns was recently surrounded by a mob screaming "death to the Jews." Imagine him taking his child to a Jewish house of study as he realizes he needs to be guarded by a cordon of heavy security. Travel with him to Belgium as she spots the sign that says "we welcome dogs but not Jews." Watch as he reads newspaper headlines which inform him that anti-Semitism is rampant around the world with the surprising twist that the word Israel seems to have become a more common synonym for the clearly intended word Jew. Remembering is supremely important - but if it is to be of value it needs to be a spur to action in the present. Yes, the Auschwitz survivor would be profoundly aware that what he is now witnessing has but small relationship to the unimaginable suffering he endured. It is certainly far less severe. Yet with the wisdom of his experience of the early stages of the Holocaust he would be keenly aware of the similarities. He would remember how it began with the world minimizing the threat. He would be keenly sensitive to the incremental stages of discrimination, of harassment and of persecution. Most of all he would be amazed that those who pride themselves on their civilized values could be so blind to the moral decay of civilization around them and so passive about their response to the evil forces threatening their survival. As a post-Holocaust Jew I grew up with the mantra that "never again" was more than a slogan; it was a prediction. The world would certainly never again countenance unrestrained evil. Never again could Jews become victims. But today we tragically know that anything is possible. And that is why I think our collective priorities need to be transformed. When a building is burning, firemen dare not focus on past conflagrations. Full attention needs to be paid to the present danger. Remembering is supremely important - but if it is to be of value it needs to be a spur to action in the present. Memory must go hand-in-hand with commitment. Without a future, the past cannot leave a legacy. Forgive me then if I urge that days of remembering must take second place to days of dedication. Now is the time for every Jew concerned with Jewish survival to pledge active involvement in confronting the growing threat of anti-Semitism - the blatant and open anti-Semitism against Jews as Jews, and the insidious and camouflaged anti-Semitism directed against Israel. That, after all, has always been the goal of memory as well as the reason for its importance to our people. Published: January 28, 2015

from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com> date: Thu, Jan 29, 2015 at 10:19 AM subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest for 1/29/2015: 4 new posts

**Mann: What?!**

**by R. Ezra Bick**

Let us ask the question the Jews asked in the desert, when they first encountered the manna:

The Israelites saw, and they said to each other, "WHAT ('mann') is it," for they did not know what it was (16,15).

I would like to change the meaning of the question slightly. What precisely is the point of having manna fall from the sky, with its special quality of being unhoardable? What is the reason that the manna is connected to Shabbat observance? What is the meaning of the manna, within the context of the narrative of Parashat Beshalach?

A. Some questions

Parashat Ha-man is contained in chapter 16 of Sefer Shemot. Let us first examine the verses and list the apparent anomalies and difficulties.

16,1: "They traveled from Eilim, and the entire congregation of the children of Israel came to the desert of Sin, which is between Eilim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month of their exodus from Egypt." Why are the location and the time here spelled out so extensively? If we compare this stop on their way with the previous two, we will not find a comparable specificity - "They came to Mara" (15,22), "They came to Eilim" (15,27). In neither case is there a date, or an attempt to exactly locate the station within the larger, and presumably better known, geographic picture. 16,2: "The entire congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moshe and Aharon in the desert." There is something missing here. This verse should have been preceded by a statement that there was no food in Midbar Sin, or that their original stores ran out. When they complained in Mara, the Torah first explained that "they could not drink the water in Mara, for it was bitter" (15,23). Similarly, in Refidim, we first find "there was no water for the people to drink" (17,1), and only then, "And the people argued with Moshe and said, give us water" (17,2). Why is the reason in our case for the complaint not explicated? What is indicated by "... Israel complained... IN THE DESERT?" We already know that the location is "the desert of Sin." Naturally, if the complained, they complained in the desert. Why does the Torah append this geographic location to the complaint?

16,4-13: The complaint of the Jews is followed by a confusing list of speeches of God, Moshe and Aharon. This is the order as described in the verses:

a. God tells Moshe that He will send down "bread from the heaven" to be collected each day, except for Friday, when there will be a double portion (4-5).

b. Moshe AND AHARON tell the Jews that in the evening and the morning they will witness that God will hear their complaint, "but what are we that you should complain about us?" ((6-7).

c. Moshe then - well, he seems to say exactly the same thing again (8).

d. Moshe tells Aharon to gather the Jews before God (9).

e. God tells Moshe that He will give the Jews meat in the evening and bread in the morning (11-12).

f. After the manna falls, Moshe explains to the Jews what the rules for collecting manna are, without mentioning Shabbat (15-16).

God promises meat by evening, and indeed the camp is covered with quail (13). But there is no further reference to the quail, nor are we told of the reaction of the people to this event, even though previously Moshe had predicted that "in the evening, and you shall know that God has taken you out of Egypt." What is the status and the meaning of the quail, especially in relation to the manna, which is described at length and clearly is at the center of the story? There are more questions, but that will do for now. (See the Ramban for some discussion of each of these questions).

B. No food?

Let us start from the second and third question. The Ramban already suggests that the answer to the second is found in the third. The reason the Jews complained was because they were in the desert. They "complained... in the desert" means that their complaint was formed and caused by their being in the desert. Now, you might understand this to be no more than a shorthand way of saying that they had no food, since the desert is associated in our minds with a shortage of food. But that is not what I am suggesting, for had that been the case, I still would expect the Torah to state that "there was nothing to eat" just as when there is no water, that is explicitly stated. Rather, I am suggesting that there was, at least for the moment, plenty of food. It was the fact that they were entering the desert, a place where there is no assured supply of food IN THE FUTURE, that led to the complaints. It was not hunger, but uncertainty, that caused the unrest.

In fact, the desert is not necessarily a place where there is no food. More importantly, the Jews were only a few weeks from Egypt, and they had originally planned a trip that would have to take at least that long. Even the

short route ("the way of the land of the Philistines") would have necessitated a trek of several weeks. If we assume that their immediate goal is Mt. Sinai (as God had promised Moshe in Shemot 3,12), they have yet some distance to go, and presumably they should have prepared food. We know that they had their flocks with them, and there is, as yet, apparently no shortage of water. So why are they complaining about imminent death from starvation?

The answer is not that they are feeling hunger but that they are scared. In the desert, it is difficult to know where your food will come from. They are no longer sure of the path (since they are not on the "way of the land of the Philistines"), and they are now "in the middle of nowhere" (between Eilim and Sinai). They lack not food but faith.

This is indicated by the picturesque language used to describe Egypt – the pot of meat. The contrast between the desert and Egypt is between a land of unknown resources and a full pot. They remember not the fullness of their bellies but the fullness of the pot; in other words, the assurance of food tomorrow. This is what they find so disturbing in the present – not the lack of food per se, but the lack of a pot brimming with an abundance of food. What was so special about Egypt was that there was more food than they could eat, and THAT is what they miss now.

In fact, we can not be sure that they always ate well in Egypt, for, as slaves, they might well have been deprived by their masters. But they undoubtedly had enough to survive and continue working, and, since this was Egypt, they had no fear for the future in that respect.

This situation, the assurance of tomorrow's meal without necessarily being richly fed now, is in fact the essence of being a slave. The slave has no riches of his own, but he relies on his master, who is rich. The complaint of the Jews when they reach the desert is a direct expression of their slave mentality, and their memories of Egypt are a form of nostalgia for the security of enslavement. To a slave, whose meal comes every day at the same time from the hands of his master, the desert is truly a terrifying place, even if at the moment he still has food in his hands.

We now understand the answer to the first question. The geographic location is "the desert of Sin, which is between Eilim and Sinai;" in other words, halfway between a place of abundant food (seventy palms and twelve springs) and their direct goal, Sinai. The time frame is "on the fifteenth day of the second month of their exodus from Egypt;" in other words, halfway between the crossing of the sea and the revelation of Sinai. (Actually, they were 24 days from the sea and 21 days from the giving of the Torah, but I think it is close enough. In fact, the midpoint here may be not in the number of days but in the count of the months. They left in the first month, the Torah is given in the third, and they are now precisely in the middle of the second, intermediate, month). The Torah is stressing to us the feeling of "being in the middle" – away from Egypt, but not yet at their goal. The open-ended future, cut off from their origin but not yet in sight of their destination, between worlds, as it were, is the background to their situation. The actual distance from Egypt is not great, nor is the time that has transpired sufficient to actually exhaust their food-supply, but mentally, psychologically, they are halfway from everywhere.

C. What is it?

The manna is God's answer to this complaint. We all know the special conditions of the manna – it fell every morning, but could not be stored for the next day. Everyone received the same amount. The attempt to hoard resulted in its becoming wormy and ruined. God explicitly tells Moshe that this is not merely a blessing but a "test" (nisayon) – "will they follow My Torah or not" (16,4). Rashi explains this test as referring to the laws associated with the manna. I would suggest, following the Ibn Ezra, that it refers not to any specific law but to the entire relationship of the Jews to God in the desert. "In order to test them" - because they will need Me every day" (Ibn Ezra 16,4). The Manna is, in a sense, a recreation of the assured dependence of the slave on his master, only that God has replaced the Egyptian master. On the other hand, because God is not a natural cause, and His bounty cannot be seen with the same sense of natural assurance that the overflowing Nile gives to the population of Egypt, this is a test of faith. The

manna will fall daily without failure, God promises, and you will be totally dependent on that promise, because it is impossible to accumulate manna and save it for a rainy day. The experience of the manna is a kind of education, training the Jews to have faith in the providence of God, weaning them from a dependence on hoarding, which would have been, perhaps, a natural reaction to their separation from the fleshpots of Egypt.

This helps us to understand the deep connection between the manna and Shabbat. One of the messages of Shabbat is that everything has to be prepared beforehand. On Shabbat one does not accumulate anything at all, but relies only on what has been prepared. This message is explicated in our parasha - "On the sixth day, they shall prepare that which they shall bring" (16,5). Shabbat is, for all generations, a small trial of dependence, where one enjoys what one has without gathering for the morrow. Imagine the feeling of the recently released slave, when finally, on the sixth day, he has managed to put aside a small nest-egg, a small security for the rainy day he knows in his Jewish heart will surely come - and then, on the next day, Shabbat, he has to eat his savings and go back to living on the edge of penury! Naturally, he can barely resist and goes out and tries to gather on the Shabbat, in order to protect his savings. "On it came about on the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather, but they did not find" (27).

This lies at the heart of the mysterious unknown nature of the manna as well. Were the manna to be any form of a familiar food, no matter how unexpected it were initially, the Jews would have come to view it eventually as the natural food found in this particular desert. It would have become a natural resource, a form of security for the inhabitants of the desert. But God wishes the Jews to remain on the edge of insecurity, with the desert remaining a land that does not provide assured food. Hence, manna is not the food of the desert but "bread from the heavens" (4), and the only thing the Jews can say when they encounter it is "what!?" What is it - its name is a question. "Mann hu?" - what is it? Therefore "The house of Israel called it mann" (31).

D. Manna and Quail

In the initial speech of Moshe to the Jews, he tells them that there will be meat in the evening and bread in the morning. Indeed, that is what takes place - quail covering the camp in the evening and the manna in the morning. We do not find the quail mentioned again except in exceptional circumstances (the episode of Kivrot Hataava, Bamidbar 11). This parasha itself concludes with the statement, "The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they arrived at an inhabited land, they ate manna until they arrived at the edge of the land of Canaan" (35). While this does not necessarily mean that they ate nothing else, it definitely seems to imply that their only regular food was manna. (See Ramban v.12, who states that the quail fell for forty years). What happened to the quail, and what was the purpose of its falling in the evening?

To answer this, we have to follow very closely the multiple speeches of God and Moshe in the beginning of the story (question 4). When God first responds to the complaint of the people, He does not mention the quail.

"Now I am going to rain down bread from the heaven, and the people shall go out to gather every day's amount" (4). At this point, God already mentions that on the sixth day there will be a double portion. Immediately afterwards Moshe and Aharon speak to the people, and, for the first time and without apparent command from God, tell them that

in the evening, you will know that God has taken you out of Egypt; and in the morning, you will see the glory of God, when He hears your complaint against God, but who are we, that you should complain against us (7,8).

Moshe then makes explicit the meaning of "evening and morning," telling them,

when God gives you meat in the evening and bread in the morning in satiation, when God shall hear your complaints which you complain against Him, but who are we; your complaints are not against us but against God (8).

Only after Aharon gathers the people do we find God saying to Moshe:

Say to them, you shall eat meat towards evening and in the morning be satiated with bread, and you shall know that I am HaShem your God" (12).

What is happening here? Apparently, there are two different issues. One is the faith issue I described above. God's answer to that is the manna, with Shabbat emphasized. But Moshe and Aharon have seized on another issue. The Jews, in their complaint, have complained to Moshe and Aharon and placed the responsibility for their plight squarely on their shoulders. "Would that we had died by the HAND OF GOD in the land of Egypt... for YOU have taken us out to this desert, to kill all this congregation by hunger" (3). Moshe perceives a basic error of religious knowledge here. The Jews fail to see the guiding hand of God in the exodus and in the path in the desert. Moshe therefore speaks to the people and admonishes them, telling them that their complaint is not against him and Aharon, but against God. Moshe emphasizes that when they see the miracles of the quail and the manna, they will "know that God has taken you out of Egypt" (6). It appears to me that the manna is the basic answer to the slave mentality of the Jews, which is not so much a sin as a condition. God does not give the manna as a punishment or a rebuke, but as a gift. The quail, on the other hand, although food, carries within it a rebuke, similar to what happens in Parashat Behaalotekha, when the Jews rebel against the regimen of the manna and God bombards them with quail (Bamidbar 11). The purpose of the quail is directly to correct the theological transgression and to show them that God is in charge of their destiny. Precisely because the quail is a natural solution (though miraculous in its appearance in this place and time), it demonstrates God's mastery over NATURE, and therefore His responsibility for their fate. The manna, on the other hand, shows that those who are God's servants are completely out of the bounds of nature and are fed directly from "His table."

How could Moshe and Aharon have promised the quail if God did not first tell them? The answer presumably is that God DID tell them, since it is inconceivable that they made it up on their own. Nonetheless, the Torah gives the impression that God is initially only concerned with the manna and its message of dependence on God, whereas Moshe and Aharon are interested in the problem which concerns them directly, the misplaced "blame" and responsibility which the Jews place on their shoulders.

This difference between the message of the quail and the message of the manna is hinted at even in the language with which Moshe introduces the double miracle.

Moshe and Aharon said to all the Israelites: Evening, and you shall know that God has taken you out of Egypt.

And morning, and you shall see the glory of God, when He hears your complaints against God.... (6-7)

As Rashi points out (quoting the Sages), the first verse contains a note of displeasure, especially when compared to the second. The evening is directed only to correcting their theological error. The morning, by contrast, contains an element of religious excitement and uplifting - you shall witness the glory of God! The Sages state that the evening is "not with a shining face" and the morning is with "a shining face." Their complaint in terms of food is met graciously by God in the morning. The evening is not an answer to their complaint, but only a lesson in who is in charge.

Since there is a difference between God's main concern and Moshe's, the conversations between them and between them and the people become rather convoluted. First God speaks to Moshe about the manna (and Shabbat), then Moshe and Aharon speak to the people, stressing the proper address for their complaints, then, after they bring the people to the proper address, gathering them to hear the word of God, God appears and adopts their double plan. Once, however, the morning dawns and the Jews experience the manna, the primacy of God's plan is manifest, as the rest of the parasha deals exclusively with the manna and its ramifications.

I think there are two reasons for the primacy of the manna issue over the quail issue. The first is that it is genuinely more central, pointing, as it does, to the main purpose of the exodus - to turn the nation of slaves into the servants of God. At least in the immediate future, this is crucial, as it is a precondition for receiving the Torah. The recognition of God's leadership of Jewish destiny can wait - perhaps until they are about to enter the Land of Israel and begin political life.

The second reason, which admittedly at least partially contradicts the first, is that the message of the quail was not absorbed in the short run. The Jews continued to turn to Moshe as the source of their problems and to accuse him of responsibility for what happens on the way through the desert. In the case of the golden calf, this is especially evident -

The people saw that Moshe was tardy in descending from the mountain, and they gathered on Aharon and said to him: Arise and make us a god, for this man Moshe, WHO TOOK US OUT OF EGYPT, we do not know what has happened to him. (32,1)

... he made it into a molten calf, and they said: THIS IS YOUR GOD ISRAEL, WHO TOOK YOU OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT. (32,4)

This perception of Moshe as the actual leader and decision-maker in the desert continues to be expressed throughout the events in the desert, throughout the complaints of Sefer Bamidbar, until the original generation has disappeared. God's plan turns out to be correct. First one must take Egypt out of the soul of the Jews; only then can they reach full recognition of God's mastery of nature and their destiny.

This essay originally appeared on Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash and is republished here with permission.

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From: **Rabbi Kaganoff** <ymkaganoff@gmail.com> reply-to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com date: Tue, Jan 27, 2015 at 2:08 AM subject: for parshas Beshalach- **about carrying on Shabbos**

Do People Live in the Zoo? By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Checking inside the eruv "Can the eruv fences, walls, and wires be checked religiously every week, yet the eruv is invalid?"

Question #2: Shabbos in a warehouse "May one carry in a warehouse on Shabbos?"

Question #3: Do people live in the zoo? What do the previous two questions have to do with the title of this article?

Answer: Invalidating an eruv from inside With the direction of his rav, Yankel has joined the committee of makers and shakers working on building an eruv in his hometown. He now knows that the area in which he currently lives has the halachic status of a karmelis, an Aramaic word meaning an area in which one may not carry, but which can be enclosed to permit carrying. Creating the enclosure in a halachically approved way is what one does when building an eruv. One of the benefits of his new project is that Yankel learns much about the laws of eruv. Among the laws he discovers is an entire area of halachah with which he was not familiar - that enclosing an area does not always permit carrying. Often, there is an area within the eruv that precludes carrying there. These areas are often called karpif, although Yankel discovers that this term is also not really accurate. As a result of his curiosity, he studies the relevant source material in the second chapter of Mesechta Eruvin, a topic that he, like most people, had never studied during his years in yeshivah.

What is a karpif? Although min hatorah one may carry within any enclosed area, Chazal permitted carrying in a large area only when the enclosing of the area serves a residential purpose, which is called mukaf ledirah. If the enclosure was not mukaf ledirah, the area inside is also considered a karmelis in which one may not carry.

Technically, the word karpif means an enclosure outside the city in which one stores felled wood (Rashi, Eruvin 18a). However, the term is generally used to mean an enclosed area that is not mukaf ledirah.

Yankel learned that if an enclosure does not serve a residential purpose, one may carry within it only when it encloses an area that is no larger than the size of the courtyard of the mishkan, which was 50 amos (cubits) wide and 100 amos long, the size of 5000 square amos (Mishnah Eruvin 23a). An area this size is called a beis sasayim, an old farmers' term based on how much seed they would plant there, and equals approximately 1000\* square meters or 10,000-11,000 square feet. For the balance of this article, I will refer to an area larger than a beis sasayim, that is, one that contains more than 5000 square amos, as a large area, and any area smaller than this as a small area.

There is another factor that must be met to permit carrying in a small area that is not enclosed for residential use – its length may not exceed twice its width by more than one amoh (Mishnah, Eruvin 23a).

Why is a small karpif permitted? Why may one carry in an area that is not mukaf ledirah when it is 5000 square amos or smaller? Was this size chosen arbitrarily?

Chazal permitted carrying in a small area, even when it is not mukaf ledirah, for the following reason: Since no one is permitted to live in the courtyard of the mishkan, the curtains that surround it do not make it mukaf ledirah. This would mean that carrying within the mishkan would be under the heading of a rabbinic prohibition. Yet this carrying was necessary on Shabbos for the regular functioning of the mishkan. Rather than treat the mishkan as an exception to the halachah, Chazal permitted carrying in any area that is this small, even when it is not mukaf ledirah (see Graz, Orach Chayim 358:3).

What is mukaf ledirah? The definition of what qualifies as mukaf ledirah and what does not is, at times, not obvious. The Gemara (Eruvin 22a) itself states that there are instances when an enclosed area is roofed and resembles a building, yet it is considered not mukaf ledirah, and there are places that are open-air and yet have the status of mukaf ledirah. The Mishnah (Eruvin 18a) mentions four cases that qualify as mukaf ledirah, even though (according to Rashi) there is no roof over them. They are:

(1) Dir -- a corralled area that one intends to plant eventually. At the moment, it is fallow, and one is grazing one's livestock there, so that they naturally fertilize the field.

(2) Sohar, which is, according to Rashi, an area where the townspeople graze their animals, and, according to the Rambam, a prison.

(3) Muktzah -- a backyard area.

(4) Chatzeir, a front yard. The Ritva (Eruvin 22a) explains that the list is progressively more obvious; meaning that the first case, that of dir, is the least obvious "residential" area. Indeed, much halachic literature is devoted to explaining why an area enclosed for animals is considered residential, when, as we will soon see, areas enclosed for trees or vegetation are not. Non-residential enclosures Our next objective is to define what is considered a non-residential enclosure, eino mukaf ledirah, in which one may not carry unless it is small, as defined above. The Mishnah and the Gemara teach that several different types of enclosed areas are not mukafim ledirah. As I mentioned above, one of these is a karpif, an enclosure outside the city in which one stores felled wood (Rashi, Eruvin 18a). Similarly, a fenced-in orchard (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 16:1, based on Eruvin 25b), a vegetable patch or a grain field (Mishnah Eruvin 18a; Eruvin 23b) are not mukaf ledirah, even when they contain huts, called burgenin, for the watchmen (Eruvin 22a). In all of these instances, the fence built around the perimeter does not serve a residential need. Even the watchman's hut is there not to serve as a residence, but to allow the watchman to remain nearby (Rashi, Eruvin 15a). (We should note that some authorities [Tosafos Shabbos, 358:1; Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham 358:1] contend that if the watchman sleeps overnight in the hut, it is considered a residence. In their opinion, a burgenin is considered not mukaf ledirah because one uses it only in the daytime.)

We need to understand exactly why certain uses are considered residential, and others are not. However, prior to explaining these ideas, we need to clarify another aspect of this discussion.

Mixed neighborhoods What is the halachah if an enclosure comprises both an area considered residential and an area that is not? For example, Yankel's neighbor, Shmerel, has a large fenced-in backyard, which his family uses predominantly for barbecues and other recreation. It sounds as if this area should be treated as mukaf ledirah, even if it is larger than 5000 square amos. Indeed, its proximity to the house and its use would make this backyard mukaf ledirah.

However, this yard also includes a section planted with various spices and vegetables. As we learned above, a planted area is not mukaf ledirah. Do we consider the entire yard mukaf ledirah or not? May Shmerel's family carry in the backyard? In the course of Yankel's studying the laws of Eruvin, he

discovered that carrying in his neighbor's fenced-in yard might be prohibited!

A breached eruv -- Nifratz bemilu'oh To answer these questions, we need to explain a principle, called nifratz bemilu'oh, literally, breached in its entirety. Whenever an area in which one would otherwise be permitted to carry is open to an area where carrying is forbidden, the halachic result is that one may not carry in the otherwise permitted area (see Eruvin 25b). Thus, if it is prohibited to carry in the planted area, and the recreational part of Shmerel's yard is nifratz bemilu'oh to the planted area, one cannot carry in any part of Shmerel's yard (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 358:10). As we will soon see, this law has major ramifications for city eruvin also.

What is called "breached?" Our next question, germane both to Shmerel's yard and to our city eruv, is: How big a breach prohibits carrying?

There are two ways that a breach forbids carrying. One is when it is greater than ten amos, approximately seventeen feet or five meters. The other way is when the breach is smaller than ten amos but it comprises an entire side of the otherwise-permitted mukaf ledirah area. For example, if an otherwise-permitted rectangularly-shaped area is mukaf ledirah on three of its sides, but the remaining unwall side opens to an area in which carrying is forbidden, even if the unwall side is less than 10 amos wide one may not carry in the mukaf ledirah area.

In terms of Shmerel's yard, this means that if the recreational part is not isolated from the garden, and the garden is large enough to prohibit carrying, the entire yard is prohibited. The same concept is true in a city eruv, as we will soon see.

How large a garden? Before we can issue a ruling regarding Shmerel's garden, we need one more piece of information. How large a garden will prohibit carrying?

The Gemara (Eruvin 23b-24a) states that if a planted area is larger than 5000 square amos, one may not carry in any part of the backyard. Even when the planted area is smaller than 5000 square amos, if the planted part is larger than the rest of the yard and the entire yard is larger than 5000 square amos, one may not carry in any part of it.

Healing a breach Yankel and Shmerel measure the vegetable garden and the yard and discover that, lo and behold, one may not carry in Shmerel's yard. Is there any way to fix the above problem to permit carrying within the recreational part of the yard?

Yes, there are at least two ways that one can do this. The first is to separate the recreational area from the planted area, and the second is to subdivide the planted area until it is small enough not to create a halachic issue. There are several ways of implementing either of these methods, but discussing them is beyond the scope of this article.

A flower garden What is the halachah if Shmerel's garden consists of a flower garden, rather than a vegetable patch? Does his flower garden invalidate the area for carrying, just as the vegetable garden did?

The halachic issue here is the following: People do not live in vegetable patches, but they do enjoy looking and smelling pretty and fragrant flowers. Is this a sufficient reason to consider a flower garden mukaf ledirah?

This matter is a subject of dispute, with different authorities on, shall we say, different sides of the fence. Although most authorities rule that a flower garden does not present a problem (see also Meiri, Eruvin 24a), the Divrei Chayim of Sanz (Shu't Divrei Chayim, Orach Chayim 2:28) and the Sha'ul Umeishiv (Shu't 3:131) were among the authorities who ruled that a flower garden will prohibit an eruv. Someone with a similar shaylah should refer it to his own rav or posek.

Fair lawn As I mentioned above, the Gemara rules that a large, planted area for vegetables or grains will invalidate the eruv. Several halachic authorities say that a grass cover does not invalidate an eruv, since people relax by sitting or lying on the grass. However, can this logic apply when someone does not permit anyone to walk across their expensively tended lawn? This phenomenon, not uncommon in a modern suburban setting, implies that the contemporary lawn of this nature may not be considered mukaf ledirah and

can therefore create a problem, if it is larger than a beis sasayim. I leave this question for the eruv movers and shakers to discuss with their posek.

Fenced first Another halachic factor is that mukaf ledirah requires that the enclosure must have been constructed initially for residential use. This is called pasach u'le'besof hukaf, literally, he opened the entrance first and then afterwards enclosed the area (Eruvin 24a). However, if the area was enclosed when it did not yet have a residential use, providing it with a residential purpose later will not render the area one in which carrying is permitted.

For example, if Shmerel had originally decided to fence in his large yard because he wanted to plant vegetables, and only later decided to use it for domestic purposes, one may not carry in the yard, since its enclosure was originally not for domestic use. (There are ways to rectify such a situation, but this is a topic that we need to leave for a different time.)

Bitul mechitzos We have yet to discuss another related question: What is the halachah if an area was originally mukaf ledirah, and then someone planted within the mukaf ledirah area? Does this now render the area a karmelis and prohibit carrying? As an example, let us imagine the following scenario:

When Shmerel built the fence around his yard, his intention was for residential purposes, and it therefore had a status of mukaf ledirah. At this point, one could carry in the yard. Later, Shmerel decided to plant a large vegetable garden in the yard. Do we say that the yard remains permitted?

The halachah is that planting grain or vegetables invalidates the enclosure, and it is prohibited to carry in his yard.

However, there is an interesting halachah here. Not all planting invalidates the external walls. For example, the Gemara (Eruvin 23b) states explicitly that if one plants a large area of trees, one may continue carrying in the area. This ruling is very interesting, especially in light of the fact that a fence surrounding an orchard is not considered mukaf ledirah.

Trees versus veggies What is the different between trees, which do not invalidate the eruv, and grain and vegetables, which do?

Rashi (Eruvin 23b) explains that people do not live in a vegetable patch; however, people will walk through an orchard to enjoy the shade. Thus, the planting of trees does not remove the designation of mukaf ledirah from the area.

As I noted above, the latter halachah applies only when one planted trees in an area that was already mukaf ledirah. In other words, there is a difference between enclosing the area, which requires that it initially is mukaf ledirah, and changing its status once it was mukaf ledirah. Enclosing an orchard is not considered mukaf ledirah.

We will continue this article next week...

\* The measurements used in this article are meant only for rough calculation.

## PARASHAT HASHAVUA

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## PARASHAT BESHALACH

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This shiur is dedicated in memory of  
**Miriam Heller z"l**  
whose **yahrzeit** falls on the seventh of Shvat,  
by her niece, Vivian Singer.

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### **"By the way of the land of Pelishtim" vs. "By the way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf" The Source and Meaning of the Prohibition to Return to Egypt**

**By Rav Yoel Bin Nun\***

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go,  
that God led them not  
by the way of the land of the Pelishtim,  
because that was near;  
for God said:  
Lest the people repent  
when they see war,  
**and they return to Egypt.**  
But God led the people about, by the way of the  
wilderness by the Yam Suf;  
and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land  
of Egypt.  
(*Shemot* 13:17-18)

These verses are very difficult to explain. Indeed, much has been written about them, but the various interpretations still seem lacking.<sup>1</sup> The following are three less-serious difficulties, which have been resolved in a variety of ways:

1. What is the meaning of the words, "because (*ki*) that was near," and what is the nature of this clause?
2. To which war do the words, "when they see war," refer?
3. Why is the fact that "the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt" mentioned here?

The three more serious difficulties are:

1. Why in these verses is only the name *Elokim* mentioned? These are the only such verses in the entire story of the exodus from Egypt, beginning with the story of the burning bush!<sup>2</sup>

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\* Taken from "*Nes Kibbutz Galuyot*," by R. Yoel Bin-Nun.

<sup>1</sup> See a summary of the main positions in Nechama Leibowitz, *Iyumin Chadashim Be-Sefer Shemot*, pp. 170-182.

<sup>2</sup> In the first two chapters of the book of *Shemot*, the Tetragrammaton does not appear, but only the name *Elokim*. This is striking at the end of chapter 2: "And *Elokim* heard their groaning, and *Elokim* remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov. And *Elokim* saw the children of Israel, and *Elokim* took cognizance of them" (vv. 23-25). This is followed by the story of the burning bush, where God appears to Moshe using the Tetragrammaton. At the beginning of *Parashat Va'era* (6:2), this becomes the norm: From now on, revelations and commandments are by virtue of "I am the Lord," and similarly all the passages dealing with the exodus from Egypt, with the exception of the first three verses in *Beshalach*.

2. It is explicitly stated to Moshe at the revelation at the burning bush:

When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt,  
you shall serve God upon this mountain. (3:12)

And then later:

And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. And now let us go, we pray you, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." (3:18)

That is, in fact, what Moshe and Aharon said to Pharaoh (5:3). It was about permission to go to offer sacrifices in the wilderness that they conducted tough negotiations with Pharaoh in the name of God, and in the end they received permission to do so:

"Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said." (12:31)

How, then, could God have possibly ignored all this apparent intent by leading the people by way of the land of the Pelishtim, which, it seems, does not pass through Chorev – as if the revelation at Mount Sinai had not at all been on the agenda? Why, then, does the Torah indicate that He would have done so were it not for the concern of "lest the people repent"?<sup>3</sup>

These two points are among the key questions that led biblical scholars to the Documentary Hypothesis – that is, the idea that the Torah reflects a combination of traditions that are not familiar with each other, nor do they take each other into account. These scholars speak of two traditions concerning the exodus from Egypt, or primarily of two waves of leaving Egypt (the house of Yosef and the house of Yehuda), one of which did not pass by way of Mount Sinai. The reader will perhaps be surprised to learn that *Chazal* also speak of two waves of leaving Egypt – the children of Efrayim and the children of Israel, specifically in this context of the way of the land of the Pelishtim. They interpret the verse as teaching that God did not lead the children of Israel by the way that the children of Efrayim had gone.<sup>4</sup> However, according to *Chazal*, this early exodus failed;<sup>5</sup> everyone who left at that time was killed.<sup>6</sup>

The gap between these interpretations and the plain sense of the text only strengthens the question.

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The three verses at the end of chapter 2 can be explained as emphasizing the situation of the people of Israel in Egypt before God reveals Himself to Moshe at the burning bush. At this point, God hides His face from His people, so that there is no place for the Tetragrammaton. Indeed, the Tetragrammaton is not found at the end of the book of *Bereishit* or at the beginning of the book of *Shemot* until God's revelation to Moshe. But this explanation, of course, cannot be applied to our verses, which deal with the period of the exodus itself.

<sup>3</sup> Unless we assume that the true reason for the roundabout route is not written; see *Mekhilta*, ad loc., which states that had they gone by the way of the land of the Pelishtim, they would not have received the Torah.

<sup>4</sup> See *Mekhilta* on the words, "because that was near."

<sup>5</sup> This took place over the course of thirty years, based on a comparison between *Bereishit* 15:13 and *Shemot* 12:40.

<sup>6</sup> Based on I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 7:21.

3. The various interpretations of the verse share one common idea – namely, that God wanted to prevent the people from going to war, at least in the immediate aftermath of the exodus from Egypt, out of concern that they would regret everything and return to Egypt. If so, this may be likened to one who flees from a lion and then encounters a bear. For what did the people of Israel encounter at the Yam Suf if not war?! And what did they want to do if not to return to Egypt, were that only possible?

And when Pharaoh drew near,  
the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore afraid;  
and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.  
And they said to Moshe,  
"Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?  
Why have you dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt?  
Is not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying,  
Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?  
For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness!"  
And Moshe said to the people, "Fear you not.  
Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will work for you today;  
for as you have seen the Egyptians today,  
you shall see them again no more forever.  
The Lord will fight for you,  
and you shall hold your peace." (*Shemot* 14:10-14)

Furthermore, given that the Israelites were rescued by God with the splitting of the sea, what would have prevented God from doing the same thing for them had they gone by way of the land of the Pelishtim? And in the continuation of the long journey, did the children of Israel not encounter war, and did they not wish to return to Egypt?

It is clear, then, that if the objective was to avoid war, this objective was not achieved. How can one attribute to the Torah such an understanding, according to which God wanted to avoid Israel's encounter with war, while at the same He brought war upon them while taking them along a longer route? The greatest of our commentators (Rashi, following the *Mekhilta*, Rashbam, Rambam, and Ramban) all sensed this difficulty, and each tried to resolve it with a variety of forced explanations.

Certain modern scholars understand this passage in a slightly different way (although close to the understanding of the Ramban).<sup>7</sup> Pharaoh Seti I, who ruled at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty, is dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., close to the time of the exodus from Egypt or the conquest of the land of Canaan. Reliefs of Seti I found in an Egyptian temple at Karnak, as well as traditions concerning Egyptian conquests and military campaigns in Canaan primarily from the days of the New Kingdom (from the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. onwards, according to conventional chronology), indicate that the coastal road of the

northern Sinai – from Tjaru (identified with Kantara) until Rafah – was a military road under Egyptian state control, with fortified Egyptian fortresses alongside it.<sup>8</sup> The Pelishtim were not found there; the Sea Peoples hailing from Crete had not yet arrived in the region during the period in question (according to the conventional dating). Instead, there were Egyptian military fortresses. These scholars conclude from this that this road could have been a military trap for the tribes of Israel, especially with Pharaoh in hot pursuit, and they therefore bypassed this road entirely. According to this view, instead of Israel falling into a military trap, this bypass created a military trap for Egypt at the Yam Suf crossing.

This is a fine explanation that resolves the difficulty (according to the Ramban and according to the findings of modern research). However, its deficiency lies in the fact that none of this is explicitly stated. Scripture speaks of a concern that the people will "return to Egypt," not of a military trap. According to this approach, we must say that the true reason for the detour is not explicitly written – namely, the desire to bring about the miracle of the splitting of the sea or the giving of the Torah.<sup>9</sup>

I wish to propose an explanation of these verses based on the words of the prophets and on the words of *Chazal* (as I understand them).

God did not take the Israelites on the way of the land of Pelishtim, "ki that was near" – although that was near, and it would have been right to take them the shorter way. Why? "Lest the people repent when they see war" – any war, whether with the conquest of the land or in any generation; "and they return to Egypt" – **to seek Pharaoh's help and patronage**. "But God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf" – so that Pharaoh would pursue them and a war would take place at the sea; "and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt."

The verse does not mean that God wished to prevent war, to spare Israel and to prevent their fear; God did not fear war, neither with the Pelishtim, nor the Canaanites, nor the Amalekites. On the contrary, He led Israel to war so that they

<sup>7</sup> See A.H. Gardiner, "The Ancient Military Road Between Egypt and Palestine," *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 6 (1920), pp. 99-116. See also a description of the road between Egypt and Palestine at the end of Papyrus Anastasi I. For details and translation, see J. Wilson, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 475-479. See also Eliezer Ozran, "Metzuda Mitzrit Be-Derekh Ha-Tzeva'it Mi-Mitzrayim Le-Cana'an," *Kadmoniyot* 6, pp. 101-103; idem., "Metzudat Migdol Be-Tzefon Ma'arav Sinai," *Kadmoniyot* 10, pp. 71-76.

<sup>8</sup> "The way of the land of the Pelishtim" is the shortest route along the Egyptian coast to the land of Canaan, and it is part of an international road leading from Egypt to Aram Naharayim. In Egyptian documents from the time of the exodus, this road is called "the way of Hor" – that is, the way of the god Hor (Horus) – because the Pharaohs of Egypt passed through it with their armies on their military campaigns in Palestine and Syria. The Egyptians erected fortresses and stations not far from each other along the entire desert section of the road to ensure travel on the road and the provision of supplies for the army and convoys.

A series of reliefs, sort of a military map, has been preserved in the Temple of Pharaoh Seti I in Karnak, from about 1300 B.C.E., approximately the period of the exodus from Egypt, which portrays the road from Sila (near Kantara in the area of today's Suez Canal) to Rafah. At the right side of the picture is Sila, which is described as a border fortress near the Nile Delta. The fortress in the upper left corner might symbolize Rafah. A chain of fortresses and fortified wells (about twenty in number) surround the chariots of Pharaoh, who is returning to Egypt. A literary document from the days of Ramses II (the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century) describes a section of these very stations (Papyrus Anastasi I). This fortified road could have become a military trap for the tribes of Israel who left Egypt, and for this reason they bypassed the road of the land of the Pelishtim. [See picture's at the end of this shiur].

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Abravanel in his second question, as well as *Mekhilta* on the verse, "By the way of the land of the Pelishtim," who offer three reasons not stated explicitly in the text: in order to give the Torah, in order that the time of the oath to Avimelech should pass, and in order that the Canaanites should be misled and rebuild.

would go out to full independence at the sea, and leave not only their physical and legal bondage behind, but also their deep and explicit sense of slavery:

"...Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians. For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." (14:12)

This liberation will be achieved precisely through war - "The Lord will fight for you" – and through victory and song.

"And they return to Egypt" – to seek help. This is the simple meaning of the return to Egypt, as formulated by the prophet Yeshaya:

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help,  
and rely on horses,  
and trust in chariots, because they are many,  
and in horsemen, because they are exceeding mighty;  
but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,  
neither seek the Lord. (*Yeshaya* 31:1)

And as Yeshaya says elsewhere:

That walk to go down into Egypt,  
and have not asked at My mouth;  
to take refuge in the stronghold of Pharaoh  
and to take shelter in the shadow of Egypt. (30:2)

And as he further states with a clear allusion to the battle at the splitting of the sea:

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God,  
and their horses flesh, and not spirit;  
so when the Lord shall stretch out His hand,  
both he that helps shall stumble, and he that is helped  
shall fall,  
and they all shall perish together. (31:3)

Regarding this same issue of requesting the patronage and assistance of foreigners, the prophet Hoshea says, apparently referring to the delegation sent by the king Hoshea to So, the king of Egypt:<sup>10</sup>

And Efrayim is become like a silly dove, without understanding; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. (*Hoshea* 7:11; and see there v. 16)

And similarly:

Now will He remember their iniquity  
and punish their sins;  
they shall return to Egypt. (8:13)

And again there:

They shall not dwell in the Lord's land;  
but Efrayim shall return to Egypt,  
and they shall eat unclean food in Ashur. (9:3)

In his description of the exodus from Egypt, the prophet Hoshea says:

I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love...

He shall not return into the land of Egypt.

And in contrast:

But Ashur shall be his king,  
because they refused to return [to God]. (11:4-5)

We find a similar message from Yirmeyahu:

...You shall be ashamed of Egypt also,  
as you were ashamed of Ashur.  
From him also shall you go forth  
with your hands upon your head;  
for the Lord has rejected them in whom you did trust,  
and you shall not prosper in them. (*Yirmiyahu* 2:36-37)

It is clear from the words of the prophets that the "descent" or "return" to Egypt does not necessarily refer to the actual descent or return of all or part of the people. It suffices that the king of Israel or Yehuda sends to ask for Egyptian patronage and help, and his emissaries present themselves to Pharaoh and say in the name of the king of Israel, "I am your servant and your son"<sup>11</sup> or the like, for it to be a severe act of "returning to Egypt" in royal and official manner.

Indeed, this is explicitly stated not only in the Prophets, but even in the Torah itself in the passage dealing with the king, which includes the principle commandments regarding the character and ways of the monarchal regime in Israel:

Nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses... (*Devarim* 17:16)

This is a prohibition falling upon the king and the monarchy to seek patronage and assistance from Egypt through horses and chariots. It is clear that the intention there is not to return all of the king's men to Egypt; it is enough that a number of merchants go, as indeed happened with Shelomo.<sup>12</sup> The verse is not talking about the return of people to live in Egypt, but with a request for help and patronage on the part of the king living in Israel. This is "returning to Egypt," the opposite of the independence gained by leaving it, and this is the explicit reason for forbidding the king to multiply horses and horsemen.

This understanding emerges also from the verse with which the rebuke of calamity in *Devarim* concludes:

And the Lord shall bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way whereof I said to you, You shall see it no more again; and there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies for bondmen and for bondwoman, and no man shall buy you. (*Devarim* 28:68)

The objection has already been raised: Did the people of Israel leave Egypt by ship?<sup>13</sup> Clearly Scripture is not speaking of a specific way of returning to Egypt. Rather, returning to Egypt is the opposite of freedom from bondage – in other words, it is renewed bondage. The common denominator between asking the king for patronage and assistance, on the one hand, and voluntarily returning to Egypt and being sold there as a slave after having been taken captive, on the other, is that in each case there

<sup>11</sup> II *Melakhim* 16:7.

<sup>12</sup> I *Melakhim* 10:28-29.

<sup>13</sup> See R. Y. Gershuni, *Kol Tzofayikh*, p. 422.

<sup>10</sup> See II *Melakhim* 17:4.



is a loss of independence and re-enslavement. This is the essence of the prohibition as it was formulated by *Chazal*:

The ear that heard on Mount Sinai, "I am the Lord your God who took you out from the land of Egypt from the house of bondage," and yet this man procured another master for himself – let it be pierced. (Rashi, *Shemot* 21:6)<sup>14</sup>

The meaning of the verse is, therefore, that God will once again enslave you in the way that He had forbidden you to return there – by way of subjugation.

Now we can return to the beginning of the prohibition to once again become subjugated to Egypt:

For the Lord has said to you, You shall henceforth return no more that way. (*Devarim* 17:16)

By the way whereof I said to you, You shall see it no more again. (*Devarim* 28:68)

Where did God say this to Moshe, and what exactly did He say? Is there a congruence between "You shall return no more" and "You shall see it no more"?

The repeated phrase "You shall no more" (*lo tosiif*) leads us to *Parashat Beshalach* to Moshe's answer to the people before the splitting of the Yam Suf, after they cried out in their great fear that they would have preferred slavery. Moshe answers that God will fight for them. Then he adds:

"For as you have seen the Egyptians today, you shall see them again no more forever." (*Shemot* 14:13)

The meaning of this verse (in my opinion) is: "For as you have seen the Egyptians today" – **the way slaves eye the hands of their masters**; "you shall see them again no more forever" – **with such a look**, "forever." These three verses say essentially the same thing.

This is also the explicit understanding of *Chazal* in many places, and it is summarized by the Ramban in his commentary to these verses in *Parashat Beshalach*:

According to our Rabbis, this is a negative commandment for all generations. If so, the verse is saying: Fear you not. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will save you today from their hands, **and return not to serve them**; for as you have seen the Egyptians today, **the Holy One, blessed be He, commands you further that you shall see them no more of your own free will from now and forever**. This is a commandment from the mouth of Moshe to Israel, which was not mentioned earlier. And similarly: **"He shall not cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; for the Lord has said to you, You shall henceforth return no more that way"** (*Devarim* 17:16), which is **truly a commandment**, not a promise. (Ramban, *Shemot* 14:13)

This understanding of *Chazal*, according to which the prohibition to return to Egypt is a prohibition of voluntary

subjugation, stems simply from the interpretation of the three verses as we have proposed. The prohibition relates not necessarily to a physical return to Egypt, but to a return to their subjugation. This includes a return of individuals to live in Egypt and fall under its authority, and no less to the king of Israel as the representative of the Jewish People asking Pharaoh for patronage and assistance.

Clear proof that this is the approach of *Chazal* both with regard to the interpretation of the verses and with regard to the *halakha* is found in this summarizing statement:

In three places, God forbids Israel to return to Egypt, as it is stated: "For as you have seen the Egyptians today, you shall see them again no more forever"; and it is stated: "You shall henceforth return no more that way"; and it is stated: "And the Lord shall bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way whereof I said to you, You shall see it no more again." Three times they returned there and three times they fell. The first time in the days of Sanheriv, as it is stated: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses" (*Yeshaya* 31:1); the second time in the days of Yochanan ben Kare'ach; and the third time in the days of Turgenos.<sup>15</sup> (*Mekhilta Beshalach, masekhta 2, parasha 2*)<sup>16</sup>

It is clear from here that the three times that they returned reflect three different types of return. The first refers to Chizkiyahu's request for patronage, in accordance with Yeshayahu's prophecy, and as we have explained it here. The second refers to the physical return of individuals to settle in Egypt out of fear of the Babylonians after the destruction of the Temple in the days of Yirmeyahu.<sup>17</sup> And the third refers to the time during the period of the exile when the Alexandrian Diaspora numbered tens of thousands of Jews; generations relied on the patronage of Hellenistic and Roman rulers, from the time of Alexander the Great to the days of the Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian. The Roman patronage crumbled under the pressure of hatred and persecution in Alexandria, leading to the general revolt of the Diaspora communities against Trajan and the destruction of the Alexandrian community about sixty years after the destruction of the Second Temple.

These are thus three different situation of Egyptian/foreign patronage that turned into dust and destruction, which *Chazal* saw as a punishment for the sin of voluntary subjugation. This also follows from the words of the *Yerushalmi*:

You may not return to settle there, but you may return for business and merchandise and to conquer the land. (*Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin* 10, end)

In other words, there is no prohibition if there is no receiving patronage or subjugation, but rather return in the form of commercial representation, or when the king of Israel conquers the place.

Now we can return to the beginning of *Parashat Beshalach* and interpret it with precision. The first exodus from Egypt took place with Pharaoh's consent and approval. A

<sup>15</sup> Apparently a reference to Trajan, the Roman emperor at the time of the Jewish Diaspora Revolt, 116 C.E.

<sup>16</sup> See also *Yerushalmi, Sukka* 5:1 (end); and with a difference, Bavli, *Sukka* 51.

<sup>17</sup> See *Yirmeyahu* 40-43.

<sup>14</sup> Based on the *Yerushalmi, Kiddushin* 1:2, and the *Sifra* on *Vayikra*.

reference to such an exodus that is still under the patronage of Pharaoh can only come in the name of *Elokim*. This is God's general, rather than personal name;<sup>18</sup> it is therefore known and understood by the entire world, and the Torah often uses it when members of the people of Israel speak to outsiders.<sup>19</sup>

When the Torah speaks of the first exodus from Egypt, which was with Pharaoh's consent and patronage, this is not a revelation or the giving of Torah, but rather an international historical event in light of natural, historical considerations. Even when the Torah wants to convey that the exodus from Egypt did not occur this way, it speaks to us in the name of *Elokim*, which relates to the world of nature (see *Bereishit* 1). Only when the Torah returns to the journey of the Israelites in a fully independent manner, by way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf, which leads also to Mount Sinai, does it return to a revelation of the Tetragrammaton – "And the Lord went before them."

The way of the land of the Pelishtim was a royal military road controlled by Egypt like many parts of Canaan itself. Had the children of Israel gone by the way of the land of the Pelishtim, they would have demonstrated their good and friendly behavior toward Pharaoh and recognition of the continuation of his patronage over them. At the border-crossing, they would have presented Pharaoh's legal authorization, and similarly at every fortress along the way. The commanders of the Egyptian army would have saluted them and removed the border barrier for them, and then they would have reported back to Pharaoh that his subjects, the children of Israel, passed them with his permission.<sup>20</sup> The children of Israel would also have sent him appropriate letters of appreciation. Whenever they would encounter some obstacle, especially a war, they would have sent Pharaoh letters, just as the kings of Canaan sent him letters during that period. For example:

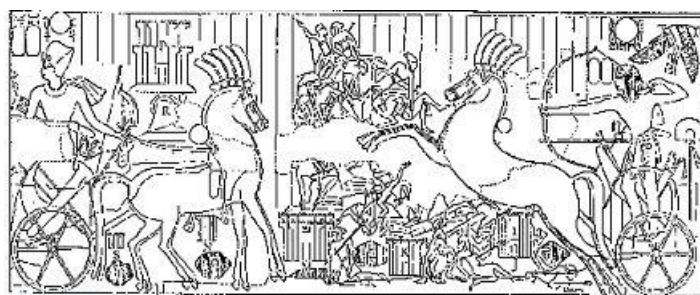
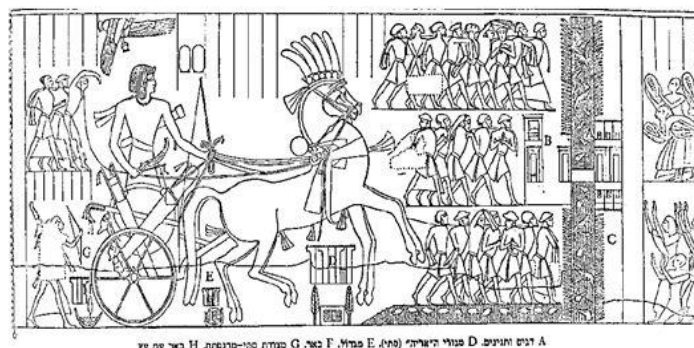
To my king, my lord, and my sun, saying: So says Biridia, the king's faithful servant – at the feet of my king, my lord and my sun, seven times seven times I prostrate myself [literally, "on my belly and on my back"]. (Letter of Complaint to Pharaoh from the king of Megiddo concerning Aviya the king of Shechem)<sup>21</sup>

Had Israel left Egypt in this way, Pharaoh would never have pursued them at all. He could have granted them the mountain region in the land of Canaan and turned them into his agents, bearing his sovereignty. In times of wars, the people would have regretted their independence and returned to Egypt to enjoy his patronage. This exodus would have been completely different than the one envisioned at the revelation to Moshe in the name of the Lord. A nation of slaves that moved from Goshen to Canaan, enjoying Pharaoh's patronage, would indeed have been saved from harsh slavery, but they would not have gone out at all to freedom. Such a nation could not have received the Torah, as it

would not have been sovereign, and the *Shekhina* would not have rested upon them.

God's kingdom is possible only after the removal of the yoke of subjugation to the nations. From that: "I am the Lord your God who took you out from the land of Egypt from the house of bondage; you shall have no other gods before Me." All of Moshe's prophecy and leadership, including the giving of the Torah, came only by virtue of full independence from Pharaoh. It was therefore necessary to lead the children of Israel by way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf to the pursuit, the war, the rescue, and the song – to full independence: "You shall see them again no more forever [through the eyes of slaves]."<sup>22</sup>

Appendix: By the way of the land of Pelishtim in pictures.



Translated by David Strauss

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<sup>18</sup> See Ibn Ezra, *Shemot* 3:15, and *Kuzari* 4:3.

<sup>19</sup> This emerges, for example, from *Bereishit* 20, regarding Avimelekh; from chap. 31, regarding Lavan; from chaps. 40-41, regarding Yosef and Pharaoh; and from a precise reading of the verses in *Shemot* 5:1-4.

<sup>20</sup> There is historical testimony to the passage of individuals and groups and even an Edomite tribe through the official road, with the permission of Pharaoh's officials, who inform him about it. In a document known as Papyrus Anastasi 1, we find: "We have decided to transfer the Shasu tribes from Edom by way of the Merneptah fortress... so that they and their flocks may live." See J. Wilson, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 259.

<sup>21</sup> From the Tel El-Amarna letters discovered in Egypt, dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. For details, see W. F. Albright, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 483-490. Regarding the letter from Biridia, king of Megiddo, El-Amarna, 244. See there similar openings of other letters.

<sup>22</sup> It would be impossible not to add a remark relevant to our own times. In Jewish history, from the exodus from Egypt until modern times, there was no great event of double independence, both with the agreement of the great powers of the world and according to their laws, as well as with pursuit, war, victory, and song – until the birth of the State of Israel. The State of Israel was born out of a United Nations agreement and in accordance with international law, and at the same time, through a war of survival against the Arab armies – primarily, the Egyptian army – and also against the British authorities who ruled the country. The National Home arose from the Balfour Declaration, but the British went back on it owing to Arab pressure; the British Empire removed its forces along the coast, but intended to return with Egyptian forces and the Arab Legion, which enjoyed its patronage. The Israeli War of Independence ended in a symbolic manner, with the downing of five British jets in the Negev, above Nitzana. We have not experienced such independence since the exodus from Egypt.

# Parshas Beshalach: From Egypt to Sinai

By Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

## I. A DETAILED TRAVELOGUE

Our entire Parashah – along with the last sixteen verses of Parashat Bo and the first chapter and a half of Parashat Yitro – essentially map out the road from Egypt to Sinai. Following the climactic verse at the end of Chapter 12 – “And on that very day YHVH brought the B’nei Yisra’el out of Egypt by their divisions.” (Sh’mot [Exodus] 12:51) – We would expect to come directly to Sinai, following the divine promise given at the beginning of the entire process:

Therefore, say to the B’nei Yisra’el: “I am YHVH, and I WILL BRING YOU OUT (v’hotzeiti et’khem) from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I WILL FREE YOU (vhitzalti et’khem) from being slaves to them, and I WILL REDEEM YOU (v’ga’alti et’khem) with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I WILL TAKE YOU AS MY OWN PEOPLE (v’lakachti et’khem li I’am), and I will be your God...” (Sh’mot 6:6-7).

The first three prongs of the divine promise had been fulfilled – God redeemed us at the slaying of the first-born (see last week’s shiur); He freed us from their enslavement that night, when the Egyptians deported us and we left the slave-town of Ra’amses and He took us out when we moved from Sukkot (again, see last week’s shiur). All that remained, following the events presented in Chapter 12, was for God to take us as His people – the covenant at Sinai (see Sh’mot 3:12).

Why doesn’t the next chapter move us directly to Sinai and to the fourth step of the Exodus? Why does the Torah detail certain events of our travels to Sinai – and take 6 chapters to do so?

A verse in D’varim (Deuteronomy) may hold the key to solving this puzzle:

...or has any god ventured to go and take for himself one nation from the midst of another by prodigious acts, by signs and portents, by war, by a mighty and outstretched arm and awesome power, as YHVH your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? (4:34)  
In this reference to the Exodus, we are described as “a nation” in the midst of “another nation” – in other words, we were the same as the nation around us (the Egyptians); yet God took us out and “made us His”.

**I would like to propose that the events spanning chapters 13-19 (v. 6) describe the process by which we became worthy and ready to enter into the eternal covenant with God at Sinai.**

## II. “DOUBLED” EVENTS

Why does Mosheh exhort the people about observance of Mitzvot at Marah (15:26) – before the Torah has been given?

What is the significance of the “twelve springs and seventy date-palms” at Elim (15:27)? We are generally not given such detailed landmarks in our travels. Note that this seemingly minor detail is repeated in the much terser travelogue in Bamidbar (Numbers) 33.

What is the significance of the second water-scene, where the waters flow from a rock on Horev (=Sinai)?

Why is Shabbat introduced before we get to Mount Sinai (in the Mahn [Mannah] story – 16:23,29)?

There seem to be a number of “doubles” in this section – two water scenes (15:22-26; 17:1-7); two wars (Amalek, Egypt); two educationally-oriented commands (teaching children – 13:8; training judges – 18:20). Why the “doubling”?

## A BRIEF OUTLINE

Let’s first take a look at the events – in outline form:

- A: Kiddush B’khorot – the Divine command to sanctify the firstborn (13:1-2)
- B: The commemoration of the Exodus – including instructing our children (13:3-16)
- C: The events at the Reed Sea (including the Song at the Sea) – (14:1-15:21)
- D: The waters at Marah (15:22-26)
- E: The Mahn (Mannah) (16:1-36)
- F: The waters from Horev (17:1-7)
- G: Amalek (17:8-16)
- H: Yitro and the appointment of judges (18:1-27)
- I: The preparation for entering the covenant (19:1-6)

Looking at it again with a few added details, will give us a new perspective on this sequence. First, a word about structure within Biblical narrative.

## III. STRUCTURE AS MESSAGE

The Torah not only informs us in words – it also informs us in style and structure. Not only by juxtaposing certain laws or narratives (e.g. the juxtaposition of the Mitzvah of Tzitzit with the prohibition of mixed-garments – see BT Yevamot 4a); but even the greater structure of the narrative can often be instructive. A wonderful example of this is R. Yoel Bin-Nun’s explanation of the prophecies of Zekhariah (Megadim 12:49-97) – as is the structure of the “28 times” of Shelomo in the third chapter of Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) [I hope to write a shiur on this before Sukkot].

Perhaps the most powerful example of this “message via structure” style in Tanakh is found in the first two chapters of the book of Amos [yet another shiur!].

## CHIASMUS

One common feature of Biblical literary structure – chiefly found in “Shirah” (poetry) – is known as “Chiasmus”. This form, taken from the Greek letter X (Chi), is basically an A-B-B-A (or more intricate – like A-B-C-B-A etc.) structure, with which we are all familiar in Biblical poetry. An obvious example is found in this week’s Haftarah:

Most blessed of women be Ya’el, the wife of Hever the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed. (Shoftim [Judges] 5:24) – we could better see it as follows:

A: Most blessed...  
B: ...of women...  
C: ...be Ya’el, the wife of Hever the Kenite...  
B’: ...of tent-dwelling women...  
A’: ...most blessed.

(The original is, as always, much clearer; but in this case, the translation works well).

**The purpose of a chiasmus is to create a center and put the focus on the middle section** – in this case, Ya’el.

I would like to propose that the six and a half chapters under discussion are also arranged in a chiastic structure – as follows [I will include (in parentheses) those terms or ideas which connect the given section with its chiastic partner]:

A: Kiddush B’khorot – (\*Kadesh LI...LI heim\* – “sanctify UNTO ME...they are MINE”)  
B: The commemoration of the Exodus – (instructing children)  
C: The events at the Reed Sea (God’s war against Egypt – 14:14, 25; 15:3)  
D: The waters at Marah (thirst)  
**E: The Mahn (Mannah)**  
D’: The waters from Horev (thirst)  
C’: Amalek (God’s war against Amalek – 17:16)  
B’: Yitro and the delegation of judges (instructing the people)  
A’: The preparation for entering the covenant (\*v’hiy’tem LI...v’atem tih’yu LI\* – “you will be UNTO ME...and you will be TO ME”)

This scheme allows to understand two basic things about the events as they are presented:

The apparent “doubling” (e.g. the water-scenes) are sequenced in order to highlight the changes that take place from one occurrence to the next (the evolution of the B’nei Yisra’el);

The “fulcrum” of the chiasmus is the point of dramatic turning, which helps us understand the goal and method of this educational process in readying the B’nei Yisra’el to enter into the covenant at Sinai. Since the fulcrum of our chiasmus is the narrative of the Mahn (Mannah), we will have to examine that section with an eye towards finding the “secret” of this evolution. Let’s take a closer look at the components of our structure to understand the developments.

#### IV. A: SANCTIFICATION

13:1-2:  
At the first steps out of Egypt, God commands us to sanctify our first-born. Although this involves some level of sacrifice (offering the firstborn animals, redeeming the firstborn children), its scope is minimal in two ways:

It involves a one-time act (offering/redemption);

It takes place solely within the purview of the family. Each family must sanctify its own firstborn – but this does not impact on the rest of the nation.

In addition, this act is a confirmation of God’s sanctification of the firstborn during the last plague (see last week’s shiur) – but it involves no new sanctification on the part of the B’nei Yisra’el.

19:5-6:  
As we now stand at the foot of Sinai, we are called to become God’s people. Instead of merely confirming that which God already did that night in Egypt, we are asked to move forward and become holy. This holiness is distinct from the earlier one in two ways:

It involves a constant sanctification involving a life of Mitzvot;

It involves every member of the nation – not just the B’khorot.

We might posit that the earlier sanctification was a foreshadowing of the latter one – as if the \*sanctify unto me\* was the first step in fulfilling “I will take you unto Me” – and “you will be unto Me a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation” was the consummation.

#### V. B: INSTRUCTION

13:3-16:  
We are instructed to commemorate the Exodus and to tell our children about it – the T’fillin are even presented as a way to constantly keep this story “in our mouths” (v. 9).

Here again, we find the same two features:

The story is only to be told within the context of family;

The information to be transmitted is a one-time event – the Exodus. There is no mention of teaching children about laws, statutes, ethics etc.

Keep in mind (we will see more about this later) that until this time, the B'nei Yisra'el had a group of Mitzvot to fulfill – some in perpetuity – but they all related to the Exodus and were all commemorative. The one exception to this rule is B'rit Milah.

18:19-27:

Here, Mosheh is advised to teach the Torah to two groups – the entire nation, and a select group of “minor” judges. The two features, noted above, are again expanded:

The teaching takes place on a national level – to the nation or its representatives.

The information is an ongoing, growing process – “teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do” (v. 20).

Several things have changed here. Besides the scope of involvement becoming broadened to include everyone interacting with Mosheh and his designated judges, the nature of the information has changed. Instead of one static story to transmit, Torah has taken on a life – a life of new circumstances and applications. As God instructs Mosheh regarding new Mitzvot and Dinim (laws) – and he faithfully transmits this instruction to the people – new situations arise which demand analysis and discussion of those divine words. The “story-time” of Chapter 13 has evolved into the “Beit-Midrash” of Chapter 18! The dynamic discussion which is the inevitable blessing of Torah analysis carries with it a tremendous sense of creativity (I highly recommend reading Rabbi Soloveitchik's “Halakhic Man” on this point). As R. Yehoshua avers (BT Hagigah 3a): There is no session of the Beit Midrash without a novel explanation.

Beyond the creativity, this type of learning invests the student with a sense of involvement in Torah – a partnership in creating Torah. Many statements found in Rabbinic literature attest to this approach to Torah study – the best illustration is the story of the Akhnai oven (BT Bava Metzia 59b).

## **VI. C: WAR**

14:1-15:21:

One might ask what was the necessity of the entire scene at the Reed Sea. Besides the obvious need to defeat (and destroy the army of) Egypt and to ensure the safe Exodus of the B'nei Yisra'el – there was another component which is a significant piece of this evolution.

For all of the miracles and plagues in Egypt, we never have a clear indication that the B'nei Yisra'el witnessed any of them first hand. Some of the plagues only took place in the Egyptian neighborhoods (e.g. darkness) – which means that the B'nei Yisra'el were only aware (by viewing the destruction afterwards) that a plague had taken place – but that is not the same as seeing it firsthand. That is why the verse at the end of Chapter 14 notes that

“Yisra'el saw the great work which YHVH did against Egypt ; they feared YHVH and believed in YHVH and in Mosheh his servant.” (v. 31)

This is, clearly, a necessary prerequisite to entering into the covenant – having the full experience of seeing God's power. However, note a salient feature of this war:

God does all of the fighting and the B'nei Yisra'el are totally passive. The verse is quite clear:

YHVH will fight for you, and you have only to keep still. (14:14).

When the B'nei Yisra'el sing to God, they describe Him as a “Man of War” (15:3) – it is God who fights for the B'nei Yisra'el, just as He did in Egypt via the plagues.

17:8-16:

See how much has changed! When Amalek attack the B'nei Yisra'el, Mosheh immediately charges Yehoshua (Joshua) (where did he come from?) to choose valorous men to go and fight Amalek. Mosheh, for his part, ascended the mountain and raised his hands. The Torah relates that as long as his hands were raised, the B'nei Yisra'el were successful in war – and when they fell, so did the fortunes of the B'nei Yisra'el. The Mishnah in Rosh haShanah (3:8) astutely explains that it was not Mosheh's hands that were fighting – but that when he raised his hands, the B'nei Yisra'el would look heavenward and succeed. In other words, this war was an almost direct inversion of the one that opened our Parashah (note that our Parashah is also arranged chiasmatically – war, thirst, mahn, thirst, war). In this war, the B'nei Yisra'el are doing the fighting and God is apparently passive. I say apparently because it is a basic tenet of faith and philosophy that God is never passive – but, within the description of the war, God and the B'nei Yisra'el almost reverse roles. The denouement of this war and of our Parashah comes when God declares that the war against Amalek is His war forever (17:16) – the wars of the B'nei Yisra'el are also God's wars.

## **VII. D: THIRST**

15:22-26:

The scene at Marah is enigmatic. The B'nei Yisra'el have wandered for three days without water – yet we hear nothing of their legendary complaining. They only lodge a complaint when they come to the waters of Marah and they prove to be undrinkable. In spite of this obstacle, they don't yet phrase their complaints in the familiar litany of “...why did you take us out of Egypt” (17:3) or, worse yet “...let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.” (Bamidbar [Numbers] 14:4).

Surely the name of the place and the bitterness of the waters must have caused great chagrin among the people. They had just left the bitter work of Egypt (1:14) – and celebrated that by eating bitter herbs (“M'rorim”) with their Korban Pesach (12:8). Suddenly, their first stop after seeing the end of Egypt and the embittering Egyptians is – Marah – a place of bitter waters. The lesson here is powerful: The Exodus was not a one-shot deal, where you are now out of trouble forever. There is always the potential for bitterness and trouble. This is a brand-new lesson for the B'nei Yisra'el – that their relationship with God is not over (which they had every reason to believe until this point); rather, they have an ongoing interaction with Him.

This idea is underscored in two ways. First of all, Mosheh throws a stick into the water, making them sweet and drinkable. This is a clear inversion of the first Egyptian plague – where sweet, drinkable waters were made unusable when he struck his staff on them. Mosheh is

showing that the same God who can embitter waters and destroy Egyptians is the source of life and sweetness. This is followed by Mosheh's statement of the relationship between their allegiance to God and their welfare:

If you will listen carefully to the voice of YHVH your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am YHVH who heals you (15:26). There is new information here – that the duties to God extend beyond the few Mitzvot which He already gave, (almost) all of which focus around a commemoration of the Exodus.

Note that the waters of Marah are stagnant (although the verse does not say so, there is no indication that these waters flowed in any way and every indication points to settled waters) and that Mosheh takes the existent waters and changes their taste. 17:1-7:

Here, we have an entirely different “water-experience”. Besides the stronger complaint of the B'nei Yisra'el (which is beyond the scope of this shiur to discuss), note what type of waters Mosheh brings forth. He hits a rock which is on Horev (Mount Sinai) and waters gush forth. The symbolism of new waters flowing from Sinai is almost too obvious to mention. Unlike Marah, these waters are flowing (indicating dynamism and growth) and come from Sinai (the source of that dynamism and growth).

### **VIII. INTERLUDE: 12 SPRINGS, 70 DATE-PALMS**

15:27:

The Mekhilta (Parashat vaYassa #1) makes the connection

R. Elazar haModa'i says: When the Holy One, Who is blessed created the world, he created twelve springs corresponding to the twelve tribes of Ya'akov and seventy date-palms corresponding to the seventy elders.

Before addressing the connection – why are there always seventy elders among the B'nei Yisra'el (see Sh'mot 24:1, Bamidbar 11:16)? I would like to suggest that this number held great significance for the B'nei Yisra'el – since it is the exact number of their ancestors who had descended to Egypt (1:5). The B'nei Yisra'el understood that their future was strongly rooted in their past – a past of twelve brothers, constituting seventy family members.

This is the connection with our springs and date-palms (which represent nourishment). First, let's summarize the evolution of the B'nei Yisra'el since the Exodus:

They take the first step towards sanctification.

They are given a system of perpetuating the story of their Exodus and transmitting it to their children.

They experience – first-hand – God's power.

They learn that their relationship with God is eternal.

Now – they also learn that their relationship is not beginning now – nor did it begin in Egypt. Their relationship is built on an ancient one that goes back to the Land where they are headed – and to their ancestral family which came down from there to Egypt. With this lesson in hand, they were ready for the big lesson of the Mahn.

### **IX. E: MAHN (Manna)**

16:1-27:

As mentioned above, since the story of the Mahn sits at the center of our chiasmus, it must include some clue as to how the B'nei Yisra'el evolved into the people who could stand at Sinai and become God's nation.

There are two central features of how the B'nei Yisra'el were to respond to the Mahn.

They were to only take the proper amount per person in the household.

They were to take double on Friday and take none on Shabbat.

Each of these commands (which, for the most part, the whole nation followed) carries a critical step in the development of the holy nation.

R. Yaakov Medan, in a wonderful article (Megadim 17:61-90), points out that the command for each person to restrict himself to a daily portion for each member of the household represented not only a good deal of faith in God – but also tremendous self-restraint and concern for one's fellow. This is how he explains the “test” of the Mahn (16:4) – that we were tested to see how much concern each of us could demonstrate for our fellow, knowing that if we took more than our portion, someone else would go hungry. Indeed, the B'nei Yisra'el passed this test with flying colors! (v. 18) For a slave people, wandering in a desert to exercise this much self-restraint was a demonstration of their readiness to stand as a unified nation and to enter into a covenant which includes mutual responsibility.

The second piece is an even stronger statement. We first learn about Shabbat in the beginning of B'resheet (Genesis). God created the world in six days and ceases creating on the seventh day. For the first time, we are given the command to abstain from certain types of creative actions on Shabbat – in imitation of God (more on this next week). The lesson of Shabbat is integral to the education of the B'nei Yisra'el: They are not just to be the recipients of God's bounty; they are to be His partners in this world!

### **X. SUMMARY**

Now we can see the step-by-step education of the B'nei Yisra'el and how they come from being a “nation in the midst of another nation” to “a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation”.

Moving from

a static relationship with God which revolves around one event in their personal past and which would be celebrated and commemorated in the family – (13:1-16)...

...to experiencing of God's power "firsthand"; (14:1-15:21)...

...to learning that the relationship with God will be ongoing (15:22-26)...

...to a reminder that their roots are ancient and that their nourishment comes from those roots (15:27)...

...to an exercise in concerned fellowship and partnership with God (16:1-27)...

...to a demonstration that the relationship with God will be a flowing source of life coming from Sinai (17:1-7)....

...to demonstrating their own readiness to fight and play a role in their own survival (17:8-16)...

...to being introduced to the Beit Midrash of Mosheh Rabbenu (18:1-27)...

...to standing at Mount Sinai and being invited to become God's holy people (19:1-6).

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## **Parshat Beshalach: Trust Me**

by Rabbi Eitan Mayer

This week's parasha introduces several new themes which we will revisit many times as we make our way through the Torah. As a transition between the period of enslavement in Mitzrayyim (Egypt) and the journey through the desert, our parasha sets the stage for the rest of the Torah, which follows Bnei Yisrael through their desert journey toward Canaan.

### **A. THE BLIND WALK:**

Do Bnei Yisrael trust Moshe, their leader? Do they trust Hashem, their God? Several events of this week's parasha typify events we will encounter throughout the rest of the Torah which respond to these questions of trust:

#### **SHEMOT 13:17 --**

It happened, when Paro sent out the nation, that Hashem did not lead them by the way of the Land of Philistines, although it was shorter, because He said, "Lest the nation regret [leaving Egypt] when they see war, and return to Egypt."

The parasha opens with Hashem's leading the people toward Canaan, their destination -- but He doesn't take the shortest route. Hashem knows that if Bnei Yisrael run into adversity (like a war with hostile nations), they might turn right around and run back to Mitzrayyim. They don't yet have the confidence and resolve to fight an enemy in order to preserve their independence; their most likely response to a threat is flight to familiarity and safety. People react to uncertainty, anxiety, or danger by reaching for the familiar. Even though the life the people knew in Egypt brought them slavery, cruelty, pain, death, hatred, and oppression, they might, Hashem knows, still try to return to that life if they feel like they are standing on quicksand. People are willing to pay an enormous price to cling to the feeling of security.

#### **How does this impact their relationship with Hashem?**

Sometimes, as here, Hashem makes allowances for the people's mentality. But at other times, He challenges them to take risks and not allow their experiences to control them. Sometimes this results in His becoming angry when they fail.

#### **SHEMOT 13:21-22 --**

Hashem went before them by day, leading them by a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to illuminate for them, traveling by day and by night. The pillar of cloud did not depart by day, nor the pillar of fire at night, from before the people.

Hashem's presence -- His guidance and protection -- remains with the people at all times. But this does not banish their insecurity: despite constant signs of Hashem's presence, the people continue to wonder whether Hashem is truly with them. Besides the cloud and the fire, the "man" ("manna") which falls from the sky every day, the water which comes from rocks when stricken (on several occasions), and the birds ("selav") which are sent to them every evening for dinner all testify to Hashem's presence. But the people remain unsure: is Hashem truly among them? Can they truly depend on Him?

**Why don't the people "get it"? Can't they see the cloud, the fire, the birds? Did their bread fall from the sky back in Egypt, too? Why don't they understand that Hashem is truly with them?**

#### **"TRUST ME":**

Trust is built on facts, but it is made of emotion and supported by experience, encouragement, and familiarity. The people certainly see the pillars of cloud and fire, they certainly gape at the food falling from the sky and the water from rocks. But these very miracles contribute to their insecurity, offering them the impossible and the bizarre in place of the unremarkable but familiar. The miracles say "Hashem is present" to their intellect, but their hearts tell them that tomorrow there will be no more water from rocks or manna from heaven, that this is all a dream. This is why they violate Hashem's instructions and leave over manna from the day's gleanings: they do not believe it will be there tomorrow. It is all a fairy tale. Their eyes tell them what is here today, but this miraculous ground doesn't look solid enough to step on; if they begin to trust this state of fantastic affairs and depend on it for their needs, it will suddenly evaporate and disappear.

Awhile ago I participated in a training session at a conference. The topic of the session was "Building Leadership by Building Trust." We started off with an exercise called the "Blind Walk." We split into pairs; one member of the pair would close his eyes, and the other would keep his eyes open. The one with his eyes open would lead the other around the conference center -- down the hallways, up and down stairs, escalators, and elevators, outside the building, into the pool (it was in Miami), into the gift shop, down the boardwalk. I started to lead my partner down the hall, and the first thing I noticed was that he did not trust me! Although we know each other well, he refused to walk at the brisk pace at which I wanted to walk. I was surprised -- did he think I would steer him into a wall or trip him down a flight of stairs? If he trusted me, wouldn't he put his fate into my hands, relax, and walk willingly?

He couldn't do it. Being blind was so unfamiliar and so unsettling that he was unable to let me be his eyes. When it came my turn to close my eyes and have him lead me, I was able to relax and participate only by a tremendous act of will. I did not trust him any more than he trusted me -- the situation was just too unfamiliar -- but for seven minutes I made this leap of faith (hoping it would not involve a leap down the stairs) and forced myself to tolerate it.

This is what Bnei Yisrael face in the desert -- the Blind Walk. But instead of seven minutes, they are walking the Blind Walk all day and all night. Nothing they can see means anything to them; everything is completely unfamiliar. They know Hashem is acting as their eyes, but this knowledge alone does not create trust. They do make the leap of faith at certain times, like when they walk right into the middle of the split ocean, but they cannot maintain the "Blind Walk" at all times. Imagine that the Egyptian army is at your heels, chasing hard in chariots, armed and angry. You turn to your leader frantically, and he tells them that the proper thing to do is to do nothing -- that the invisible God will save you! It is to Bnei Yisrael's immense credit that they accept Moshe's words and obey his command to walk into the sea.

### **B. HORSES AND CHARIOTS:**



Last week we developed the idea that one of the primary aims of the plagues is to introduce Hashem into the public sphere as the Power behind everything. This was expressed by the repeated formula, "They [Mitzrayyim] shall know that I am Y-HVH." If, as we suggested, "Y-HVH" means "The One who is Present," then Hashem's saying "They shall know that I am Y-HVH" means, "They will know that I am the God Who is aware of events in the world and intervenes in those events." The specific nature of the plagues expresses the surprising truth (to the pagan mindset) that one God is Master of the water, air, land, animals, and humans, and that these different spheres are not each controlled by a "local" deity.

In this week's parasha, the "education" of the Egyptians comes to an end. Hashem commands Bnei Yisrael, who have just left Egypt, to behave as if they are confused and lost in the desert so that Paro and his people will be tempted to chase them down and recapture them. According to Hashem, the point of this is to show them that "I am Y-HVH" -- "I am present; they cannot do a thing against My will." But since the Egyptian army does not survive the parasha, what is the point of teaching them that "I am Y-HVH"?

Part of the lesson is for the world at large. Although Mitzrayyim is the direct object of Hashem's lesson as the immediate oppressor and evildoer, the lesson is targeted toward all of humanity. "I am Y-HVH" is a message broadcast to all nations; Mitzrayyim is only the current target/example. That this message is heard by the international community (despite the ancient world's appalling lack of CNN) is confirmed by a) the latter part of the Shirat Ha-Yam (Song of the Sea), which focuses on the reaction of some of the nations, b) next week's parasha, where we hear that Yitro has heard of the miracle at the sea, and also c) in Sefer Yehoshua by Rahav, a resident of Yeriho (Jericho), who tells the spies sent to the city by Yehoshua that everyone is terrified of Bnei Yisrael because they have all heard of the miracles done for them.

### **"EILEH BA-REKHEV VE-EILEH BA-SUSIM"**

We now move to the actual confrontation between Mitzrayyim and Bnei Yisrael. In that context, one theme appears with great prominence: the focus on the chariots and horses of the Egyptians. This begins with Paro himself, who leads the move to the chariots:

#### **SHEMOT 14:6 --**

He harnessed his CHARIOT and took his nation with him.

We then hear about the quality and quantity of the chariot forces Paro takes with him:

#### **SHEMOT 14:7 --**

He took six hundred choice CHARIOTS, and all the CHARIOTS of Mitzrayyim, with officers over all of them.

We hear about the chariots again when the Egyptians catch up with Bnei Yisrael:

#### **SHEMOT 14:9 --**

Mitzrayyim chased after them and caught up with them camped at the desert; all the HORSES of Paro's CHARIOTS, his HORSEMEN, and his army, at Pi Ha-Hirot, before Ba'al Tzefon.

We next hear about the chariots from Hashem himself:

#### **SHEMOT 14:17 --**

"I will strengthen the heart of Mitzrayyim, and they will come after them; I will be bear down upon Paro, his whole army, his CHARIOTS and his HORSEMEN."

We hear about the horses and the chariots again as they begin to follow the Bnei Yisrael into the water:

#### **SHEMOT 14:23 --**

Mitzrayyim chased and came after them -- all the HORSES of Paro, his CHARIOTS and HORSEMEN, into the sea.

We next hear the curious detail that Hashem rips the wheels off of the chariots, and that the chariots begin to drag "roughshod" over the temporarily exposed seabed:

#### **SHEMOT 4:25 --**

He [Hashem] removed the wheels of their CHARIOTS, and they dragged heavily . . . .

We next hear about the chariots in Hashem's command to Moshe to rejoin the split waters:

#### **SHEMOT 14:26 --**

Hashem said to Moshe, "Stretch your hand over the waters, and they will return upon Mitzrayyim, on his CHARIOTS and on his HORSEMEN."

And we hear about them again as they are destroyed:

#### **SHEMOT 14:28 --**

The waters returned and covered the CHARIOTS and the HORSEMEN of all of the army of Paro which had come after them in the sea; not even one was left.

We next hear about the horses and chariots in the first line of the Shirat Ha-Yam:

#### **SHEMOT 15:1 --**

Then Moshe and the Bnei Yisrael sang this song to Hashem: "I shall sing to Hashem, who has been exalted; the HORSES and CHARIOTS, He tossed into the sea."

And then once more during the Song, once just after the Song, and once more in Miryam's song:

#### **SHEMOT 15:4 --**

The CHARIOTS of Paro and his army, he threw into the sea; the choicest of his officers sank in the Yam Suf.

#### **SHEMOT 15:19 --**

For the HORSES of Paro came, with his CHARIOTS and HORSEMEN, into the sea, and Hashem returned upon them the waters of the sea . . .

#### **SHEMOT 15:21 --**

Miriam responded to them, "Sing to Hashem, for He has triumphed; HORSE and its CHARIOT He threw into the sea."

**Why do horses and chariots get so much attention here? Why does the Torah mention them so many times in the process of the story and in recounting the songs?**

One other question has been bothering me since we left Sefer Bereishit: remember that when Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and sent them back to Cana'an to bring Ya'akov down to Egypt, Ya'akov did not believe his sons when they told him that Yosef was still alive and was the (de facto) king of Egypt. The Torah says that he believed the story only when he saw the wagons which Yosef had sent from Egypt to pick him up. What is there about wagons that convinces Ya'akov that the story is true? And, for that matter, why does Paro himself make such a big deal out of the wagons when he tells Yosef how to arrange for his father to come down to Egypt?

Here, a bit of Torah U-Mada seems warranted: what role did chariots play in warfare at the time of the Exodus, and what role did wheeled vehicles play in general? Archaeological, textual, and other historical evidence has convinced many scholars that while the wheel was certainly known in Cana'an at the time of the Avot, it was not widely used for either transportation (wagons) or war (chariots and war-wagons). On the other hand, we know very well from the Torah that wagons and chariots are very much in use in Egypt. Several reasons are advanced by scholars:

1) Cana'an tends to be hilly and rocky, which makes life hard on the wheels. Until technology had produced a more sturdy wheel, it was more practical to use pack animals like donkeys for transportation (remember that Ya'akov's sons use donkeys to transport the food they buy from Mitzrayyim back to Cana'an). Egypt's softer, flatter terrain, on the other hand, is gentler to wheeled vehicles.

2) If you think producing and maintaining a modern automobile is a complicated process, it was no easier 4,000 years ago to build a wagon or chariot and keep it in good repair. Producing and maintaining wheeled vehicles was an industry which required:

- a) Considerable technical know-how.
- b) Skilled craftsmen to build and fix the various parts of the vehicles.
- c) Special workshops.
- d) Storehouses for parts.
- e) The gathering of different types of material (including several types of wood, leather, reeds, and later on, large amounts of metal)
- f) Plenty of money in order to pay for the whole industry. (Think "Detroit.")

For these reasons, **only organized nations with powerful economies could afford to support a wheeled-vehicle industry.** Cana'an was highly splintered, tribal, and somewhat nomadic, while Egypt was more unified and had a more stable agricultural economy (supported by the fertile Nile delta).

This may explain why the appearance of the wagons convinced Ya'akov that the story about Yosef was true: the wagons could only have been supplied by a powerful person from Egypt, someone who could allocate valuable resources (wheeled vehicles) to the task of carrying Ya'akov and his family down to Egypt. And who would have done such a thing for him besides his son?

In Tanakh, the first time we hear of a large-scale chariot force being used by Bnei Yisrael is in the time of Shlomo Ha-Melekh (see I Melakhim 4:26, II Divrei Ha-Yamim 9:25, I Melakhim 10:26). Only once David had unified the country and Shlomo had built it into an economic power was it practical to field a military force of chariots. In fact, Shlomo built cities just for the chariots (see I Melakhim 9:19).

#### **CHARIOTS OF WAR:**

In our parasha, we encounter wheeled Egyptian vehicles once again: chariots drawn by horses. According to historians, chariots served a dual purpose on the battlefield:

- 1) They served as a moving platform from which to fire arrows (and occasionally to toss javelins).
- 2) They served to scare the enemy out of its wits (see Devarim 20:1).

Horses, which were used to draw chariots, were used mostly for this purpose alone; it was fairly rare (and considered somewhat low-class) for a person to ride on the horse itself (later on, this changes, as we see from Qohelet 10:7). Just as the automobile industry of today is always tinkering with new designs and ideas, introducing new models every year, ancient civilizations did a lot of experimenting with different chariot designs. In order to design effective models for different terrain and different purposes, and in order to take advantage of better technology and better materials, there was constant experimentation with different ways of building chariots. The Egyptian war-chariot reached the height of its development in the 14th century BCE, shortly before the reign of Ramses II -- the Pharaoh who is supposed to be the Paro we know so well.

One other element is critical to the story: in several places in Tanakh, we see that Mitzrayyim is *the* place to buy horses. Horse-breeding and trading are major industries there. In fact, the Torah specifically forbids Jewish kings to send people to Egypt to buy horses (Devarim 17:16); the warning is necessary only because Egypt is so attractive a market for horses, which are necessary for a strong chariot force and for less violent purposes. Later in Tanakh, we hear that Shlomo Ha-Melekh does indeed buy horses from Mitzrayyim (I Melakhim 10:28-29). In addition, he buys chariots from Mitzrayyim.

#### **BACK TO THE SCENE ON THE SEA:**

Now we return to our original question: why does the Torah place so much emphasis on the Egyptian chariots, horsemen, and horses? Furthermore, of all the details which the Torah could have reported to us about the destruction of the Egyptian army, why do we hear that Hashem "removed the wheels from their chariots" and dragged them over the seabed?

Several possibilities:

- 1) To account for Bnei Yisrael's great fear in facing this army.
- 2) To dramatically depict the power and momentum of the Egyptian pursuit and Hashem's sweeping destruction of the Egyptian army.
- 3) The Torah's emphasis on horses and chariots is meant to hint to \*Mitzrayyim's\* emphasis: the Egyptians, horse-breeders and horse-traders par excellence, professional chariot-makers and chariot-sellers, have built the technology of warfare to a pinnacle. And they \*believe\* in what they have built. Their chariots and horses will bring the Jewish slaves back, no matter what Power is helping the fleeing Bnei Yisrael. With sophisticated and deadly weapons, Egypt believes it can best even the awesome Y-HVH, whose great power has just demolished mighty Egypt. In modern terms, they believe that the final factor in war is more accurate missiles, faster and stealthier airplanes, and more powerful nuclear weapons -- not the support of Hashem.

This is why the Torah makes special mention of Hashem's removal of the wheels of the chariots as they cross the seabed. Using Bnei Yisrael as a decoy, Hashem draws the Egyptians into the danger zone and then overpowers them by paralyzing their trusty weapons. Removing the wheels of their chariots strips the Egyptians bare of the war-tools they trust to guarantee their victory. They drag to a halt with the walls of water trembling around them, and in the moments between the removal of the wheels and their deaths, the Egyptians have just enough time to understand what has happened:

#### **SHEMOT 14:25 --**

Mitzrayyim said, "I must run away from Bnei Yisrael, for Hashem is fighting for them against Mitzrayyim!"

#### **C. DEATH UNDER COVER:**

At what time of day does the sea split, and at what time of day do the people cross the exposed seabed? A look at the text supplies the answer:

#### **SHEMOT 14:21 --**

. . . Hashem moved the sea with a powerful east wind ALL NIGHT, and made the sea into dry land. The waters were split.

Apparently, the waters separate slowly, under the pressure of the wind Hashem causes to blow all through the night. This means that it is dark. Keep reading:

#### **SHEMOT 14:24-25 --**

It happened, at the MORNING WATCH, that Hashem faced the Egyptian camp through a pillar of fire and cloud, and confounded the Egyptian camp. He [Hashem] removed the wheels of their chariots . . . .

**Bnei Yisrael enter the parted sea and begin to cross while it is yet dark (the morning watch means the third of the night closest to morning), and Egypt gives chase through the darkness. Sometime during this pursuit, Hashem causes the chariots to lose their wheels, grounding the Egyptian pursuers in their tracks.**

#### **SHEMOT 14:27 --**

Moshe stretched his hand out over the sea, and the water returned to its strength TOWARD MORNING; Egypt was running toward him, but Hashem overturned Mitzrayyim in the midst of the sea.

**Sometime shortly before dawn (morning), Bnei Yisrael complete their crossing. Moshe turns back to the parted sea, stretches out his hand, and the walls of water crash onto the seabed, drowning the trapped Egyptians - in the dark before morning.**

To review the process briefly:

- 1) The wind blows "all night" in order to split the water;
- 2) Hashem "looks" in fury at the Egyptians, terrifies them, and removes their wheels at the "ashmoret ha-boker" -- the night being divided into three "ashmorot," "watches," and the "ashmoret ha-boker" being the final third of the night;
- 3) Finally, Moshe is commanded to return the waters to normal "towards morning," whereupon the Egyptians drown.

**In other words, Bnei Yisrael do not actually witness the Egyptians drowning, since it takes place just before dawn! They only know for sure what has happened when they see the bodies float to shore after sunrise, as the text emphasizes:**

#### **SHEMOT 14:30-31 --**

. . . Yisrael saw Mitzrayyim dead on the shore of the sea. Yisrael saw the mighty hand which Hashem had used against Mitzrayyim; the nation feared Hashem, and they believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant.

**Only now do Bnei Yisrael know what has happened, when they "see Mitzrayyim dead on the shore"; only \*then\* do they "see the mighty hand . . ." because only THEN do they realize what has happened.**

Where else do we find "unwitnessed destructions" in the Torah?

1) No'ah is commanded to build a "tzohar" for the teiva (Ark), which is something like a window. The Midrash cites two opinions about this tzohar: one says it was a window, the other says it was a luminous gem-like material which provided light for the teiva. According to some interpretations (early sources for which I am currently unable to trace), what drives this second opinion is that No'ah was not considered worthy enough to witness the destruction of the rest of the world. He merits being saved, but he is not so perfect that he can stand above all of humanity and watch everyone else die.

2) As Lot and his family leave Sodom, they are commanded not to turn around to see the destruction of the city. Of course, Mrs. Lot

disobeys and turns into a pillar of salt.

**As the sun rises over the sea and the Egyptian bodies become visible on the shoreline, Bnei Yisrael finally understand what has happened to their pursuers. But they do not witness the crashing of the sea over their enemies. The Egyptians deserve their fate, but Bnei Yisrael are not so perfect that they can stand above the Egyptians and witness their destruction. For this reason, the whole scene takes place under cover of night. Only as the day dawns do Bnei Yisrael "see the mighty hand with which Hashem did to Mitzrayim."**

#### **WHY SING?**

This brings us to the next theme of the parasha, which we will deal with only briefly: the Song. What is its purpose? Why do the people sing, and why is the Song recorded in the Torah? The most obvious function of the Song is praise. But what else might be the purpose of the Song?

Looking at the structure of the Song may yield a clue. It splits neatly into three parts:

#### **PART I: PESUKIM 1-6:**

- a) Begins in third person, describing Hashem, and moves to second person in the last line as a transition to the second part.
- b) Ends with a poetic "summary" line.
- c) Topic: praise of Hashem's power

#### **PART II: PESUKIM 7-12:**

- a) All in second person, addressing Hashem.
- b) Ends with a poetic "summary" line.
- c) Topic: description of the actual event of the splitting and joining of the sea.

#### **PART III: PESUKIM 13-18:**

- a) All in second person, addressing Hashem, until the last line, which returns to third person (like the beginning of the Song).
- b) Ends with a poetic "summary" line.
- c) Topic: The fear of the nations as the Bnei Yisrael travel through the desert, and a look forward to establishing a place of holiness on a special mountain once they get to Eretz Canaan.

Looking at other songs which appear in the Torah and their function also provides possibilities:

The Song of Ha'azinu: Moshe is commanded to teach it to the people and make sure they remember it so that it will be passed down to later generations. The predictions it contains will serve as a resource to explain to the people how to understand events which happen to them in the course of history. In other words, the purpose of the Song is educational.

The same may be true of the Song in our parasha: one of its purposes is to teach the people something and remind them of it in future generations: Part I reminds them of the power of Hashem; Part II reminds them of how He saved them at the sea; and Part III reminds them of the international reaction to the event and directs their attention toward the ultimate goal: establishing a center for worship of Hashem in Eretz Canaan.

Song is an excellent medium for education because of its vivid imagery and, of course, because it is easier to remember a song than a list of facts.

Shabbat Shalom

## **PARSHAT BESHALACH - A Desert Seminar**

### **ALL ON THE WAY TO HAR SINAI**

Bnei Yisrael's journey from Egypt to Har Sinai was certainly not easy. Instead of the anticipated cheerful 'three day journey', Bnei Yisrael endured several weeks of life-threatening situations - including lack of food & water, and military attacks by both Egypt and Amalek.

Did something go wrong, or were all of these events part of God's original 'plan'?

Furthermore, if these 'tests of faith' were indeed part of a divine 'plan' - did God really expect for Bnei Yisrael not to complain?

To answer these questions, this week's shiur analyzes the progressive nature of the events that occur from the time that Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt until they reach Har Sinai, while considering their relationship to the overall theme of Sefer Shmot.

### **INTRODUCTION - THREE DAYS OR SEVEN WEEKS?**

Prior to the actual Exodus, God had made several specific promises that He would take Bnei Yisrael from Egypt to the Promised Land (see Shmot 3:16-17 and 6:5-8, as well as Breishit 15:13-18); yet we never found even a hint that God wanted Bnei Yisrael to dwell for any length of time in the desert (other than to cross it). True, Moshe had told Pharaoh that Bnei Yisrael requested a three day journey to worship God in the desert; however, Moshe was never instructed to convey that message to his own people.

Hence, it only makes sense that Bnei Yisrael would expect to travel directly from Egypt to Eretz Canaan.

Furthermore, the opening pasuk of Parshat Beshalach implies that traveling directly to Eretz Canaan remained the primary goal of the Exodus, while the 're-routing' of that journey (to the southeast) was simply a 'maneuver' taken due to 'military considerations' (see 13:17, and 14:1-3).

However, in Parshat Beshalach, a very different set of events unfold. Instead of leading Bnei Yisrael directly to Israel (or to stop at Har Sinai on the way to Israel), God reroutes their journey towards the Red Sea. Then, after crossing the Red Sea, Bnei Yisrael do embark on a 'three-day journey' into the desert, but only to arrive at 'Mara', rather than 'Har Sinai'. Then, over the course of their five-week excursion from Mara to Har Sinai, they run out of food at Midbar Sin, run out of water at Refidim and then face Amalek's unprovoked attack. Only after some six weeks do they finally arrive at Har Sinai.

In the following shiur we will attempt to find the purpose of this sequence of events - by considering the underlying reason for Bnei Yisrael's redemption from Egypt.

### **A SECOND CHANCE**

In our study thus far of Sefer Shmot, we have shown how the Exodus served as a fulfillment of God's covenant with Avraham Avinu (at "brit bein ha'btarim"). However, the purpose of that covenant was not merely to promise Avraham's offspring salvation from a future oppressor; rather God was 'planting the seeds' of a people that were to become His model nation - to make His Name known to all nations.

From this perspective, the redemption that God promised in "brit bein ha'btarim" was only the first stage in a long historical process. After their redemption from Egypt, Bnei Yisrael would first need to receive the special set of laws and guidelines (better known as 'Matan Torah') - that would facilitate their becoming that 'model nation'. After receiving and studying those laws, the nation would be 'spiritually' ready to inherit the Promised Land.

For this very reason, God found it necessary to first call upon Bnei Yisrael to perform 'teshuvah' [repentance] even **before** the Exodus began. [See Yechezkel 20:4-10, and our shiur on Parshat

Va'era.] Presumably, had Bnei Yisrael indeed obeyed that original call, the redemption process could have proceeded as originally planned, i.e. the nation would have traveled directly to Har Sinai (in three days) - to thank God and receive the Torah. (See Seforno's introduction to Sefer Shmot; see also Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Ramban and Seforno on 2:23-25.)

Unfortunately, the nation did not repent in the manner that God had expected. As we explained in last week's shiur, the offering of the 'korban Pesach' may have rendered them worthy 'just enough' to survive the Tenth Plague; nevertheless, at the time of the Exodus Bnei Yisrael were far from being 'spiritually ready' for Matan Torah. Therefore, we posit that God found it necessary to first challenge His people with a series of 'tests' (as described in Parshat Beshalach) - to help prepare them for Matan Torah!

### **THE NEW PLAN**

The following table lists the key events that take place during Bnei Yisrael's journey from Egypt to Har Sinai:

<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
1) Yam Suf (14:11)	Am Yisrael is <b>attacked</b> by Mitzraim;
2) Mara (15:24)	the <b>water</b> is bitter;
3) Midbar Sin (15:2)	there is no <b>food</b> to eat;
4) Refidim I (17:3)	there is no <b>water</b> to drink;
5) Refidim II (17:8)	Am Yisrael is <b>attacked</b> by Amalek.

[Note the chiastic structure: war-water-food-water-war.]

Despite the distinctive nature of each of these events, we will show how and why God *intentionally* initiates these incidents in order to catalyze Bnei Yisrael's spiritual growth, to 'train' them to become His Nation!

To appreciate the specific purpose of each individual event, we must first consider WHY Bnei Yisrael had not performed proper 'teshuvah' in Egypt.

### **BREAKING SLAVE MENTALITY**

It is extremely difficult for a slave, even after having gained his freedom, to act or think like a free man. As we explained in Parshat Va'era, Bnei Yisrael did not listen to God's original call because of their 'crushed spirits and hard labor': "ve-lo sham'u el Moshe, mikotzer **ruach** u-meavoda **kasha**" (see 6:9).

The strain of their prolonged bondage and the fatigue of their daily routine had drained them of all spirituality.

Specifically because of this bondage - Bnei Yisrael had grown instinctively dependent upon their Egyptian masters. Therefore, to facilitate their transformation - from Pharaoh's slaves to God's servants - they must change their instinctive physical dependence on Egypt to a cognitive spiritual dependence on God. [See an amazing Ibn Ezra on Shmot 14:10 for a discussion of this topic.]

We all know how difficult it is for an individual to change his character, all the more so for an entire nation. Therefore, the rebuilding of Am Yisrael's character becomes a very complex process. This background can help us understand the need for the variety of events that transpire from the time that Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt. To explain how, we will show how that a change of character occurs in one of two patterns - via:

- 1) A traumatic experience - which may facilitate a sudden change.
- 2) A change of daily routine - which affects instinctive behavior.

As we will see, God employs both approaches.

### **1) KRIYAT YAM SUF - SPLITTING OLD TIES**

Kriyat Yam Suf [the splitting of the Red Sea] may be understood as the traumatic experience that helps Bnei Yisrael break away from their instinctive dependence upon Egypt.

Recall that, at Kriyat Yam Suf, God inflicted His final punishment upon Pharaoh and his army (14:4). Were God's sole intention merely to punish the Egyptians, He could have done so during the Ten Plagues. The fact that Bnei Yisrael must witness this Egyptian defeat suggests that these events occur for the sake of Bnei Yisrael as well.

This purpose becomes clearer in light of Bnei Yisrael's reaction to the imminent threat of the approaching Egyptian army:

"And they complained to Moshe saying... What have you done to us by taking us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing **we told you in Egypt**: Let us be and **we will serve the Egyptians**, for it is better for us to **serve** the Egyptians than die in the desert?!" (14:11-12)

[See Ibn Ezra on 14:13 where he explains why Bnei Yisrael did not even consider confronting the Egyptians in battle.]

God responds to Bnei Yisrael's complaint by commanding them to 'break away' from this instinctive dependence:

"Do not fear, stand upright and watch God's salvation... for the manner in which you see Mitzraim today - you will **never see them again**" ["**lo tosifu** lir'otam od ad olam"] (14:13).

Although God's reassurance appears to be a **promise**, for some reason Chazal interpret this statement as a **commandment**! According to Ramban (14:13), Chazal interpret this pasuk as follows: "In the manner by which you look at Mitzraim today - **do not look at them this way ever again**" (14:13).

God here does **not** promise His nation that they will never face an Egyptian army again. Rather, He **commands** them to 'never again' look to Egypt for their salvation.

Although this interpretation of "lo tosifu lir'otam" does not appear to be the simple 'pschat' of this pasuk, it does find support in a parallel reference in the 'tochacha' in Parshat Ki Tavo (see Devarim 28:1-69). At the conclusion of that lengthy rebuke, God warns Bnei Yisrael that - should they disobey Him - they will be exiled and sold into slavery (see Devarim 28:62-67 / note "ki **lo shama'ta** be-kol Hashem..."). Their condition will deteriorate to such an extent, the Torah warns, that they will actually **hope** that someone will 'purchase them as slaves'.

To emphasize this point, note how the end of that Tochacha employs a phrase very similar to the phrase used to describe God's command before "kriyat Yam Suf":

"And God will return you to Egypt in ships, in the manner that I told you: '**lo tosif od lir'otah**' [do not look at them this way again], and you will offer yourselves to your enemies for sale as slaves and maidservants, but no one will purchase you" (28:68).

[The word 'ba-derech' - 'in the manner' - should not be understood as a description of the ship-route to Egypt, but rather as a description of their 'state of mind' as they are exiled to Egypt inside of those crowded ships.]

Ironically, the last stage of the 'tochacha' has Am Yisrael returning to the same state they were in before they left Egypt, where they yearn for total dependence on their human masters! In the slave-market, their only hope for survival would be for an Egyptian to buy them (to become his slave); otherwise they will starve to death. [See also Devarim 17:16 & Yeshayahu 31:1-3 to support this interpretation of "**lo tosifu li'rotam**...".]

Thus, after the miracle of "kriyat Yam Suf", it appears as though God's plan had succeeded. Upon seeing the drowning of the Egyptians, Bnei Yisrael arrive at the 'proper' conclusion:

"...and Yisrael recognized His great Hand.. and the people **feared God and believed** in God and Moshe His servant" (Shmot 14:30-31).

Then,

They instinctively respond with a song of praise to God: "Az yashir Moshe u-vnei Yisrael..." (see 15:1).

## 2) MARA - A DESERT SEMINAR

After crossing the Red Sea, Bnei Yisrael set out on their 'three-day journey' into the desert. However, instead of arriving at Har Sinai, they arrive at Mara, where the only water they could find is bitter and hence undrinkable (see 15:22-23). As we'd expect, the people complain to Moshe, their leader; who in turns complains to God. As their complaints appear to be justified, God provides Moshe with a solution to 'sweeten' the water (see 15:24-25).

Certainly God realized that the people could not survive without water, nonetheless He led them to a location *without* water - **in order** that the people would complain. In this manner, God teaches

the nation not to take their water supply for granted; rather - it now becomes clear to them that their physical survival is dependent upon God - who now tends to their water supply. [Recall that in Egypt, the Nile River supplied drinking water for the entire country, and hence it became like a God to Egypt - and Pharaoh considered himself as the god-like master over the Nile / see Yechezkel 29:1-3.]

Now, after these two traumatic events have shown the nation who their real 'master' is, Chumash informs us how God gives the people another chance to show their readiness to accept His laws:

"And He said - im **shamoa tishma** le-kol Hashem Elokecha - Should you **listen** to the voice of God, and do what is proper in His eyes, and listen to His commandments, then the affliction that I put on the Egyptians I will not put on you, for I am God your Healer" (15:26 / see shiur on Parshat Va'era.).

Note how Bnei Yisrael's acceptance of this offer can 'cure' their original 'attitude problem' reflected by "**ve-lo sham'u el Moshe**..." (see 6:9, and our shiur on Parshat Va'era).

Furthermore, by linking the sweetness of the water to their readiness to obey His laws, God teaches Bnei Yisrael an important lesson of spiritual dependence. This connection between 'water' and 'following God' will emerge numerous times in Chumash, and forms the basis of the famous Midrash Chazal of 'ein mayim ela Torah' - that the term 'water' in Tanach symbolically refers to Torah.

[The 'message' of the 'eit' which God instructs Moshe to cast into the water (see 15:23-25) may also relate back to Gan Eden, itself a motif of an environment that demands obedience to God. See also Mishlei 3:18 and its context ("etz chayim hi la-machazikim bah...").]

## A 'MODEL CAMP' FOR A 'MODEL NATION'

At their next camp-site, at Eilim (see 15:27), God gives Am Yisrael a short 'rest' - as there is plenty of water and food. But note how they 'just so happen' to find **twelve** springs and **seventy** palm trees!

The 'twelve springs' obviously reflect the twelve Tribes. [Recall the twelve monuments erected at Har Sinai to represent Am Yisrael when they accept the covenant in Shmot 24:4-7.] We posit as well that the seventy palm trees represent the 'seventy nations'. Just as the spring provides 'water' - so the trees can bear their best fruit; so too when Bnei Yisrael will become a nation properly keeping God's Laws, the other nations can learn from this 'model' and thus reach their fullest potential.

After this educational 'time out', Bnei Yisrael arrive in Midbar Sin, where God creates yet another crisis.

## 3) MIDBAR SIN - BASIC TRAINING

After arriving in Midbar Sin, the food supply runs out, triggering yet another round of complaints (16:2-3). Even though Bnei Yisrael have the right to ask for food, the way in which they ask is inexcusable:

"If only we had died by the Hand of God in Egypt, when we had plenty of meat and bread to eat! Now you have brought us out into this desert to die of famine" (16:3).

The very tone of their complaint (and its content), indicate that Bnei Yisrael had retained their instinctive dependence upon Mitzraim. Their instinctive reaction to this terrible hunger includes reminiscing about the 'good old days' in Egypt. The trauma they had experienced heretofore was not sufficient to totally change their character. To rectify this, God will force them into a **daily routine** that hopefully will slowly change their instinctive behavior.

The manna served this very purpose, as it provided a daily routine that transformed what was once their physical dependence on Mitzraim into a physical dependence on God. As explained in Sefer Devarim:

"And He tormented you and starved you, then gave you 'manna' to eat... **in order to teach you** that man does not live on bread alone, rather, man lives by whatever God commands" (Devarim 8:3).

By allowing only enough food for one day at a time, Bnei Yisrael

learn to become dependent solely on God. To emphasize this point, their food falls directly from heaven. Note how the Torah uses a key word - 'nisayon' (a test) in its description of the purpose of the manna:

"Behold I will rain down bread for you from the heavens, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day's portion - lema'an **anasenu** (= 'nisayon') - **in order that I may test them**, to see whether or not they **will follow my instructions...**" (16:4).

The word "nisayon" here should not be understood simply as a 'test' that will help God assess Bnei Yisrael's obedience. The purpose of this "nisayon" was to raise the nation to a higher level in their relationship with God. In a similar manner, we find that the Torah uses this same root in the story of the Akeida where God 'tests' Avraham ["ve-Hashem **nisa** et Avraham..." /see Breishit 22:1] - not to find out **if** he is worthy, but rather **to make** him worthy.

The manna served a similar purpose. God is not testing Bnei Yisrael to find out **IF** they will obey Him, rather He is **training** them in order that they learn **HOW** to obey Him.

#### 4) REFIDIM - PREPARING FOR HAR SINAI

The next stop on their journey (and the last stop before arriving at Har Sinai) is Refidim - where they can't find any water to drink (17:1-3). But why does God lead them to such a location? Certainly He realizes that Bnei Yisrael cannot survive without water.

Once again, God **wants** Bnei Yisrael to complain!

However, this time God's plan is more complex, as His scheme at Refidim will prepare Bnei Yisrael both physically and spiritually for Har Sinai. As you review the details of that story (see 17:1-6), note how God solves their water shortage.

As you probably remember, God instructs Moshe to hit the rock - and it would supply water. But we would expect that rock (and hence the water source) to be in Refidim - where the people are suffering from thirst. Instead, God instructs Moshe to gather some elders (see 17:5-6) and **travel** from Refidim to the rock at "Chorev" - the same site where God first appeared to him at the burning bush (see 3:1) - the same site that later becomes Har Sinai! [See Shmot 3:12 & Devarim 5:2.]

But would it not have made more sense for God to supply this dearly needed water at Refidim, where the people are encamped!

One could suggest that God is providing water purposely only at Har Sinai, for He wants the nation to first encounter Har Sinai as a source for their physical salvation - that will quench their terrible thirst. By providing water at Har Sinai, the nation will now eagerly travel from Refidim directly to Har Sinai.

Note the wording 17:5, where God instructs Moshe to take his staff with which 'he hit the Nile' - to hit the rock at Chorev. Even though Moshe's staff also turned into a "nachash", and had also split the sea, etc. - yet God specifically refers to it here as the one with which he 'hit the Nile' - for Har Sinai will now become the new source of water for Bnei Yisrael, replacing their old source of water - the mighty Nile River of Egypt.

Let's consider the reality of this situation. After Moshe hits the rock, the water would gush forth from Chorev and flow into the desert. But to drink that water, Bnei Yisrael will need to travel from Refidim to Har Sinai, to their **new source** of water. [For proof that hitting the rock created a gushing river flowing down the mountain - see Devarim 9:21.]

This initial encounter with Mount Sinai - where it becomes the source for their physical existence, sets the stage for Matan Torah, when Har Sinai will become the source for their spiritual existence. Not only has heaven replaced earth as the source of bread (the manna food), but now Har Sinai has replaced the Nile as their constant source of water.

In this manner, Bnei Yisrael's total dependence on Mitzraim has now been replaced by their total dependence on God.

#### 5) THE WAR WITH AMALEK - LOOKING UP TO HAR SINAI

As Bnei Yisrael begin their journey from Refidim to Har Sinai (to their new source of water), Amalek attacks. War breaks out, and

God orders that Yehoshua lead Bnei Yisrael in battle.

In contrast to passive nature of Bnei Yisrael's participation in battle against the Egyptian army - when God split the Red Sea, here Bnei Yisrael do the fighting themselves. But to assure that the people recognize that God Himself brings them victory - despite their own military efforts - God instructs Moshe to climb the hill and raise his staff heavenward. Upon which hill does Moshe stand?

Based on the juxtaposition between this narrative and the incident at 'masa u-meriva', Ibn Ezra explains that Moshe stands with his hands raised high - on Har Sinai! Just as Har Sinai has become their source of water, it now becomes their source of military salvation, as well.

For Yisrael to become victorious, Moshe must raise his hands (see 17:11) to show and teach the people to look to Hashem, to Har Sinai, for their salvation.

[See Midrash in Rashi (17:11) & Rosh Hashana 29:1.]

#### FROM PESACH TO SHAVUOT

We have shown that during the seven weeks from the Exodus to Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael encounter several traumatic experiences and changes in their daily routine that helped prepare them for Matan Torah. During this 'training period' they have also become more active in the process of their redemption - they are now ready to take on the next stage of the redemption process: to receive the Torah in order to become God's special Nation in His land.

Not only was this seven week time period significant for Bnei Yisrael at the time of Exodus, this same time period of the year remains no less significant for future generations as well. It is not by chance that Chazal identify a similar purpose in the seven weeks of the Sefirat ha-Omer, where we count the seven weeks from the celebration of our freedom from Egypt [on Pesach] in preparation for our commemoration of Matan Torah on Shavuot.

Each year, after we thank God for our freedom from slavery, we prepare ourselves for seven weeks - to become worthy of, and to be thankful for - our receiving of the Torah.

shabbat shalom,  
menachem

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#### FOR FURTHER IYUN

Many traditional sources indicate that Bnei Yisrael required an educational process of one sort or another upon their departure from Egypt in order to recover from the effects of the lengthy period of bondage. The type of process required comes in two forms: PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL

#### PHYSICAL

Military training and the development of confidence. Several mefarshim emphasize that, as they leave Egypt, Bnei Yisrael are in no position to conduct a war - the implication of the opening pasuk of Parshat Beshalach ("pen yinachem ha-am bir'otam milchama..."). The Ibn Ezra stresses this point at least twice in his commentary (peirush ha-katzar - 13:17; peirush ha-aroch - 14:13).

The Ibn Ezra (in the second source mentioned) goes so far as to say that Hashem had to see to it that this generation would die in the wilderness rather than enter the land, because the period of bondage had crushed their spirits to the point where they would never be able to fight for the land. (This comment obviously has ramifications with regards to the sin of the spies and other related topics.)

The Malbim (commenting on the parsha's opening pasuk) likewise writes that Bnei Yisrael needed time to develop the courage necessary to wage war. Hashem therefore decided not to lead them along the shortest route to Canaan.

The Abarbanel comments that the second pasuk of the parsha mentions Bnei Yisrael's being equipped with arms to emphasize that their resources were useless as they had no heart for battle.

The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:24, 32) writes that the grueling experience of the wilderness travel was necessary to physically prepare Bnei Yisrael for the conquest.



## SPIRITUAL

Spiritual rehabilitation - the approach we take in the shiur. Within this approach, however, we find two versions: Bnei Yisrael's spiritual growth is necessary as preparation for Matan Torah, or for their entry into Eretz Canaan.

In the shiur we adopt the former view, which appears explicitly in Rabbenu Bechaye's comments to the opening pasuk of the parsha. He writes that all the travails that Bnei Yisrael experienced constituted a 'nisayon' - "in order that their inner intellect would grow in the levels of trust [in Hashem], which forms the root of faith, in order that they are worthy to receive the Torah." This approach may have a much earlier source, as well. The Midrash Tanchuma (Yitro 10) writes that Hashem did not give Bnei Yisrael the Torah immediately upon their departure from Egypt because they had 'blemishes'. A recovery period was therefore necessary before they could receive the Torah. The Abarbanel (Yitro 19) interprets these 'blemishes' as the spiritual influence of Egypt. As we claim in the shiur, he explains that the miracles at sea and in the wilderness cured these spiritual ills by reinforcing Bnei Yisrael's trust in Hashem.

In a similar vein, the Alshich (14:10) writes that the Yam Suf experience was necessary in order to prevent any arrogance on Bnei Yisrael's part. The threat posed at the sea humbled them in preparation for Matan Torah. Later, in his comments to 19:1, the Alshich compares the process that Bnei Yisrael undergo during this period to the period of purification required after the onset of certain forms of tum'a. Yetziat Mitzraim constituted the cessation of tum'a; the following seven weeks correspond to the 'shiv'a nekiyim' - the seven 'clean days' - that spiritually prepared them for Matan Torah.

On a more kabbalistic level, the Ramchal (Choker U-mekubal 18) writes that after Bnei Yisrael had sunken to the forty-nine 'levels of impurity' in Egypt, over the next 49 days Hashem shone upon them the forty-nine 'levels of sanctity' to render them worthy of Matan Torah. All this relates to the point made in the shiur, that the events that occurred in between yetziat Mitzraim and Matan Torah served to spiritually prepare Bnei Yisrael for Matan Torah.

By contrast, Rav Meir Simcha Hakohen of Dvinsk (Meshech Chochma) and the Netziv (in He-amek Davar) maintain that Hashem led the people into the wilderness in order to spiritually prepare them for their entry into the land.

Rav Meir Simcha focuses specifically on the need for Bnei Yisrael to rid themselves of Egyptian paganism; the Netziv speaks more generally about the need for Bnei Yisrael to establish their individual character, which necessitated a journey through the wilderness, far away from other societies and cultures.

We should perhaps note in this context a passage in Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer 42, which states that, as Bnei Yisrael saw the Egyptians closing in on them at sea, they repented and discarded their Egyptian idols. Apparently, they had not adequately repented from their avoda zara while in Egypt.

There are also indications of the fact that Bnei Yisrael had not yet broken their sense of dependence on Egypt, for one reason or another. The Mechilta (on the first pasuk of the parsha) writes that Pharaoh had sent escorts to accompany Bnei Yisrael as they departed from Egypt.

Rav Baruch Epstein (Torah Temima) and Rav Dov Rabinowitz (Da'at Sofrim) use this Midrash to explain how Bnei Yisrael could have considered returning to Egypt (as Hashem was concerned about - "ve-shavu Mitzrayma"). As the Egyptians had begun treating Bnei Yisrael with dignity, they felt that all the plagues and miracles had brought about a change of heart on the part of the Egyptians. Thus, Bnei Yisrael had yet to turn their backs entirely on Egypt.

Furthermore, the Da'at Sofrim notes that the parsha's opening pasuk describes yetziat Mitzraim as "be-shalach Par'o et ha-am" - Pharaoh letting the people go, rather than Hashem taking them out. (This was noted already by the Abarbanel, who explains differently; see also Ozneyim La-Torah and Nechama Leibowitz's *Studies* on this parsha, 1.)

Da'at Sofrim explains that Bnei Yisrael still felt dependent on Pharaoh's decision to set them free, rather than guided by Hashem's providence. An extreme expression of Bnei Yisrael's continued sense of dependence on Egypt appears in the Akeidat Yitzchak, in his comments to 14:11. He claims that Bnei Yisrael had thought that Hashem intended for them to live permanently in Ramses (as they had when Yaakov and his family first resettled in Egypt). It was Moshe, they felt, who forced them to leave Ramses and continue into the wilderness. This clearly reflects that they had not yet seen themselves as an independent nation. They were content to live as free people under Egyptian rule; they had not resigned themselves to the fact that they would establish their own society in Canaan.

## PARSHAT BESHALACH

### "AMALEK - - V'LO YA'RAY ELOKIM"

Many nations have attacked and oppressed Am Yisrael throughout its history. Yet, for some reason, Amalek is singled out as Israel's 'arch enemy.' What was so terrible about Amalek's attack that requires a battle 'for all generations'?

To answer this question, we examine some very interesting details in the Torah's description of this event (that are often overlooked) in attempt to determine if the commandment to destroy Amalek should be understood as something 'genetic' or 'generic'.

## INTRODUCTION

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.

We begin our study with a discussion of 'who' is 'where' when Amalek first attacks.

## WHO'S IN REFIDIM?

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..."

(see Shmot 17:8, after 17:1-7)

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..." (17:1-3)

To solve this water shortage, God instructs Moshe to take his staff hit the rock etc. However, recall **where** that rock is located:

"God 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..." (17:5-6)

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 (as we discussed in our first shiur on Parshat Beshalach).

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 ample 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.

## AMALEK ATTACKS

It is precisely at this point when Amalek attacks: "Amalek came, and attacked Israel at REFIDIM..." (see 17:8). 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..." (see Devarim 25:17-18)

Amalek capitalizes on Bnei Yisrael's disadvantage. [They break the laws of the 'Geneva Convention.'] 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. [See Rashi & Ibn Ezra on "ayeif v'yagaya" on Devarim 25:18.]

## YIRAT ELOKIM

Further support of this interpretation may be drawn from the conclusion of the pasuk cited earlier from Sefer Devarim: "...v'LO YA'RAY ELOKIM - and he (Amalek) did not fear God." (Devarim 25:18, see Rashi & Ibn Ezra in contrast to Chizkuni)

This phrase - YA'RAY ELOKIM - in the context of unethical (or immoral) behavior is found numerous times in Chumash. For example, Avraham offers Avimelech the following explanation for lying about his wife:

"And Avraham explained (to Avimelech), for I said (to myself) there is no YIRAT ELOKIM in this place, and therefore they will kill me (to take my wife)..." (Breishit 20:11)

In this context, a lack of "yirat Elokim" describes one who would kill a visitor in order to take his wife. [Rather unethical according to even the lowest moral standards.]

Similarly, Yosef - pretending to be an Egyptian official - tells the brothers that he will release them from jail, allowing them a chance to prove that they are not spies. He prefaces this decision to his brothers with the phrase: "... ET HA'ELOKIM ANI YA'RAY..." (see Breishit 42:15-18). From this conversation, we see once again how the phrase "yirat Elokim" in the Bible seems to be 'internationally' understood as a description of ethical behavior.

We find yet another example at the beginning of Sefer Shmot, as the Torah describes how the midwives 'feared Elokim' by not obeying Pharaoh's command to kill the male babies: "v'ti'rena ha'myaldot et ha'Elokim..." (see Shmot 1:21).

[Note as well Yitro's comment in Shmot 18:21, suggesting to appoint judges who are "yirei Elokim", among a list of other 'ethical' characteristics. / See also our TSC shiur on the Akeyda. ([www.tanach.org/breishit/vayera.doc](http://www.tanach.org/breishit/vayera.doc)), which discusses this phrase in greater detail.]

All of these examples support our interpretation of the phrase "v'lo yarey Elokim" by Amalek - as reflective of their unethical behavior - waging war on the weak and unprotected.

Based on this analysis, we conclude that Torah may have singled out Amalek as Israel's 'arch enemy' not merely because they were the first nation to attack Israel, but rather due to the unethical nature of that attack.

In this sense, one could suggest that "zecher Amalek" - the remembrance of Amalek - could be understood as a 'generic' term describing any aggressive nation that would act in a similar unethical manner, and not necessarily a 'genetic' term, describing any family descendent of those people who attacked Israel at Refidim.

Let's attempt to support this conclusion, and its underlying logic.

## AMALEK IN THE BIBLE

The commandment to remember what Amalek did (see both Shmot 17:16 and Devarim 25:17) 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 (see Shmuel Aleph 27:7-9 and 30:1-3!), only a short time after they were 'totally wiped out' by Shaul (ibid. chapter 15).

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. [It is recommended that you read that entire account (see 30:1-19).] Here, we find not only the name Amalek, but a very similar manner of ('unethical') warfare.

In fact, if one follows Amalek's whereabouts in Chumash - we find them all over:

- \* In the western Sinai desert -  
when Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt (Parshat Beshalach).
- \* in the northern Negev (near Kadesh Barnea)  
when the spies return (in Parshat Shlach / see 14:25).
- \* east of the Dead Sea (in Jordan),  
when Bilam 'blesses' them in Parshat Balak (see 24:20).

Then, in Sefer Shoftim, we find them joining in battle against Israel, no matter who the primary enemy was:

- \* joining the Moabites in battle in the time Ehud  
(see Shoftim 3:13)
- \* attacking in the area of Ephraim in the time of Devora  
(see Shoftim 5:14, precise context unclear)
- \* attacking Emek Yizrael, joining Midyan, in the time of Gidon  
(see Shoftim 6:3 & 6:33)

[Not to mention the battles of Shaul and David against Amalek, as mentioned above.]

Yet in all of these battles, we never find Amalek living in any specific land, rather they appear as a nomadic tribe - roaming the desert, and especially the highways crossing 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 Philistim (see Shoftim 10:6), we never find even a mention of the god of Amalek.

Amalek emerges as a nation with no god, and no land. Their very existence centers around plundering the unprotected. In relation to Israel, and neighboring nations as well; at any time of weakness or vulnerability, 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 God commands Shaul to destroy them. Note how Shmuel describes Amalek (at that time) as a nation who had sinned against God (see Shmuel Aleph 15:18).

Furthermore, from the commandment not to take any booty from that battle (see again 15:18 and context of that entire chapter), 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.

Therefore, it is not incidental that it becomes the mitzvah of the King of Israel to defeat Amalek (see I Shmuel 15:1-2 and Rambam Hilchot Melachim 1:1). Recall how the king of Israel should be known for his ability to establish a nation characterized by acts of "tzedaka & mishpat" - see Shmuel Bet 8:15, Melachim Aleph 10:9, and Yirmiyahu 22:1-5, 13-16 & 23:5-8. 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.

[Note as well at the end of Parshat Ki-teyze, immediately before the mitzvah to 'remember Amalek', we find a set of laws that emphasize the enforcement of "tzedek u'mishpat" - see Devarim 25:13-16.)]

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'.

## FOR FURTHER IYUN

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### PRO'S & CON'S

There are certain pro's & con's that come with this 'generic' understanding of Amalek. The obvious advantage, is that it would solve the 'ethical' problem of how and why would God command us to kill any descendant of that nation, even if those later generations did nothing wrong. After all, Chumash itself teaches us that: "parents should die for the sins of their children, nor children for the sins of their parents, each man is responsible for his own sin" (Devarim 24:16).

The obvious disadvantage is that the simple pshat of the psukim suggests that this commandment applies specifically to the people Amalek, the descendants of Esav's grandson (see Breishit 36:12). Furthermore, this nation appears again several times in Tanach, which supports the 'genetic' interpretation. For example, in Bilam's blessings, he sees Amalek, in a manner very similar to how he sees Israel, and the Kenites etc. (see Bamidbar 24:20-22). Later on, the books of Shoftim and Shmuel, the nation of Amalek appears numerous times, and appears to a nation like any other in the Bible.

Therefore, in our shiur, we have tried to find the 'middle ground'.

### THE COUNTER ATTACK

This interpretation also explains an enigmatic detail in the Torah's description of the counterattack, as presented in Parshat Beshalach. When Moshe hears of Amalek's attack, he instructs Yehoshua to launch a counteroffensive - machar - on the next day: "Go fight Amalek... MACHAR - TOMORROW - I (Moshe) will be standing at the top of the hill with the MATEH ELOKIM..."

(17:9/ See Ibn Ezra - "givah" = Har Sinai!)

Should not Yehoshua engage Amalek immediately? Why wait for another day of hostilities to pass before mobilizing the nation's defense? According to our explanation, the leaders (Moshe & the elders) and most of the men are already at Har Sinai. It will therefore take a full day for Yehoshua to organize the troops and march them back towards Refidim.

### THE WATER AT SINAI

The Moshav Zekeinim (Ba'alei Tosfot on the Torah) cites the question as to how the water-producing rock in Chorev (Sinai) gave water to Bnei Yisrael in Refidim. However, the Ramban (17:5) claims, as we mentioned in the shiur, that the gushing water formed several rivers and streams that flowed to Refidim.

As for the significance of the water flowing specifically from Har Sinai - this point is developed at length by the Abarbanel, in his commentary to this parsha. He writes that as water symbolizes Torah, Hashem had intended all along to provide the nation's water needs from Sinai, the site of the giving of the Torah. Refidim was to have been a brief, preparatory stopover before the nation's arrival at Sinai.

The Abarbanel adds that for this reason Hashem ordered Moshe to bring the elders along with him to Sinai. The presentation of water was to correspond to the presentation of the Torah, which also required the presence of the zekeinim (Shmot 24:9). The Abarbanel also notes that the Beit Hamikdash, which, like Har Sinai, is the place where Torah is given ("ki mi'Tzion tetze Torah" - Yeshayahu 2:3; Michah 4:2), is also destined to serve as a source of water - Yoel 4:18; Zecharya 14:8.

### SPOILING HAR SINAI

Up until this point we have discussed the particularly unethical nature of Amalek's attack. Yet, the eternal mitzvah to 'erase the memory of Amalek' for all generations may also suggest a spiritual theme. Recall from Part I that the entire journey from Egypt to Har Sinai served as a 'training mission' of sorts to spiritually prepare Bnei Yisrael for Matan Torah. At Refidim, the 'stage has been set' for Matan Torah - but Amalek's attack 'spoils' this encounter. [See Shir Ha'shirim 1:4.] In effect, Amalek attempts to prevent Am Yisrael from achieving their Divine destiny.

The nature of this struggle remains throughout our history. Even

once Am Yisrael conquers its internal enemy and is finally prepared to follow God, external, human forces of evil, unwilling to allow God's message to be heard, will always make one last attack. Am Yisrael must remain prepared to fight this battle against Amalek for all generations: "ki yad al kes Kah, MILCHAMA I'HASHEM b'AMALEK, m'dor dor." (17:16)