

Torah Tidbits

ב"ה

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ישראל

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י"ג שבט תשפ"ו

פרשת בשלח
PARSHAT BESHALACH

SHABBAT SHIRA

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

Rabbi Reuven Tradburks
Page 12



From Sound to Song

Rebbetzin Dr. Adina Shmidman
Page 64



OU Israel
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a joyful
Tu B'Shvat!

ט"ו בשבט הגיע חג לאילנות

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT BESHALACH ZMANIM:

CANDLES 4:35 PM • HAVDALA 5:51 PM • RABBEINU TAM 6:29 PM



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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

☪ Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Sh'vat/Sun. night Feb. 1



COVER PHOTO Photographed by Gedalia Perelman

I made aliya in 1990. We live in Jerusalem. The picture was taken in Emek HaTzva'im. I look forward to every opportunity I get to go out with my camera into the magnificent nature of Eretz Yisrael. This view reminds me of the blue and white of our flag.

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OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
Jan. 28 - Feb. 7 / 10 - 20 Sh'vat

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:42-5:36
Sunrise	6:35-6:28
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:13-9:10
Magen Avraham	8:36-8:33
Sof Zman Tefila	10:06-10:05
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:52-11:53
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:22-12:23
Plag Mincha	4:03-4:10
Sunset (Including Elevation)	5:14-5:23



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	Beshalach		Yitro	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:35	5:51	4:42	5:57
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:54	5:54	5:00	5:59
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:54	5:52	5:01	5:58
Gush Etzion	4:52	5:51	4:58	5:57
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:52	5:52	4:58	5:58
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:52	5:51	4:58	5:57
Netanya	4:51	5:51	4:58	5:57
Be'er Sheva	4:54	5:53	5:00	5:59
Rehovot	4:52	5:52	4:59	5:58
Petach Tikva	4:35	5:52	4:42	5:58
Ginot Shomron	4:51	5:51	4:57	5:57
Haifa / Zichron	4:40	5:50	4:47	5:56
Gush Shiloh	4:50	5:50	4:57	5:56
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:52	5:52	4:59	5:58
Givat Ze'ev	4:55	5:51	5:01	5:57
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:52	5:51	4:58	5:57
Ashkelon	4:54	5:53	5:00	5:59
Yad Binyamin	4:52	5:52	4:59	5:58
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:42	5:48	4:48	5:54
Golan	4:48	5:48	4:54	5:54
Nahariya/Maalot	4:49	5:50	4:55	5:56
Afula	4:49	5:49	4:56	5:55

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Beshalach - 6:29 PM • Yitro - 6:36 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Menachos 20



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
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Birthdays and anniversaries are important opportunities in our lives to express our gratitude to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for what we have, and to share it with our friends and families. Similarly, on the other side, when we observe a *yahrzeit*, it reminds us of a dear parent, grandparent, sibling, or other loved one who is no longer with us, and gives us pause to think about them and to share their legacy with others.

This past *Motzei Shabbat*, I sat with my wife and the first thing we did was call our granddaughter on FaceTime to wish her a very happy birthday. Naama just turned two, and we, as proud grandparents, were very excited to wish her a happy birthday and a year full of, *b'ezrat Hashem*, growth and happiness with her incredible parents.

I recently conducted an experiment in the OU Israel office. I asked a number of employees if they could tell me what date the pagers blew up in Lebanon, or when Nasrallah was killed, effectively ending the war with Hezbollah with a decisive victory. They did not know the answer.

I then asked if they could tell me what day we eliminated Sinwar in Gaza. Once again, they did not know. The same continued to be true for so many of the huge military successes that we have experienced with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu's* help. Now, it's not that my employees don't consider these events important. So many of us celebrated when witnessing the downfall of the heads of terror in the countries that surround Israel throughout this war. So why don't we remember the day these things happened?

I found myself thinking about *Parshat Beshalach*, where the song of *Az Yashir* appears. This is such an important song, sung by *Klal Yisrael* with Moshe Rabbeinu after the splitting of the Red Sea and the defeat of the Egyptians. We can only imagine that *Bnei Yisrael* were beside themselves with all the miracles they were experiencing in those moments.

Yet the Midrash tells another story. When the Jewish people were walking "*betoch hayam bayabashah*," "through the sea on dry land" (Shemot 14:22), the midrash says that some Jews complained that this was just like when they were in Egypt. For when they were in Egypt, they had mud on their feet from constantly working with mortar and cement, and here they were walking through *Yam Suf* and once again they had mud on their feet!

When reading that midrash, I asked myself: How could it be that the greatest miracle in history was literally happening right in front of them, where they saw the water split into two, where they walked on dry land that had been completely covered in water two seconds

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grandfather and great grandfather**

Morris Zimmerman ז"ל

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on his fifth yahrzeit

*The Zimmerman family
Nof Ayalon, Kerem Reim,
Nairobi, Jerusalem*

prior, where the Torah tells us with the water became like two walls on either side of them? How could it be that they saw all of this and what was going through their minds was the fact that they had mud on their shoes? The answer is that we too easily miss the miracles happening in our lives. It becomes commonplace to us, and we fail to recognize them as the miracles they are.

In a way, we recreate the midrash's story and lesson every day. In the morning *Shacharit* prayer, we recite *Az Yashir*, and we allow ourselves to grow accustomed to it. And then, *Parshat Beshalach* comes around, and we give the Shabbat a special name – *Shabbat Shira*, the Shabbat when we sing to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Then, *Az Yashir* elevates to something special. Many shuls have the custom to either stand for the entire Torah reading, or at least during the part when they get up to the song of *Az Yashir* in the Torah.

I think the idea is that this special emphasis serves as a reminder to us that great miracles happen, and that our job is to make sure that we recognize it every single day. And not only is it important to remember that the miracle happened, but it's important as well to remember that we must thank *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for this incredible miracle of splitting the sea for the Jewish people.

Maybe it's time to mark more dates on the calendar. Perhaps days like the miraculous day the last remaining hostage, Ran Gvili z'l, was returned home- 8th of Shevat 5786, so too for the one in which the pagers went off – the 15th of Elul, 5784 – should be a day that we thank *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Perhaps make a *l'chaim*, perhaps have a *fleishig* meal – something to mark the occasion and express our gratitude. As well as for the day Nasrallah was killed, the



25th of Elul. Or, every person should pick a date that is important in their lives. It could be for a family living in Sderot or Kiryat Shmona, it's the day they were finally able to return home. These are days that are very joyous for the Jewish people. Perhaps for someone else, it's the day they received their dream job, or the day they made *aliyah*. Great things happen in our lives, and I think this beautiful practice of standing up every year on *Shabbat Shira* and saying, "Thank you, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, for the incredible gift that You gave us of walking through that water and being saved from the Egyptians" should inspire us to create similar moments of gratitude throughout the year.

Many talk about how *Klal Yisrael* were at the

May the Torah learned
in this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of

Libby Pattashnick א"ה
ליבה בת הרב דוד ע"ה

Our beloved Tante Libby
on her fourth Yahrzeit, כ"ב שבט

*The extended Pattashnick family
in Israel*

lowest levels of impurity at the moment of the Exodus. For hundreds of years, they had been influenced by the Egyptian pagans, in many ways. Yet, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* took them out anyway in His abundant kindness, as he had promised to Avraham Avinu.

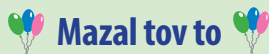
Today, we are living through another miracle. Hashem promised *Rachel Imeinu* that He would bring us back even after our long exile, and here we are, building up this beautiful Land with so many of us coming back to our homeland. As a Jewish people, we must continue thanking *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for all the great things He does for us. We must continue to recognize that He is giving our soldiers and our defense forces endless strength to accomplish what needs to be done to protect the Jewish people.

May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* give blessings to all those around the world who help the Jewish people. And *b'ezrat Hashem*, we should be able to celebrate many great occasions and to thank *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for those great moments – as individuals and as a nation – until 120 in good health.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat Shira,



Rabbi Avi Berman



Mazal tov to



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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"L

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Humble Determination

The world is spinning at high speed. As we wonder how to react to it all, the enigmatic opening of our parsha presents an excellent frame to help us orient ourselves to where we stand.

When Pharaoh sent the people out, G-d did not lead them via the land of the Philistines which was nearby, for G-d said, "The people may have a change of heart when they see war and return to Egypt." (Shemot 13:17)

While some understood that G-d was protecting the Jewish people from facing a new conflict with the Philistines, the Midrash, as conveyed by Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, explains the concern of a change of heart due to a confrontation that had occurred 30 years previous. At that time, precisely 400 years after G-d had told Avraham that his descendants would endure exile for 400 years, a contingent of 200,000 well-armed members of the tribe of Efrayim left Egypt,

mistakenly confident that the time of redemption had come. Tragically, they were slaughtered by the Philistines. The remains of that war's fallen littered the desert near the land of the Philistines and G-d worried that if the Jewish people would now encounter those remains upon leaving Egypt, they would become discouraged and turn back in fear and overwhelming doubt about their own likelihood of future success.

Note the two experiences: We have the *Bnei Efrayim*, bullish and confident that their time had come when in fact it had not; and we have the nation who later, when their time had truly come, were vulnerable to paralyzing doubts based on previous failures. Danger apparently lurks in both overconfidence and overcaution. And while their biblical dilemmas involved meeting a prophesized divine timeframe of 400 years, in our time we do not have the benefit of such a prophecy. The decisions we make today as a nation and the steps that we choose to take surely require *siyata d'shmaya*, divine guidance and support, but that guidance is not explicit but hidden within our logical consideration of the issues. As that is the case, how are we to get it right? What can we learn from these two experiences that will help us as a nation know when to push forward aggressively and when to stand back?

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It appears that the combined lesson of the two is that we must step forward with humble determination, acknowledging the need for caution in a world where the promise of redemption has continued to remain elusive, yet determined to move forward without being intimidated by past failures. Whether combating antisemitism or moving Israel towards a safer future, we cannot afford to hesitate to assert and pursue what we need, traveling with both prayer and resolve even towards the oncoming sea, but we must do so with the lessons that history has imbued in us, knowing that just as for the *Bnei Efrayim*, unbridled confidence is not in and of itself our ticket to redemption. ■

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This week, Midreshet Zusha marked eight years of helping young women rebuild and thrive.

Eight years ago, the incredible staff at OU Israel's Pearl & Harold Jacobs Zula Outreach Center launched a unique Midrasha program for young women who have gone through the Zula's healing process and need a supportive environment where they can continue to flourish, grow spiritually, and move forward from challenging at-risk backgrounds. They combine Torah learning with Sherut Leumi or work, and take part in meaningful volunteering, chesed opportunities, and holiday programs.

Midreshet Zusha students come from across Israel and form a powerful bond as they support one another through the different challenges they've faced in their young lives. The impact is real and lasting: in an atmosphere of joy and love, these young women discover their strengths, learn to trust in their own abilities, and gain the tools, guidance, and confidence to build a religious and spiritual life with stability, dignity, and hope.

Each week, we share one OU Israel initiative empowering lives and communities in our homeland, supporting English-speaking *olim* in their *klita* and supporting Israel's most vulnerable teens to rebuild trust, confidence, and a future.



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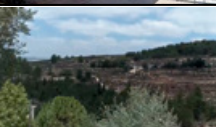
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ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT BESHALACH

Paro pursues, the sea splits, the people sing. The people traveled and complained for water in Mara, for bread and meat in the Desert of Sin and for water in Refidim. Amalek attacked and was defeated.



1ST ALIYA (13:17-14:8)

G-d guides the Jews in the direction of the Sea. Moshe takes Yosef's bones. A cloud guides them by day, fire by night. G-d instructs them to avoid the straight route to the Land of Israel for fear that return to Egypt will be too easy. Rather camp at the sea so that Paro will notice. I will harden his heart and he will pursue, in order that Egypt will know that I am G-d. Paro led his elite chariots in pursuit.

The story of the Exodus, culminating with the splitting of the sea is educational. G-d acts in our history. The plagues. The splitting of the sea.

His Hand is stuck right into our world, guiding our Exodus from Egypt. And that is a pillar of our belief. That G-d acts in our world.

Yet, here He guides the people to avoid their return to Egypt.

But. Why is He concerned that we will return to Egypt? Just manipulate our thoughts. Aren't we learning all about how He manipulates our world, sticks His Hand in our world? Doesn't it say G-d will harden Paro's heart? Then why not soften our hearts? So that we are loyal. And have no interest in returning to Egypt.

The Torah is as its name indicates, to teach us. It will soon teach us mitzvot, how we are to act. But it is also teaching us how to believe. And in particular, the thorniest of theological mysteries: how G-d acts in this world. And how He doesn't.

We see His Hand in the Exodus from Egypt. And in the splitting of the sea. But on the other hand, where was He in the years of suffering in Egypt? And why does He not prevent us from wanting to return to Egypt?

We have to read these stories with both of our eyes. To see where He intervenes. And to see where He does not. While we believe in His involvement in our world, that belief is not facile, naïve, as if we actually know when He intervenes. All we can say is that sometimes He intervenes and sometimes not. Why and when? That is beyond our ken.



2ND ALIYA (14:9-14)

When Paro's army approaches, the people are afraid. They cry to G-d and say to Moshe: why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the desert? We would have preferred to be slaves in Egypt than die in the desert. Moshe tells them not to fear, for they are about to see G-d's redemption.

The focus of the Torah pivots dramatically here. There have been 4 main players in this story: G-d, Moshe, Paro and the Jewish people. But one has been absent entirely from the narrative of the story; the Jewish people.

In the entire story of the 10 plagues, we did not hear one word from the Jewish people. The central figure was G-d; the Jewish people

completely off stage. Which is perfectly understandable because the plagues are to teach us of G-d's mastery over the world. The Jewish people are passive observers to that display.

All of that changes here. Now we hear of their struggles, their worries, their concerns. The focus is now on the Jewish people. They are frightened and unsure.

And that is the point. While with one eye we see His Hand. With the other we see the lack of intervention in our actions. The Jewish people are free to worry, to be concerned, to be fearful.

What a powerful theological lesson, so beautifully juxtaposed. G-d's dramatic involvement in the world. And His equally dramatic retreat, allowing people to be people, thinking freely, exercising choice. Worrying, concerned, fearful.



3RD ALIYA (14:15-25)

G-d instructs Moshe to raise his hand so the sea will split. And that He will harden the heart of Egypt in order that He be glorified through Paro and his entourage. And Egypt will know I am G-d. Moshe did so; the people entered the dry land in the sea with the waters as walls on both sides. The Egyptians followed; in the morning they became trapped in the sea.

The splitting of the sea renews the theme of water as a symbol of beginnings. Water featured in Creation, in Moshe's cradle in the river and now. Beginning of the world, beginning of the Exodus and now, the beginning of Jewish national life.



4TH ALIYA (14:26-15:26)

The water returned and drowned all the Egyptians. The Jewish people saw the Egyptian dead, saw

the Hand of G-d, feared G-d, believing in Him and Moshe. Moshe and the people sang "Az Yashir: I will sing to G-d, my strength, my savior, my G-d. He is the One of War. Your Hand is powerful, Your Hand vanquishes enemies. Nations will fear Him. G-d will reign forever." Miriam led the women in song. Moshe led the people to the desert to Mara. The people complained about the water. G-d instructed Moshe to throw wood and sweeten the water.

In the great song at the sea, we have emotion released. The people sing. Divine redemption demands a human response. We sensitive souls must be moved to song when the Divine Hand is so apparent. In fact, when we quote the exodus from Egypt in our tefila, we inevitably mention the Shira – people need to sing when blessed with redemption.

Here we find joy, appreciation, elation and faith. And while the entire people sing with Moshe, the song is curiously in the first person singular: I sing, My strength (the English doesn't note singular but in Hebrew "Azi", my, singular, strength.) This is personal, individual – mine, not ours. We all sang the song at the sea; yet in the singular. My G-d saved me.



5TH ALIYA (15:27-16:10)

They traveled to the desert of Sin. They complained: oh, that we would have remained in Egypt with the abundance of bread and meat. The manna was provided in the morning: gather enough for a day, on Friday for 2 days. G-d appeared in a cloud.

It doesn't take long for the complaints to begin.

In fact, our parsha has more stories of complaint and confrontation than any parsha in the entire Torah. There are 4 stories of

complaint and 2 stories of skepticism: the fear at the sea, no water at Mara, no meat or bread in the desert, no water again at Refidim, and the skepticism in trying to save manna until the next day and trying to collect the manna on Shabbat.

What an irony. In the parsha of the greatest expression of G-d's intervention in this world, the splitting of the sea and the saving of the people, in this very parsha we have the most complaints of any parsha in the Torah.

And added irony, right after the sublime song, in the first person, of our appreciation to Him for all He has done.

Now, the complaints are justified; no water, no food. But the complaints are nonetheless noticeable.

It could be that the Torah is deliberately noting the mundane, pedestrian nature of man in close juxtaposition to the lofty, noble achievement of prophecy at the sea.

We are not angels. We are human. Human beings can be majestic, elevated, holy beings. But human we remain. The story of the Torah is not the story of myth, of angelic people, of perfection. It is a real story of real people. Their greatness. And their prosaic and mundane pettiness.



6TH ALIYA (16:11-36)

Meat will come in the evening.
Each person shall gather manna daily for their needs. Some people saved for the next day; it spoiled. And some went to gather on Shabbat. G-d questioned: how long will you resist doing My commands? G-d has given you Shabbat, hence gives you double on Friday. Aharon, take a portion of manna to preserve forever. The Jewish people ate the manna for 40 years.

The manna is a further lesson in G-d's

involvement in our world. He is involved not only in the miraculous, the dramatic, the splitting of the sea. He is also involved in the prosaic meanderings of man; our food.

Though, again we need to note not only what is said, but what is not. He provides the manna. But He did not intervene to prevent man from feeling hunger.

The Torah is teaching us His Ways, but in broad sweeps. It does not unlock all mysteries of when He intervenes. That He Intervenes, yes. When He Intervenes remains a mystery.

Shabbat precedes the giving of the Torah. The mitzvah of Shabbat is the 4th of the Ten Commandments. Yet, here already, before Mt. Sinai, is the notion of Shabbat. Prepare what you need on Friday. Gather double on Friday. Do not gather on Shabbat. Because none will fall.



7TH ALIYA (17:1-16)

There was no water in Refidim.
The people complained, as did Moshe. Moshe was instructed to hit the rock; water was produced. Amalek attacked in Refidim. Yehoshua defeated Amalek. A remembrance of this war needs to be recorded.

The juxtaposition of the war of Amalek with all that came before is instructive. The Divine provided us with: redemption from slavery, intervention at the sea, water, food, meat, water again. It would seem that Amalek is attacking that reality. A people with a G-d that protects and provides – that is a people I attack.

The enemies of the Jewish people view us as the people of G-d. A people protected by His Hand. That provokes jealousy, resentment and denial. Of that we need no commentary.

HAFTORAH: SHOFTIM 4:4-5:31

This week's *haftorah* describes the decimation of the army of the Canaanites along with its general Sisera. In response to this awesome event, Devorah offers a song of thanks. This is a parallel to the song sung by Moshe and the Israelites with the drowning of the Egyptian forces in the Red Sea.

Devorah, who was a prophetess, relays a message to Barak son of Avinoam conveying the precise instructions from Hashem: "Go and gather your men toward Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and Zevulun. And I shall draw to you, to the brook Kishon, Sisera, the chieftain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will give him into your hand." Barak requests that Devorah remain at his side and together head into battle.

Although Sisera was aware of the Israelites' mobilization, Barak's army, with the help of Heaven, utterly destroyed Sisera and his troops.

When Sisera saw that his end was near he quickly fled on foot and arrived at the tent of Yael, wife of Hever the Kenite. Yael invited the general in and offered him a place of refuge. When he fell asleep, Yael took a tent-peg and with it killed the powerful general, the dangerous enemy of the Israelite nation.

The soaring song of Devorah describing the miraculous victory is undoubtedly the highlight of this Shabbat's magnificent haftorah! ■



STATS

16th of 54 sedras; 4th of 11 in Shemot.

Written on 215.33 lines (17th).

14 parshiot; 9 open, 5 closed.

116 pesukim - rank: 23 (6th in Shemot).

681 words - rank: 19 (4th in Shemot).

6423 letters - rank: 18 (4th in Shemot).



MITZVOT

Beshalach contains a single mitzvah of the 613, the prohibition of leaving one's Shabbat boundary - T'chum Shabbat.

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

"G-d shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." (14:14) - (י'ד יי) - ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תחישון
The Mechilta explains that G-d will **always** assist you in fighting your enemies, not only now. Why the command to stay silent and hold our peace? Is it not enough for the verse to say "G-d will fight for you"?

The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen (1843-1926) illuminates us by stating that, now perhaps, our request for help by G-d is justified as the Exodus from Egypt. However, even at times when we must remain silent and refrain from asking G-d's assistance because we are unworthy due to sinful behavior, G-d will continue to fight our enemies for us.

Rabbi Avrohom Bornsztain (First Rebbe of the Sochatchover Chasidut 1838-1910) goes one step deeper. As opposed to the actual Exodus where the Israelites were commanded to actively do a mitzvah of Korban Pesach, here at the Crossing of the Yam Suf, the Israelites were not commanded to do anything, but to remain silent. When there is total devotion or readiness for self-sacrifice to the Almighty, the merit is so spiritually great, there is no need for further action. Silence is enough to garner the support of G-d.
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THE PERSON IN THE PARSHA

BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

“Song of the Sea”

Teaching young children has always been a joy for me. One of teaching's special advantages is the clarity that emerges from conversation with people under the age of ten.

A cute and oft-told story describes the reaction of one fourth grader to the lesson in which he first learned the difference between poetry and prose.

He remarked, "Wow! I have been writing prose all of my life and didn't even know it!"

I guess it was in the fourth grade when I first learned the distinction between prose and poetry, and when I became aware not only that I was writing prose, but that much of what I was studying in Jewish day school was prose, not poetry.

We were taught that prose is ordinary writing, language which portrays everyday events. Poetry, on the other hand, is the

language of the extraordinary. Poems are for special events and rare emotions.

Poetry is a song, and we only sing when special feelings well up within us.

In this week's *parsha*, *Beshalach*, we finally encounter poetry. From the beginning of the book of *Genesis* until this week's portion, we have been reading prose.

Surely, much of what we have been reading has not been ordinary, and we have even read about some miracles. But the language, with the possible exception of Jacob's blessings to his children, has been prose.

It is only in this week's narrative of the crossing of the Red Sea that the poetic bursts forth.

One of the lesser differences between poetry and prose is that the words of the former are surrounded on the page by much blank space. Prose, on the other hand, consists of written or printed words with a minimum of space between them.

You will notice that in the Torah scroll too the prose of all of *Genesis* and of *Exodus* until this week's portion consists of words written by the scribe with only minimal space between them. Look at the Torah scroll for this week's portion, and you will see long columns of white space parallel to the holy written words.

These white spaces are found wherever the language of the Torah or of the Prophets makes use of poetry and song. It has been said that these blank spaces are symbolic of feelings so deep and inexpressible that they

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cannot be reduced to words of black ink and are, instead, wordlessly conveyed in the white empty spaces.

It is with the crossing of the Red Sea that the powerful feelings of the redemption experience emerge from the hearts of the former slaves. Words of poetry come to the surface. Song and music demand expression. These feelings have no precedent in all that has come before in the biblical narrative.

Today, many of us live lives of prose. Day fades into the night, and even years seem to march along uneventfully with only rare episodes of drama. Few of us sing, and even fewer would feel capable of poetry.

That is what is so amazing about the Song of the Sea in this week's Torah portion. Everyone sang. All of Israel joined in the expression of poetic exultation. Our sages tell us that even the "lowly maid servant on the sea saw more than the prophet Ezekiel" and sang!

Moses led all the men in the song, and Miriam, all the women.

Perhaps it was the contrast between centuries of oppressive slavery and the sudden experience of utter freedom that evoked song in everyone. Perhaps it was the release from the deadly fear of the approaching Egyptian army that gave vent to unanimous poetry. Or it might have been the sight of the hated and dreaded enemy drowning under the waves that inspired all present to sing out triumphantly. Most likely, it was all of the above.

As readers of the weekly Torah portion, each of us struggles to relate what we study to our daily lives. It is, therefore, important that we use this week's narrative to nurture our own poetic urge.

The Talmud compares the miracle of the Red Sea to quite ordinary processes, such as

finding a spouse and earning a livelihood. The Talmud does this to inspire us to see the miraculous even in everyday events. Our sages realize the importance of poetry and song and wish to motivate us to respond with poetry and song even to mundane events. They want us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Of all the many Torah portions that we have read this year, beginning with *Genesis* and continuing until *Beshalach*, no biblical text is fully incorporated into our daily liturgy. Finally, from this week's portion, the Song of the Sea was made part of the daily Jewish liturgy, recited every single day of the year, weekday or Sabbath, ordinary day or holiday.

The message is clear: Poetry and song are vital for you. They are evoked by the experience of something very special. Every living moment is very special. ■

 **Doron M. Spierer**
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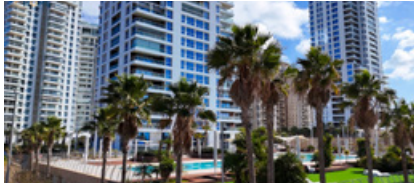
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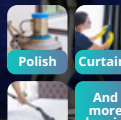
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To Be a Leader of the Jewish People

"That day, the Lord saved the Israelites from the Egyptians. And when the Israelites ... witnessed the wondrous power the Lord had unleashed against the Egyptians, the people were in awe of the Lord, and they believed in Him and in Moshe, His servant.

And then Moshe and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord..." (*Exodus 14:30-15:1*)

The Song at the Sea was one of the great epiphanies of history. The Sages said that even the humblest of Jews saw at that moment what even the greatest of prophets was not privileged to see. For the first time they broke into collective song – *Az Yashir* – a song we recite every day.

There is a fascinating discussion among the Sages as to how exactly they sang. On this, there were four opinions. Three appear in the tractate of *Sotah*:

Rabbi Akiva expounded: When the Israelites came up from the Red Sea, they wanted to sing a song. How did they sing it? Like an adult who reads the Hallel and they respond after him with the leading word.

Moses said, "I will sing to the Lord," and they responded, "I will sing to the Lord." Moses said, "For He has triumphed gloriously," and they responded, "I will sing to the Lord."

Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Jose the Galilean, said: It was like a child who reads the Hallel and they repeat after him all that he says. Moses said, "I will sing to the Lord," and they responded, "I will sing to the Lord." Moses said, "For He has triumphed gloriously," and they responded, "For He has triumphed gloriously."

Rabbi Nehemiah said: It was like a school-teacher who recites the Shema in the synagogue. He begins first and they follow along with him. (*Sotah 30b*)

According to Rabbi Akiva, Moses sang the song phrase by phrase, and after each phrase the people responded, I will sing to the Lord – their way, as it were, of saying Amen to each line. According to R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean, Moses recited the song phrase by phrase, and they repeated each phrase after he had said it. According to Rabbi

Nehemiah, Moses and the people sang the whole song together. Rashi explains that all the people were seized by Divine inspiration and miraculously, the same words came into their minds at the same time.

There is a fourth view, found in the Mechilta:

Eliezer ben Taddai said, Moses began and the Israelites repeated what he had said and then completed the verse. Moses began by saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," and the Israelites repeated what he had said, and then completed the verse with him, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and its rider He hurled into the sea." Moses began saying, "The Lord is my strength and my song," and the Israelites repeated and then completed the verse with him, saying, "The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation." Moses began saying, "The Lord is a warrior," and the Israelites repeated and then completed the verse with him, saying, "The Lord is a warrior, Lord is His name." (*Mechilta Beshalach Parsha 1*)

Technically, as the Talmud explains, the Sages are debating the implication of the (apparently) superfluous words *vayomru lemor*, "they said, saying", which they understood to mean "repeating". What did the Israelites repeat? For Rabbi Akiva it was the first words of the song only, which they repeated as a litany. For Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Jose the Galilean, they repeated the whole song, phrase by phrase. For R. Nehemiah they recited the entire song in unison. For Rabbi Eliezer ben Taddai they repeated the opening phrase of each line, but then completed the whole verse without Moses



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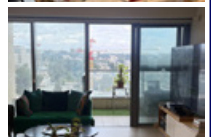
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having to teach it to them. Read thus, we have before us a localised debate on the meaning of a biblical verse.

There is, however, a deeper issue at stake. To understand this, we must look at another Talmudic passage, on the face of it unrelated to the passage in Sotah. It appears in the tractate of Kiddushin, and poses a fascinating question. There are various people we are commanded to honour: a parent, a teacher (i.e. a rabbi), the *nasi*, (religious head of the Jewish community), and a king. May any of these four types renounce the honour that is their due?

Rabbi Isaac ben Shila said in the name of Rabbi Mattena, in the name of Rabbi Hisda: If a father renounces the honour due to him, it is renounced, but if a rabbi renounces the honour due to him it is not renounced. Rabbi Joseph ruled: Even if a rabbi renounces his honour, it is renounced. . . Rabbi Ashi said: Even on the view that a rabbi may renounce his honour, if a *nasi* renounces his honour, the renunciation is invalid. . . Rather, it was stated thus: Even on the view that a *nasi* may renounce his honour, yet a king may not renounce his honour, as it is said, “You shall surely set a king over you,” meaning, his authority should be over you. (*Kiddushin* 32a-b)

Each of these people exercises a leadership role: father to son, teacher to disciple, *nasi* to the community and king to the nation.

May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits be
אבי מורי, my father, לע"נ

Kalman (Kelly) Winkler ז"ל
קלמן שלמה בן שלום יוסף ז"ל
טז' שבט

Rabbi Yehoshua and Yocheved Bienenfeld

Analysed in depth, the passages make it clear that these four roles occupy different places on the spectrum between authority predicated on the person and authority vested in the holder of an office. The more the relationship is personal, the more easily honor can be renounced. At one extreme is the role of a parent (intensely personal), at the other that of king (wholly official).

I suggest that this was the issue at stake in the argument over how Moses and the Israelites sang the Song at the Sea. For Rabbi Akiva, Moses was like a king. He spoke, and the people merely answered “Amen” (in this case, the words “I will sing to the Lord”). For Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Jose the Galilean, he was like a teacher. Moses spoke, and the Israelites repeated, phrase by phrase, what he had said. For Rabbi Nehemiah, he was like a *nasi* among his rabbinical colleagues (the passage in Kiddushin, which holds that a *nasi* may renounce his honour, makes it clear that this is only among his fellow rabbis). The relationship was collegial: Moses began, but thereafter, they sang in unison. For Rabbi Eliezer ben Taddai, Moses was like a father. He began, but allowed the Israelites to complete each verse.

This is the great truth about parenthood, made clear in the first glimpse we have of Abraham: Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. (*Bereishit* 31:11)

Abraham completed the journey his father began. To be a parent is to want one's children to go further than you did. That too, for Rabbi Eliezer ben Taddai, was Moses'

relationship to the Israelites.

The prelude to the Song at the Sea states that the people “believed in God, and in His servant Moses” – the first time they are described as believing in Moses’ leadership. On this, the Sages asked: What is it to be a leader of the Jewish people? Is it to hold official authority, of which the supreme example is a king (“The rabbis are called kings”)? Is it to have the kind of personal relationship with one’s followers that rests not on honour and deference but on encouraging people to grow, accept responsibility and continue the journey you have begun? Or is it something in between? There is no single answer.

At times, Moses asserted his authority (during the Korach rebellion). At others, he expressed the wish that “all God’s people were prophets”. Judaism is a complex faith. There is no one Torah model of leadership. We are each called on to fulfil a number of leadership roles: as parents, teachers, friends, team-members, and team-leaders.

There is no doubt, however, that Judaism favours as an ideal the role of parent, encouraging those we lead to continue the journey we have begun, and go further than we did. A good leader creates followers. A great leader creates leaders. That was Moses’ greatest achievement – that he left behind him a people willing, in each generation, to accept responsibility for taking further the great task he had begun. ■

These weekly teachings from **Rabbi Sacks zt”l** are part of his ‘Covenant & Conversation’ series on the weekly Torah teaching. With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. Visit www.RabbiSacks.org for more.

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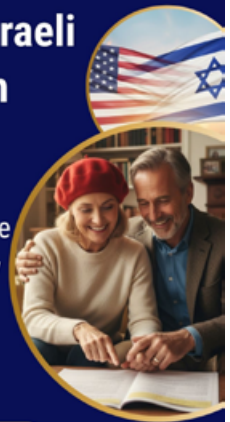
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PROBING THE PROPHETS

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FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

“Ein Breirah”

The Torah’s story of Kri’at Yam Suf and Sefer Shofetim’s saga of Israel’s battle against Yavin, the Canaanite King, share numerous details - which explains why Chazal chose the latter story from to be read as the haftarah for Parashat B’Shalach – Shabbat Shirah. We have discussed these similarities (many of which are found in Masechet P’sachim, 118b), in past articles, but I take this opportunity to review some of them.

Consider:

- Both encounters took place at a body of water (Yam Suf; Nachal Kishon)
- Both clashes pitted a weakened Israel forced to face a far stronger military
- Both enemies boasted in their massive chariot forces (600; 900)
- Both fell in war when their chariot “brigades” were made ineffective, having been trapped in the marsh and mud of the sea/river.

- Both victories were celebrated by songs of praise to Hashem
- Both praises were led by prophetesses (Miriam, [who led the women]; Devorah)

Despite the numerous similarities of the two events there is, I believe, an essential distinction between the two experiences. The distinction, however, cannot be appreciated without first studying the history of Israel’s relationship with their neighbors - a history recorded in the earlier p’rakim and elucidated by Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch.

Rav Hirsch reviews the earlier years and points to the p’sukim in the third perek [5-7] that relate how B’nai Yisra’el had been ignoring the Torah’s decree not to assimilate with the idolatrous nations around them. Yet, the text describes how Israel intermingled with the surrounding nations, intermarried with them, and, as the Torah predicted, abandoned their commitment to the One G-d. Hashem punished their unfaithful behavior by letting them fall into the hands of these neighboring nations, with the hope that such subjugation would awaken Israel to return. But they did not. Nonetheless, despite their wayward ways, Hashem responded to His nation’s cries and saved Israel from each enemy. But their regret after the years of misery was but fleeting for, despite the reprieve offered to them by G-d, they continued in their sinful ways.

But the arrival of the Northern Canaanite tribe under the harsh reign of Yavin, brought twenty years of suffering for Israel who, once again, Israel cried out to G-d. This time,

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Hashem responded through His prophethess, Devorah. And so, begins our haftarah.

Past history makes it clear that Israel's past pleas for relief did not lead the nation to genuine repentance. But under the leadership and inspiration of Devorah, there was a change. The suffering under Yavin and Sisera (his general), was far more difficult than those of the past. Pointing to Devorah's words in her "shirah" (5; 8), Rav Hirsch reminds us that, throughout the 20 years of Canaanite control, all of Israel's weaponry was confiscated, leaving Israel with "neither spear or shield". The situation was beyond difficult. It was, seemingly, impossible. In effect, Israel faced the decision of "ein breirah", they had no choice – much as the Israelites felt at Yam Suf.

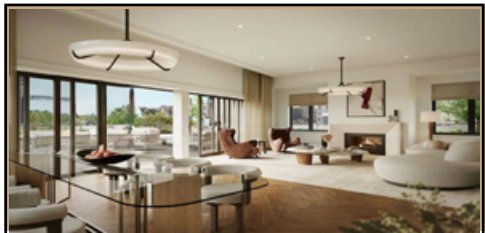
But there was a difference.

The Israelites escaping the Egyptian army had no choice but to rely on the G-d they hardly knew. They saw their "savior" – primarily - as being Moshe. The miracle at the Red Sea was wrought so that the nation would **discover** G-d.

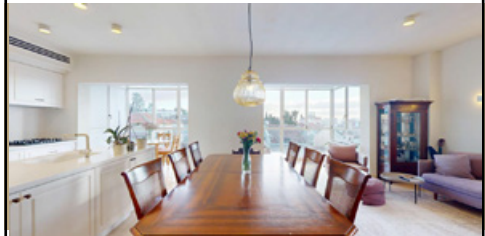
At Nachal Kishon, the nation of Israel knew well **who** Hashem was and **what** He could do. But they also recognized that they had turned away from G-d far too often in the past. Their pleas and prayers then, were not meant to **discover** a G-d they did not know... but to **return** to **THE ONE**, the **ONLY ONE**, who could help them.

When we are faced with a situation that gives us no choice, "ein breirah", [ch'v'sh] our tefillot must direct us to remember, repent and **return** to the **ONLY ONE**, who can – and who **will** – help us! ■

Rabbi Winkler's popular Jewish History lectures can be viewed by visiting the OU Israel Video archive: <https://www.ouisrael.org/video-library>



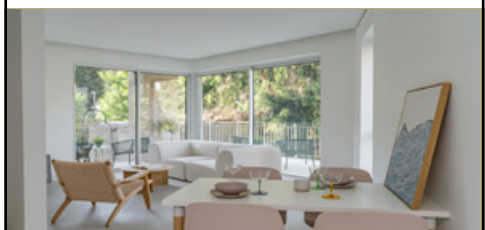
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Emunah – Two Types of Belief

וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בִּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ

“...they believed in God and in His servant Moshe.” (Shemot 14:31)

BELIEVING IN ONESELF

As Bnei Yisrael stood at the shores of the Yam Suf and witnessed the sea split before their eyes, the Torah attests that **now** they believed in Hashem and in Moshe. Rav Tzadok HaKohen explains that embedded within this verse is an additional message: not only must one believe in God — **one must believe in oneself**.

This theme resonates with Tu B'Shvat, which we will celebrate this coming week. In the cold stillness of winter, when the trees seem lifeless and bare, we begin to see the first signs of blossoming. The budding tree testifies to hidden potential — life stirring where none seemed present. So too, even in our darker or more challenging moments, we must believe in the latent greatness within us, waiting to bloom.

TWO TYPES OF EMUNAH

The *Darkei Mussar*, citing Rav Simcha Zissel, distinguishes between two types of emunah:

**Mazal tov to
Yosef & Adina Besso-Cowan
and family on the birth of a son,
brother of Tzofia Ruchama**

Emunah through inquiry and study (חקירה) — belief reached through intellectual reasoning.

Emunah through experience (חוש) — belief that emerges from direct encounter, felt reality, and lived connection.

Language itself hints at this idea. While the word for “father” varies dramatically across cultures (dad, abba, tata), the word for “mother” is strikingly similar worldwide — *ma, ema, mama*. This root is shared with the word *emunah*. A child instinctively trusts a mother who has carried, nurtured, and sustained them; the trust is born of closeness. So too, the deepest form of *emunah* is not merely belief — it is relationship.

To illustrate: imagine someone who has never tasted bread. He may accept a scientific study claiming that bread is filling. But a new study may later persuade him otherwise. Intellectual conclusions can be overturned. But someone who **tastes** bread — who has felt its satiation — cannot be shaken. His knowledge is experiential.

So it is with our faith. If *emunah* is based only on philosophy or abstract ideas, it can be unsettled by new arguments. But when *emunah* flows from **encounter**, from lived connection with Hashem — through tefillah, Torah, mitzvot, gratitude, and the ups and downs of life — it becomes unshakeable. That is the level Am Yisrael reached at the Yam Suf,

where they didn't merely hear — they *saw*. "וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל" — their eyes confirmed what their minds already held.

KNOWING, NOT MERELY BELIEVING

A Chassidic story illustrates this beautifully. A Rebbe once asked his students if they believed in God.

"Of course," they replied.

"I," said the Rebbe, "do not believe in God."

Shocked, his students asked what he meant.

"Do you believe this object before us is a table?" he asked.

"No," they answered, "we *know* it's a table."


"Exactly," said the Rebbe. "I don't *believe* in God — I *know*. I sense Him with the clarity of something right before my eyes."

Our task is to strive toward *emunah sheb'chush* — a felt faith, a relationship so real that it becomes part of our daily awareness.

OUR EMUNAH – TYPE TWO

Emunah is not meant to live only in our minds; it is meant to live in our hearts, in our experiences, and in our daily lives. It is built every time we recognize Hashem's presence in the ordinary moments — a sunrise, a breath, a small kindness, a challenge that strengthens us, a prayer whispered from the depths of our heart.

As Tu B'Shvat remind us - just as the barren tree blossoms again in mid-winter, so too can our Emunah blossom at any moment. No matter how cold, dark, or uncertain life may feel, there is always potential waiting beneath the surface — in our relationship with Hashem and in ourselves. May we cultivate not only belief, but connection. Not only ideas, but experience. Not only faith in Hashem, but the courage to believe in the greatness He planted within each of us. ■



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Trees and Teachers

Following the Splitting of the Sea, the Torah records two places where the Jews encamped. The first, *Marah*, was a place with bitter waters. Hashem instructs Moshe Rabbeinu to cast a piece of bitter wood into the waters and it becomes sweet. The second place, *Elim*, was a beautiful oasis with twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees.

It is curious that in recounting Am Yisrael's travels in the desert as recorded in *parashat Mas'ei*, the Torah deviates from listing each place, "they travelled and they encamped" to tell us once again about the springs and trees in *Elim*. If the Torah emphasizes this information, there must be true significance here.

One approach is suggested by the Chafetz Chaim zt"l. The Jews complained in *Marah* about the bitter waters, yet just a stop away was a lush wellspring. So often we hyper focus on our present situation without pausing to realize that life is a journey and "just around the corner," goodness and salvation await. The abundance in *Elim* serves as a perpetual reminder for us that we are in Hashem's caring Hand and sometimes we must exercise patience and trust until we see the obvious blessing.

Rashi alludes to a Midrash teaching that Hashem prepared this oasis at the time of *bri'at ha'olam* — the creation of the world. There were twelve springs, one for each tribe and seventy palm trees to provide rest and fruit for each of the seventy elders. The Ramban adds that Hashem arranged this for the glory of the people and the glory of the sages.

Rav Simcha Broide, zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, offers an important lesson to learn from this section. Each elder sat under a different palm tree, similar to Devorah who sat under a palm tree as she taught and judged the people. The elders did not need the tree for shade; they had the Clouds of Glory that

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shielded them from the sun. The trees were a symbol of prominence, according honor to each of the elders. Here *Am Yisrael* learned the value of treating elders of Torah with respect and reverence.

As the Jews were preparing to receive the Torah, this was a crucial message. One must show the utmost respect to the values of Torah, and to those who transmit its messages. Particularly in the age of AI, we can't forget that Torah's vibrancy and efficacy is shared through the *Talmidei Chachamim* in each generation. We see how important this lesson is — worth a second mention in *parashat Mas'ei*. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
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Our *Sedra, Parshat Beshalach*, recalls the incredible miracle of *Kriat Yam Suf*, the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds.

Kriat Yam Suf, and the spontaneous Song of Praise and appreciation that the Jewish People sang is of course such an important moment in Jewish history, that we recall each and every morning as part of the verses that precede *Tefilat Shacharit* each day. There is one particular verse that we recite each morning that I find to be exceptionally inspirational.

"Uvnei Yisrael halchu bayabasha b'toch haYam"- *"And the Jewish people walked on dry land within the Sea..."* The simple interpretation of this verse is that as the Jewish people traversed the Sea of Reeds, a miracle occurred allowing the sea to part and literally the Jewish people walked on dry land. There are several rabbinic teachings in both the *Midrash* and the *Talmud* that depict the scene as the sea actually parting into twelve sections, and each tribe walking on its own

path amid the waters.

The ***Sefat Emet, the Gerrer Rebbe zy'a***, offers the following interpretation of our verse- *On Dry land amidst the Sea- Even amid the ordinary, the miraculous can shine; revealed and concealed coexist, and Hashem's light flows into every step of everyday life.*

The ***Noam Elimelech, Rebbe Elimelech of Lijensk zy'a***, offered a unique interpretation of our *pasuk*.

"The verse speaks of the idea that '...the children of Israel walked on dry land amidst the sea...' that is that G-d gifted them with such revelation that even after they had passed through the sea, and were now on dry land, their faith and ability to experience G-d's presence, was exactly as they felt while in the midst of the sea, in the midst of the miracle..."

The ***Noam Elimelech*** explains that *Am Yisrael* was so impacted by the miracle of *Kriat Yam Suf*, that even after the miracle had ceased, the revelation stayed with them, the miracle remained with them.

The ***Birkat Avraham, the Slonimer Rebbe zy'a***, taught that the word ***b'toch (within)*** is equal in *gematria* to the word ***chatach*** (one who divides or distributes), a reference to the fact that *Hashem Yitbarach* is indeed the source of *parnasa*-sustenance and stability.

A person might often feel that

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he or she is drowning in debt or stress, that the waters of trouble are surrounding them on all sides, and they might not see or intuit any natural way out from under the pending waves that they fear will engulf them. In such circumstances, says the Rebbe, a Jew must always recall and be strengthened by remembering the great miracle at the Sea, and realize that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is the One who will bring them out of the depths.

The same is true, the Rebbe continues, in spiritual matters. At times, one feels as if they are walking on dry land, they feel spiritually uninspired- dried out, within the sea of *Kedusha*. In such instances, a person must recognize that even those spiritual dry spells are also from the *Ribono Shel Olam*, and thus be strengthened to persevere, and continue to cross the proverbial sea, to immerse themselves in the Sea of *Kedusha*, even when they might feel at the moment as if they are walking along on dry land. *Hashem* is there with us, even when we might be struggling.

May we all merit to embrace, and be strengthened by these beautiful teachings from the *Sefat Emet*, the *Noam Elimelech* and the *Birkat Avraham of Slonim zy'a*, and be able to reflect on the miracle of *Kriat Yam Suf* as a source of eternal *chizuk*, so we may have the fortitude to face life's challenges, with the faith and confidence that *Hashem* is indeed there together with us, every step of the way. ■




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Tree of Life

Rebbe Yosef Yitzchok, the Freidiker (“Previous”) Rebbe of Lubavitch was on a leisurely walk through the forest with his father, Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber zy’a, when Reb Yosef Yitzchok absentmindedly plucked a leaf off a tree as they passed by it on the trail.

Surprised, the father turned to his son and admonished him for his seemingly harmless action: “The leaf you tore from its branch was created by the *Ribbono Shel Olam* for a specific purpose! It is alive, its physical structure is akin to a body, it’s imbued with a Divine life-force, it’s guided by *Hashgacha Pratis* (Divine providence). Every blade of grass, every leaf on every tree is invested with G-d’s own vitality, created intentionally, each with a Divine spark, part of a ‘soul’ that has descended to earth to find its correction and fulfillment. How can you be so callous towards the creation of God?”

The Ba’al Shem Tov taught: the all-encompassing Oneness of Hashem is the fundamental reality underlying all Creation; everything is an expression of singular, Divine whole, the *Ein Sof*, the Infinite. Therefore, coming into contact with even one part, one element of Creation, is connecting to the entirety. Far beyond the Transcendentalist thinkers and writers of the 19th Century, the Holy Baal Shem Tov vividly perceived the interconnectedness of Creation with a supernal ecosystem, where all things share the same root and all pulsate with the same Divine heartbeat. All of Creation is branches of one tree.

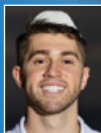
Torah itself is called “*Eitz Chayim*, a Tree of Life for all those who grab onto it.” (Mishlei 3) When we grab hold of a single leaf at the very edge of the tree, a small twig, flower or fruit, we are “*ocheiz b’kulah*”, holding on to the entire tree as well, connected to the whole of Truth and Wisdom. (*Baal Shem Tov al haTorah*, Nasso)

In the same way that the Rebbe, Reb Shalom Dov Ber was sensitive to every blade of grass, every flower petal, so do we need to

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cherish every word of Torah learnt, every letter, every mitzvah. Connecting with just one idea or verse of Torah, uttering a single word of prayer, we are bound to the entirety of the infinite universe of Jewish experience and knowledge.

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Shabbos Shirah features the Song of the Sea at *Kriyas Yam Suf*, the Splitting of the Sea of Reeds. In the midst of *Az Yashir*, the song of praise celebrating the Exodus from Egypt, Moshe has a vision of the End of Days: *T'vi'emo v'sitaeimo b'har nachalasecha*, "Bring us to and implant us upon the mount of Your inheritance..." He envisions us 'planted' on *Har HaBayis*, flourishing with Temple consciousness, rooted in the headquarters of Divine space, time and awareness, drawing from the infinite Source of All Life. So may it be!

Tu b'Shvat sameach, a meaningful and sweet New Year for the Trees to you and to all of us who strive to cling to any and every part of it! ■

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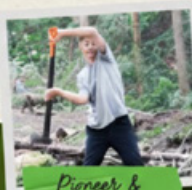
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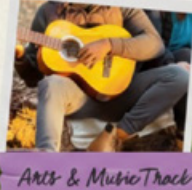
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8:30 PM

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**MONDAY
FEB 2**

8:30 PM

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@ **Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak**
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Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of
Chazal
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

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7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** Rabbi Elie Levi

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Modern Masters
Rabbi Sam Shor

10:20 AM

From Text to Tachlis: Halacha in
Action **Rabbi Jeremy Perlow**
(Rabbi Manning will resume Feb. 18)

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A study of Rav Kook's sefer
Midot HaRayah
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider

12:30 PM

Jews in the Middle Ages:
External Threats and Internal
Developments
Dr. Deborah Polster

THURSDAY FEB 5

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

@ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon,
11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua **Rabbi Ari Kahn**

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of Tanach
Rabbi Neil Winkler

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8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies
(the Bais) **Rabbi Aschi Dick**



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SHIRA SMILES SHIUR - TUE. JAN 20

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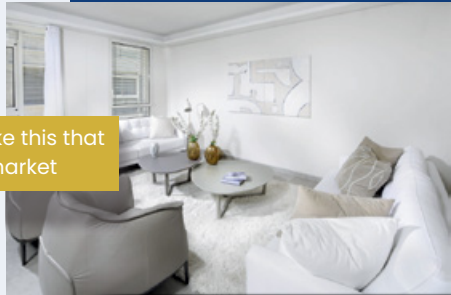
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I Am Hashem, Your Healer

Fresh off our liberation from Mitzrayim, we arrived at the desert encampment of Marah—just a few steps from Sinai and only weeks before the great encounter at the mountain. The water there was bitter, undrinkable. Hashem instructed Moshe to cast a tree into the water, and it became sweet.

That act of healing was more than a practical solution to a physical crisis. It served as a metaphor for a broader message. If we accept Hashem's will and live by His commandments, we will be spared the sickness and affliction that marked life in Mitzrayim. Hashem was not only rescuing us from bondage; He was revealing Himself as our Healer.

A DISEASED EMPIRE

Fresh off the horrific scenes of Egypt, the imagery of healing and restored health was deeply comforting. We had watched a great empire collapse into ruin over the course of a single year, battered by relentless Divine

plagues. Egypt endured the breakdown of hygiene, shortages of food, contagious disease, a sweeping animal epidemic that nearly crossed into the human realm, and finally death in every household.

We lived among them, witnessing health steadily erode and death ultimately descend. Against that backdrop, Hashem assured us that we would not be exposed to the same fate. We would be protected and kept whole and healthy. His mitzvot were presented not only as pathways to religious meaning, but as a regimen for physical health and human well-being.

ALIGNMENT

This was not an isolated promise. We were being conditioned to recognize the alignment between Divine will and human well-being. Just weeks before Har Sinai, Hashem was already demonstrating that Torah would lead to human health and elevate the human condition. The horrific illnesses we had witnessed in Mitzrayim would be prevented by a life shaped by Torah and mitzvot.

COMPASSION, NOT ANGER

At the same time, Hashem was reorienting our understanding of Him, not only our appreciation of mitzvot. Two centuries of slavery had eroded the theological world that the Avot had built. When Moshe stood at the sneh, he was uncertain how to describe

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Hashem to a people whose religious memory had grown faint. Gradually, we began to relearn who He is—a G-d who cannot be seen or fully described. We learned that He is a Redeemer. On the night of Yetziat Mitzrayim, as the firstborn of Egypt were struck down, we also learned that He is our Father.

Yet over the course of the “Year of the plagues” we had witnessed relentless retribution, punishment raining down from the heavens. There was a real danger that we would come to see Hashem as an angry God, a deity who takes satisfaction in punishing humanity. That danger was not new. That image was precisely what Avraham had labored tirelessly to undo.

For the first two thousand years of history, humanity was burdened by the mistaken belief that God was wrathful and vengeful. That was all they saw—expulsion from Gan Eden, natural catastrophes, collapsing towers. From these events, they concluded that God was perpetually angry. Avraham worked to introduce a different vision: a compassionate and caring G-d.

Now his descendants had lost touch with that tradition and were encountering Hashem primarily as a punisher. It was therefore crucial that, at the first possible moment after Kariat Yam Suf, Hashem changed the script. Instead of punishing, He provided life. Instead of turning water into blood, He healed bitter water. Hashem was announcing that He is a Healer, not a Punisher.

HEALING SIN

Over time, the metaphor of healing in religion took on an added depth. Both Yeshayahu and Hoshea adopted healing as a metaphor for *teshuva*, reframing repentance not as punishment, but as restoration.

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Hoshea writes:

אֶרְפָּא מְשׁוּבָתָם אֶהְבֶּם נִדְבָה כִּי שָׁב אִפִּי מִמִּצְוֹנוֹ

“I will heal their waywardness; I will love them generously, for My anger has turned away from them.”

Yeshayahu writes:

שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרָחוֹק וּלְקָרוֹב אָמַר ה' וְרִפְּאתִיו

“Peace, peace to the far and to the near, says Hashem—and I will heal him.”

By describing *teshuva* as healing, these nevi'im reshaped how we understand sin and moral failure. Just as illness does not define a person, and healing restores someone to their natural state, sin does not define who we are. When we stumble, we are not essentially corrupt or broken. We remain the upright and dignified beings Hashem created, momentarily pulled into something unhealthy and unnatural.

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condition of moral and spiritual health. Sin is not intrinsic; like disease, it afflicts us and sets us back. And like disease, it can be healed.

HEALING HISTORY

While Yeshayahu and Hoshea spoke of *teshuva* as healing a fractured moral spirit, Yirmiyahu spoke of healing a broken Jewish world. In perek 30, Hashem promises that we will be redeemed from the fallen state of galut:

כִּי אֶעֱלֶה אֶרֹּכֶה לָךְ וּמִמְכֹּתֶיךָ אֶרְפָּאָךְ נָא אֵם ה' כִּי
נִדְחָה קִרְאִי לָךְ

“For I will bring you healing, and I will heal you of your wounds, declares Hashem. For they have called you an outcast.

By casting redemption as healing, Yirmiyahu reminds us that galut is not the natural state of Jewish history. Exile can last a long time. For a people thousands of years removed from the Jewish homeland and from Jewish sovereignty, galut can begin to feel normal, even permanent. When exile grows comfortable, we risk forgetting that it is exile at all, mistaking it for a substitute for life in Israel.

By framing redemption as healing, Hashem defines galut as a sickness. Through our betrayal, history was damaged, and we became historically unwell. Until we return to Israel and to redemption, we remain in a diseased state. We can function as *yirai Shamayim* and build a rich, serious religious life, but it is still a compromised condition of religious health. Only with our return to Israel do we recover fully.

HEALING HEARTS

Hoshea and Yeshayahu speak of *teshuva* as healing. Yirmiyahu describes redemption as healing. David HaMelech applies that same language to the inner life of the individual:

הַרְפָּא לְשִׁבּוּי־לֵב וּמַחֲבֵשׁ לְעֵצָבוֹתָם

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

Here, healing is not about repairing a broken historical script or reshaping moral will through *teshuva*. It is something more internal. Hashem promises to help us through moments of emotional fracture and pain. When the heart is broken, when a person feels alone or worn down, we rely on Hakadosh Baruch Hu to enter our inner world and walk with us through our darkest moments.

For David HaMelech, Hashem is the ultimate Healer—not only correcting behavior or guiding history, but restoring broken identity and stitching together fractured hearts.

Our Land and our people are filled with the brokenhearted. During this war so many have suffered, on every level, and the trauma will linger for years. We do what we can to recover—through spirit, faith, courage, and by caring for one another through these hard days.

We also turn in tefillah to the Healer who promised us long ago that He would heal us and sweeten bitter waters in the desert. Thankfully, we have enough sweet water to drink; Israel has been blessed by G-d with the technology to provide it. What we now ask is something deeper. We need Hashem to be part of the healing process—to help rebuild the broken inner worlds of so many among our people.

We need Hashem to be our Healer. ■



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From Sound to Song

Last night we were at a concert. Two pieces were played back to back. The first was technically flawless. Every musician was fully present, precisely on time, deeply committed to their part. No one was off-key, no one was missing a beat. And yet, the sound was jarring, dissonant and harsh on the ear. Everyone was playing together, but the music never quite settled. It was sound, but it was not song.

The second piece was different. Each instrument still carried its own voice, its own line. No one disappeared into the background. But now those voices were listening to one another. Adjusting. Making space. And suddenly something shifted. The same number of players, the same level of commitment but what emerged was *shira*. Not

just sound, but song. Something melodic, something that lifted the room.

Shabbos Shira invites us to reflect on that difference, the subtle but essential movement from sound to song. Shira is not created simply by many voices sounding at once. It does not emerge automatically from passion, effort, or even sincerity. True shira is born when distinct voices align, when individuality is not erased, but oriented toward a shared purpose. When voices are not competing for dominance, but contributing to harmony.

The Haftorah opens with a striking formulation: בְּפָרֵעַ פְּרָעוֹת בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּהִתְנַדֵּב עָם – בְּרָכוּ ה' *When leadership stepped forward in Israel, when the people willingly responded — bless Hashem.* (Shoftim 5:2) Rashi notes that this praise is directed not only at those who led, but at those who *responded willingly*. Shira does not emerge from command alone. Presence is not enough; willingness is what allows sound to become song.

Ibn Ezra highlights the structure of the

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posuk itself. Leadership initiates, and the people answer. These are two distinct movements. Leadership without response remains sound. Response without direction lacks coherence. Song is created only when the two meet.

Malbim adds a deeper and more sobering layer. He explains “בְּפֶרֶץ” as describing a moment when Israel was *parua*, uncontained and fractured. Whether because moral discipline had unraveled, or because the people were weakened and exposed, the nation was broken into many dissonant parts. And yet, בְּהִתְנַדֵּב אִם, if precisely then, a people steps forward willingly to act with courage, this is not a natural occurrence. It is a Divine one. That is why the pasuk concludes, בָּרְכוּ ה', *bless Hashem*, because when sound becomes song in a moment of fracture, it can only be by His hand.

Shirat Devorah is not a solo. Devorah does not sing alone, and neither does Barak. The song rises from a nation in which voices differ, roles are not interchangeable, and unity is far from guaranteed — yet purpose is shared. We often assume that unity requires sameness. Shabbos Shira teaches otherwise. Harmony is not uniformity. It is attentiveness. It is responsiveness. It is



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the discipline of listening closely enough to shape something together.

Shabbos Shira reminds us that when voices compete, even sincere effort can remain mere sound. But when voices listen, when they attune themselves to one another, sound becomes song. This song becomes something strong enough to carry a people forward. ■



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RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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Rav Kook: Developing Authentic Awe

(Midot HaRa'aya: Yir'ah, Piska #5)

Rav Kook distinguishes between the fear of God's punishment (*yirat ha'onesh*), awe before God's grandeur (*yirat ha'romemut*), and love of God:

"The fear of God's punishment is to be differentiated from fear in the sense of awe before the grandeur of God and from the sensibility of love for Him..." (*Midot HaRa'aya, Yir'ah, piska #5*)

There is a profound difference between a relationship with God that revolves around fear of punishment and one in which a person is drawn to God by His greatness and magnificence.

In the same passage, Rav Kook illustrates this distinction with a beautiful metaphor:

"The fear of God's punishment is like seeds planted in a garden. They are not eaten but are first planted in a small, narrow row, where they cannot reach full fruition. Once they reach an initial stage of growth and are capable of bearing fruit, they are uprooted and replanted in a large, spacious garden. There they reach full fruition and become good food for people to enjoy."

The early stage of growth represents a less mature conception of fear—one rooted primarily in concern over punishment and discipline. This stage is necessary, but it is

only the beginning of spiritual development. True growth occurs when one progresses toward recognizing God's majesty and is drawn to Him through love and awe.

In a similar vein, Rav Kook employs another evocative metaphor (*ibid.*, piska #7): the sediment at the bottom of a bottle of wine. Fear of punishment is likened to the dregs—an unavoidable part of the process of producing fine wine. Upon this "crude foundation," Rav Kook writes, "are built august edifices, noble thoughts and aspirations, enchanting the eye with their beauty." He concludes by citing the well-known verse: "*The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord*" (Psalms 111:10).

RAMBAM: FEAR AND LOVE

The Rambam, in describing the mitzvah of fearing God, presents fear and love as complementary forces. Far from being contradictory, these emotions work together to cultivate an ideal relationship with the Divine.

He writes:

"This honored and awesome God—it is our duty to love and fear Him... When a person contemplates His great and wondrous works and creatures and perceives His immeasurable and infinite wisdom, he immediately loves, praises, and glorifies Him... Yet when

he reflects on these same matters, he recoils in awe and fear, realizing that he is a small, lowly, and limited creature standing before the God who is perfect in knowledge.” (*Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* 2:1–2)

THE TALNER REBBE’S INSIGHT

Rabbi Yitzchak Twersky of Brookline, Massachusetts, the Rebbe of the Talner Shtiebel, was known for sharing profound *divrei Torah* during *Seudah Shlishit*. In discussing Moshe’s encounter with the burning bush, the Torah states:

“Moshe said, ‘I will turn aside and see this great sight—why is the bush not consumed?’” (*Shemot* 3:3)

Rashi understands Moshe’s “turning aside” as a shift of attention—from his previous focus to the miraculous bush. The Talner Rebbe, however, was intrigued by an alternative interpretation offered by the Kli Yakar, who suggests that Moshe actually stepped back from the bush in order to perceive its light. The intensity of the light, writes the Kli Yakar, initially prevented Moshe from grasping its essence.

The Rebbe saw in this image a powerful metaphor for the relationship between love and fear of God. We are drawn toward divine

light, yet simultaneously compelled to step back in awe and trepidation. This tension lies at the heart of authentic religious experience.

A devoted student of the Rambam, the Talner Rebbe suggested

that this is precisely the dialectic described in *Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah* (2:1–2): the oscillation between love and fear that defines genuine engagement with God. (*See Torah of the Mind, Torah of the Heart, R. Twersky, ed. David Shapiro, pp. 103–105.*)

DEVELOPING AWE OF GOD

The Talmud (*Menachot* 43b) teaches that one is obligated to recite one hundred blessings each day. This obligation is derived from the verse:

“And now, Israel, what (*mah*) does Hashem your God ask of you?” (*Devarim* 10:12)

Although the Talmud does not explain the derivation explicitly, Rashi notes that the word *mah* (“what”) can be read as *me’ah* (“one hundred”). Thus, the verse can be interpreted as: “Now, Israel, Hashem your God asks one hundred of you”—a reference to the daily obligation of one hundred blessings.

By filling our days with blessings—during prayer, before and after eating, and throughout ordinary moments—we invite God’s presence into our lives. Pausing to acknowledge that our sustenance comes from divine generosity opens our awareness to the heavenly light that permeates the world.

THE BRISKER RAV AND THE HUNDRED BLESSINGS

A story is told about the Brisker Rav, Rabbi Yitzchak Ze’ev Soloveitchik, who was once a guest in a home in Switzerland. On Shabbat afternoon, he asked for a banana and an apple, but did not eat them. The fruit was brought to the Brisker Rav but the fruit



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remained untouched. After Shabbat the host finally gathered the courage to ask why he requested the two fruits and proceeded not to eat either of them.

The Brisker Rav explained that he initially needed the fruit because he was missing two blessings to complete the required hundred. (An apple requires the blessing *borei pri ha'etz*, and a banana requires *borei pri ha'adamah*.) However, during the afternoon Mincha davening he was called to the Torah, where he recited two blessings—one before the reading and one after—thus fulfilling his obligation.

This story illustrates the meticulous care with which one should approach mitzvot, particularly blessings. When recited with intention, blessings infuse daily life with an awareness of God's presence and omnipotence.

SINCERE AWE OF THE ALMIGHTY

Rav Kook writes:

“The fear of God itself must submit to the discipline of the fear of God.” (*Midot HaRa'aya, piska #10*)

This enigmatic statement suggests that even one's fear of God must be examined and refined. When fear becomes habitual or rote, it risks becoming superficial and empty.

The Rebbe of Kotzk, Rabbi Menachem Mendel, once observed that early Chassidism was so spiritually intense and ethereal that it required physical boundaries. This gave rise to distinctive garments—the *shtrimeil*, *kapoteh*, and *gartel*—meant to contain lofty spiritual energies. Today, he lamented, the opposite is often true: the external trappings remain, but the inner depth and fervor are sometimes lacking. The clothing endures, but the heart and soul are impoverished. (*Midot*

HaRa'aya, Soltonovitch, p. 265)

Another poignant Chassidic story reinforces this message. At Chassidic weddings, it is customary for a *badchan* (jester) to entertain the bride and groom. On one occasion, a *badchan* asked Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, for permission to imitate his distinctive style of prayer. The Rebbe consented.

As the performance continued, the *badchan* noticed tears streaming down the Rebbe's face. Alarmed, he stopped and apologized, fearing he had been disrespectful.

“I am not crying because I was insulted,” the Rebbe replied. “As I watched you, I began to wonder: if others can imitate me so well, perhaps I, too, am merely imitating myself.” (*The Six Constant Mitzvot, R. Berkowitz, p. 213*)

The Satmar Rebbe was asking a piercing question: *Am I praying with sincerity and depth, or am I merely going through the motions?* It is a question we must all ask ourselves — to regularly examine whether our service of God is authentic or mechanical.

LESSONS FOR LIFE

- Kiss the mezuzah when entering or leaving your home, reminding yourself that God created the world and watches over all that you do.
- Trust that everything unfolds according to God's plan. Even painful experiences ultimately serve a higher purpose.
- During prayer, pause over a single line and read it with fresh eyes and an open heart. ■



Rabbi Goldscheider's most recent OU Press Publication, “Torah United” on the weekly Parsha, can be ordered directly from Rabbi Goldscheider at aarong@ouisrael.org at a special price for Torah Tidbits readers.

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With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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Cutting Nails During Shloshim

Question: May a mourner during *Shloshim* cut his/her nails? Does it depend on the circumstances?

Answer: The short answer is that an *avel* may not cut his nails during *Shloshim*. A *baraita* (Moed Katan 17b) cites Rabbi Yehuda, who equates cutting hair and cutting nails, in that both are forbidden on *Chol Hamoed* and during *aveilut*. Rabbi Yossi does not equate nail cutting to haircutting and permits cutting nails in both circumstances. The *gemara* (ibid. 18a) concludes with Shmuel's opinion that we follow Rabbi Yossi and permit cutting nails during *aveilut* as well as *Chol Hamoed*, except

that during *aveilut* it must be done **without a nail cutting utensil**. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 390:7) indeed forbids cutting nails with a utensil during *aveilut*, throughout *Shloshim*.

Some leniencies are broadly accepted; some leniencies are a matter of opinion; others are dependent on need and circumstances. The philosophy of many of the *halachot* of *aveilut*, including haircutting and nail cutting, is that one should be in a state of mind where his physical and especially his aesthetic side should not be pursued in a normal manner. This can explain some leniencies.

The Gesher Hachayim (21:11:9) rules that if one's nails are particularly long so that it takes away from the honor of Shabbat, he may cut them. In other words, the prohibition was not meant to negate certain values or other needs that are not aesthetic. This is reminiscent of the *halacha* regarding haircutting that if one's mustache is impeding his eating in any way, he may trim it (Shulchan Aruch ibid. 1). In other words, these *halachot* are not meant to take away from functionality.

A leniency that includes functionality and *mitzva* is that of a *mohel* who can fix the nails he needs to perform a *brit mila* most effectively (Rama, YD 393:3). Another religiously related need is the permission for a woman who needs to go to the *mikveh* to cut her nails in preparation (Shulchan Aruch, YD 390:7).

We saw above (Mo'ed Katan 18a; see also the Rambam, Avel 5:2) a major distinction. It is permitted without special need to cut nails



by hand or teeth, even during *shiva* (Shulchan Aruch, YD 390:7). The logic is that only the normal manner of cutting was forbidden. Yalkut Yosef (Aveilut 37:8) says that one can even use a nail cutter to merely start the cut, and then one does the main part of the cutting by hand or with teeth.

On the other hand, the fact that there are different ways to get the job done can create limitations even when other leniencies apply. For example, regarding the permissibility of cutting before going to the *mikveh*, the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) requires that she have a non-Jew cut them for her. The Rama (ad loc.) does not see why, if it is not done by the *aveila* herself, it would make a difference whether a Jew or non-Jew would do it, considering that for even a Jewish cutter, there is no prohibition involved. Therefore, the Rama posits that even the Shulchan Aruch meant just that it be done by someone else, but it could even be a Jew. Among the commentators, some do require specifically a non-Jew to cut (Shach ad loc. 4) whereas some say that the *aveila* can do it even herself since it is for a *mitzva* (Taz ad loc. 3). As far as the bottom line, when there is a good reason to be lenient, one may be (Mei'olam V'ad Olam 33:21).

One way in which nail cutting is more lenient than haircutting, is according to most opinions, regarding what happens after *Shloshim* for parents. For haircutting, one must wait until people "criticize" his long hair after *Shloshim* (Shulchan Aruch ibid. 4). However, R. Akiva Eiger (ad loc.) says that this is not

required for nails; rather, it is automatically permitted after *Shloshim*. (There are dissenters, but the lenient opinion is standard *halacha* – see Divrei Sofrim 390:44.) Interestingly, though, R. Akiva Eiger's source (Shut Halachot K'tanot I:113) seems to indicate that the distinction is technical rather than hierarchical. ■

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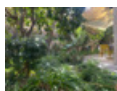
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Unusual Conception

Last time we presented the recent report that over 13 million children have been born through in-vitro fertilization, IVF. This is a huge number in less than 50 years, an average of more than 774 every day. IVF has become a perfectly normal and extremely common way of conception, and this has impact on certain halachic discussions.

Last time we asked whether a couple fulfill their halachic obligation to procreate if they have a child through IVF. On the one hand, it would seem intuitive that this is a legitimate way to fulfill the commandment to be “fruitful and multiply”. The requirement is to have children, and the mitzvah does not stipulate the method of conception.

This is the opinion of Rabbi Yosef Babad, in his seminal and widely studied book *Minchat Chinuch*, a commentary and elucidation of the classic *Sefer Chinuch*. The *Minchat Chinuch* claims that the mitzvah is to raise the children, and he would be of the opinion that one fulfills this instruction whichever way

the children were conceived.

But many halachic authorities disagree and hold that the conception of the child is part of the mitzvah and must be done according to certain criteria and parameters. If this is the case then the way that the child is conceived is extremely important.

We have a general Talmudic principle “the Torah was not given to the Ministering Angels” (*Kiddushin* 54a), rather it was given to Man. The Torah cannot instruct us to do something that is beyond human capacity. In addition, the commandments must be kept by humans in a regular human manner, in other words, in the natural normal way.

If a person was born without arms, they would have no obligation to transplant an arm in order to don tefillin, the Torah is binding only when it is performed in a natural way. Someone who injected matzah into their stomach would not fulfill the commandment to eat matzah on Pesach. Only if it is consumed in the normal manner is the mitzvah fulfilled.

We can apply this same principle to procreation; if a child is conceived naturally then the parents fulfill their halachic obligation to procreate. But this may well not be the case if the child is conceived in an unusual way, for example, by creating an embryo in the laboratory, and not in the body.

IVF is a departure from the norm and therefore it can be claimed that the parents do not fulfill their halachic obligation.

More on this next time. ■

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RICKA RAZEL

SINGER, SONGWRITER, MUSICIAN

**GUEST DVAR TORAH
FOR SHABBAT SHIRA**

Shabbat Shira: The Song of Women and the Path to Redemption

Shabbat Shira, the Shabbat of Song, marks one of the most powerful moments in our collective memory: the splitting of the sea. After fear, uncertainty, and generations of bondage, Am Yisrael finally stands on dry land, watching the waters fall behind them and the past literally collapse. The response

is instinctive — they sing. Moshe and Bnei Yisrael lift their voices together in gratitude and awe. But the Torah doesn't stop there. Almost immediately, the women enter the scene, led by Miriam the prophetess, coming forward with drums, song, and dance. Their song isn't just a response — it's a statement.

Chazal teach us that the women carried their drums with them through the desert, even during slavery. While still in Egypt, before redemption was visible or guaranteed, they believed it would come. They prepared instruments for a celebration they had not yet seen. That detail says everything. It shows that the women didn't just respond to redemption — they believed in it before it happened. Their faith wasn't passive. It was active. It helped shape the redemption itself.

This is why Shabbat Shira speaks so deeply to women across generations. The men sing after the miracle. The women sing from a place of faith that comes before it. Miriam's song isn't only about relief or victory — it's about trust. A deep, quiet trust that carried the people long before the sea ever split.

And honestly, that feels very familiar. We live in a generation that knows uncertainty well. The final redemption, the Geulah, is

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something we talk about all the time, pray for every day, and still struggle to picture clearly. It feels close and far at the same time. And in that space, the role of women hasn't really changed: to hold faith when clarity is missing, to sing before the ending is written, to keep the rhythm for a future that's still unfolding.

Music has always carried this kind of faith. Song goes past logic and speaks straight to the soul. When words feel small, melody holds what we can't explain. That's why song is always part of redemption stories — past and future. Shirat HaYam wasn't a performance. It was an outpouring. The song itself became part of the miracle.

In my own journey as a Jewish Orthodox singer, performing exclusively for women, I feel this connection deeply. Each month on Rosh Chodesh, I lead a musical Hallel for women, and together we bring something ancient back to life. Hallel is a prayer of praise connected to miracles — both the ones we've already seen and the ones we're still waiting for. When women come together to sing Hallel, we're not only thanking Hashem for what's been — we're making space for what's still becoming.

These gatherings are an open invitation. An invitation to step into Miriam's circle. To bring your voice — whether strong or quiet — your faith, your questions, your hope. You don't need certainty. You don't need clarity. You just need a heart that's willing to sing toward something bigger than itself.

And you are personally invited to join us every month for this uplifting event.

Just as Miriam gathered the women at the sea, women today gather through song, rhythm, shared breath, and shared voice. These moments are quiet acts of redemption.

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Shabbat Shira teaches us that redemption doesn't only come through splitting seas and open miracles. It comes through faith that prepares drums in advance. Through voices that refuse to go silent. Through women who keep singing even when the path ahead isn't clear.

The final Geulah will come, the prophets tell us, with song. And if history teaches us anything, the women will already be singing — not because everything is resolved, but because they believe it will be.

Just as they always have. ■

Ricka Razel (Van Leeuwen) is an acclaimed singer, songwriter, and musician. She performs regularly for women and leads Hallel every Rosh Chodesh.

RAKEL BERENBAUM
TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

What's So Special About Tu B'Shvat?

So what's so special about *Tu B'Shvat*? Is it a "real" holiday or something else?

It is true that the *Mishna* calls it a "*Rosh Hashana*, a new year" for the trees. Yet it wasn't designated as a holy day, where we can't work, though we shouldn't fast or say *Tachnun* on *Tu B'Shvat*. So it is special in some way.

The *Torah* states "Take a tithe of all the seed crops that come forth in the field each year" (*Dvarim* 14:22) *Tu B'Shvat*, the "new year" for trees, determines when one tree year ends and the next one begins, for *terumot* and *maaserot* purposes.

It seems a bit funny that it has become a custom to eat lots of fruits on *Tu B'Shvat*. Didn't all of our problems start when the first man and woman ate a fruit from the wrong tree? Why remind God of how man sinned? Actually, when eating fruits in holiness, at a *Tu B'Shvat* seder, and reading verses and reciting blessings over the foods, it becomes a type of repentance and *tikun* for the sin of Adam & Eve.

Another reason for eating fruits is to acquire the special holiness of the *Shechina* that rests in the fruits grown in the Land of Israel. We see this in the after blessing, called the three-faceted blessing (*Bracha meen shalosh*) since it is a single blessing that summarizes the three scripturally ordained blessings of the Birkat Hamazon. There we

thank God "...for the good and spacious Land that You were pleased to give our forefathers as a heritage, to eat of its fruits and be satisfied with its goodness"

When we eat all the fruits it's also an opportunity to refresh our memory on the laws of blessings such as on which fruit to bless first. We can also focus on the fact that all our days are filled with so many things to be grateful for. Every delicious morsel and soothing drink provides us the opportunity to recognize and thank God and bless Him. As the *Talmud* tells us (*Brachot* 35a) "whoever enjoys this world's pleasures without reciting a blessing is tantamount to one who steals from God". *Tu B'Shvat* is also a perfect day to eat a new fruit in order to have the opportunity to add the blessing of *shehechyanu* on a new fruit.

So *Tu B'Shvat* is a new year for the trees, a day to do teshuva for the sin of Adam and Eve, to *acquire* the holiness of the fruits of the Land of Israel, to appreciate those fruits, and improve our intentions in all our blessings. May we all be worthy to see the fulfillment of the words we say whenever we recite the *Bracha Meen Shalosh*: "Rebuild Jerusalem, the city of holiness, speedily in our days. Bring us up into it and gladden us in its rebuilding and let us eat from its fruit and be satisfied with its goodness and bless You upon it, in


holiness and purity"

So while you're eating as many fruits from Israel as you can on *Tu B'Shvat*, here's a cabbage salad filled with fruits to go along with them.

RED CABBAGE AND FRUIT SALAD FOR TU B'SHVAT

- 1/2 red cabbage (500g), cored and shredded or thinly sliced
- Red wine vinegar or cider vinegar
- 5 dried apricots, diced
- 5 dried dates, diced
- 2 tbsp. golden raisins
- 5 prunes, pitted and diced
- 1 tart, apple, unpeeled, cored and cut into julienne
- Pomegranate seeds
- 1-2 tbsps canola oil
- A number of pinches of cumin
- 1/2 tsp silan, or to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2-3 Tbsps walnut pieces

Place cabbage in a bowl. Add salt, pepper and vinegar and toss well. Cover and let stand for about 2 hours. Drain all but 1 Tbsp of the liquid. Add the fruits. Add oil. Add remaining ingredients, toss well, taste and adjust to desired taste. Add walnuts just before serving and toss to mix well. ■



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The First Fight: Red Flag or Real Information?

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אצליהו הכהן ז"ל

Chana asks:

My candidate just had her first real argument with the man she's dating. She's shaken and asking: how normal is it to fight

early on? And how do you know whether a couple is fighting in a healthy way, or if this is already a sign to walk away?

Aleeza answers:

Conflict isn't the problem. Avoiding conflict is.

If two people are dating and never disagree, it usually means they haven't gone deep enough yet, or one person is quietly shrinking to keep the peace. Neither builds a strong marriage.

So yes, having a first fight is normal, even early on. Sometimes it's the moment a relationship shifts from polite and surface-level into something real. The question isn't that they fought. The question is how they fought.

Healthy conflict has a few clear markers. There's respect, even when emotions run high. No humiliation, no threats, no sarcasm meant to wound. There's presence — people stay engaged instead of disappearing, stonewalling, or punishing with silence. And there's curiosity. Even in disagreement, there's an attempt to understand, not just to win.

When should your candidate be concerned? What concerns me is contempt, defensiveness with no accountability, or a



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quick leap to “maybe this isn’t right” instead of “let’s understand what just happened.” That’s not about the argument, that’s about character.

I always tell singles: don’t judge a relationship by the fight. Judge it by the repair. Do they circle back? Does someone say, “I see how that landed,” or “I could’ve handled that better”? Repair is one of the strongest predictors of long-term success according to Dr. John and Julie Gottman of the Gottman Institute.

Dating is not just about finding someone you agree with. Dating is about discovering whether you can grow with someone when things get uncomfortable. Learning how someone handles conflict early on isn’t a setback. It’s information. And good information is a gift.

While conflict is a challenge, I hope they will overcome the hurdles that come their way.

Blessings,
Aleeza ■

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Alexander's Story

I received the following note from Devori Kleytman, who asked me to share the story of her father-in-law, Alexander Kleytman, one of the victims of the terrorist attack in Bondi Beach, Australia.

"My beloved father-in-law, Alexander, was 87 years old, a Holocaust survivor whose family fled to Siberia when he was still a child. They endured years of hunger and bitter cold. They survived, and eventually returned to Ukraine.

"Later, Alexander and his wife, Larisa, applied to emigrate to Israel. They were refused. For many long years they lived as *refuseniks*, trapped behind the Iron Curtain,

longing to leave and longing for Zion.

"Alexander was a man of integrity and a proud Jew. He loved the Land of Israel and the Jewish people. He wrote two books about his Holocaust experiences, and he would often say that we must remember the Holocaust, not only as history, but as a moral obligation so that we know how to stand up to our enemies.

"He was deeply connected to faith. In recent years he began wearing a kippah and putting on tefillin.

"Alexander was murdered while doing what he loved most: living as a Jew, among his people. He died while protecting his wife, Larisa, who survived the attack. Alexander and Larisa were devoted to one another for more than fifty years, and they were blessed with children and grandchildren.

"We believe that Alexander's story is not one that began under Nazi persecution and ended with Islamic terror. His story is about life, love, faith, and holiness. We look forward to continuing his legacy, and we ask anyone reading these words to do one good deed today in memory of Alexander *ben* Simcha." ■



Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.



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That We Have Lived, Sustained, and Reached This Time

Dedication of Beresheet Synagogue in Memory of Rachel Lichak z"l

A moving moment took place at Beresheet residential community in the Jerusalem Hills, with the dedication of Beresheet Synagogue in memory of Rachel Lichak z"l and the installation of a new Torah scroll.



In Memory of a Matriarch

The synagogue was established in memory of Rachel Lichak z"l, mother of the Lichak family - Yoel, Avi, Yossi and Dina, owners and founders of Beresheet. Rachel worked in a nursing home after her husband passed away young and raised her four children alone. She taught them that caring for the elderly is a sacred mission.

From Planning to Vision

"The original plan placed the synagogue on the basement floor," shares Shiri Mizrachi, manager of Beresheet. "But we listened to the residents and changed the plan, finding a location on the lobby floor - large, spacious and accessible. It quickly became clear there was great demand from the surrounding community."

A Masterpiece of Design

Architect Mendi Yaakobovitz created something unprecedented. High ceilings with impressive arches, stained glass windows displaying the seven species, the seven days of creation and the twelve tribes. A cantor's stand with a Star of David and chandelier descending from the ceiling. The women's section was placed on the side per the residents' request - delicate, modern and respectful.



The Glatt Family's Donation

The Torah scroll was donated by the Glatt family, led by Elchanan Glatt, CEO of the Center for Bnei Akiva Yeshivas and Ulpanot, in memory of their parents Yosef and Tzivia Glatt z"l.

Distinguished Guests

The event was blessed with the participation of Rabbi Kalman Bar, Chief Rabbi of Israel, who said it was one of the most beautiful synagogues he has seen. The ceremony was accompanied by world-renowned cantor Yaakov Motzen and the band "The Klezmerim" led by Chanan Bar Sela.



Continuing Mother's Path

In his speech, Yossi Lichak shared: "Our mother, Rachel, was not religious in the traditional sense, but she was full of faith. She taught us never to miss a kiddush, that Friday night dinner is sacred, and that family comes first."

"I remember going to synagogue together - how I looked forward to feeling part of a community. This synagogue is named after mother, because that's exactly what she was - a place of connection, love and home."

Elchanan Glatt added: "There is something special in this connection - to see the Torah scroll in a holy place that reflects the values our parents raised us on, to meet the humble Lichak family who dedicate their lives to caring for others with love and respect."

Beresheet Synagogue serves as a community and spiritual center for Beresheet residents and the broader public - a place where Rachel z"l would have been proud to work and live.



Photography by Roman Belashov



DR. JACOB SOLOMON

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

Consistency

The Shirat HaYam climaxes with prayer for the future:

Nations heard and shuddered... fear and dread falling upon them... until your people crossed over... You will bring them and establish them in... the place You dwell in, in the holy places that you have founded (15:14-17).

G-d will be King for ever and ever (15:18).

The Rashbam and Ibn Ezra both view “G-d will be king for ever and ever” as a separate prayer. Once *Am Yisrael* settles in the Promised Land, G-d should be recognized as King over the entire Creation. The *Shira* tells us that during *Keriat Yam Suf*, nations sat up and paid attention to the absolute power that G-d was dramatically demonstrating. As the Ramban brings out, G-d was showing that He is Master of the *Universe* by supporting those who serve Him and destroying those who rebel against Him. So may it be way into the future generations that G-d will heed the

good deeds of the righteous and the sins of the wicked, supporting those who strive to do what is right according to the spiritual principles of the Creation. Thus G-d will be King for ever and ever.

Yet the Mechilta, a much earlier Midrashic source, is not entirely happy with the future tense

Hashem yimloch le-olam va-ed, that G-d will be King for ever and ever. This Midrash sees this look into the distant future as a cause for criticism. Had Moshe and the people declared: “G-d rules for ever” no nation would be able to threaten them. As the Chatham Sofer expands, even within the *Shira*, there is an implication that the impact of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* would not be permanent, that *Am Yisrael* could suffer *churban* and *galut*, as the whole world’s recognition of Hakadosh Baruch Hu as King was expressed as being in the future only. Many unpleasant things might well happen on that long journey into the future, with the ultimate destiny being a mere dream.

There is a vital lesson here. It is to keep eyes on the final destiny - always, however far into the future that might be. In life’s work. Whatever the project is. It might include a quality mastery of Shas and Poskim. It might be discovering and innovating a cure for a particular form of cancer. It may be leading a team to tackle a particular crisis in the community, for example *shidduchim* barriers for those in their late 20s and 30s. It could very likely be raising a family as fully-fulfilled *B’nei*




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Torah and *Yirei Shamayim*. Whatever the project, visualize yourself as having reached the goal and then plan and do what it takes to get there, even if it takes many years. Bear in mind that there are many supportive intermediate targets on the way. All these goals not only yield the proverbial pot of gold (and very much more) at the end, but their intermediate markers pay rich dividends on the grounded and single-minded focused journey to the objective.

Let's briefly look at a possible example. Torah learning has always been part of your life, but now you're seeking serious quality mastery of Shas and Poskim. That doesn't happen overnight. Work and family severely limit available fatigue-free hours.

Shas and Poskim are mentally demanding. Shas before Shacharit tackled at Daf Yomi (for example) or Omud Yomi rates take 7½ or 15 years respectively, with the additional challenge of remembering what you've learnt (I write brief summaries for quick regular review). Whilst most *dapim* can be reasonably grasped in an hour or two, some demand formidable patience, persistence, and endurance. Similarly with Poskim. A page of Mishna Berura for half an hour between Mincha and Ma'ariv can be monumentally challenging after a frustrating day at work or in the home, when it's quite a struggle to keep eyes on the Siddur during Mincha.

In addition Gemara and Halacha are not in a vacuum; you want to be conversant with Torah Bichtav, perhaps going through the

Parasha plus a couple of chapters of Nach on Friday nights. You also want to get a sense of the times and events in which our Torah sources developed and unfolded and – most important – the *mussar*: the ethical, spiritual, and personal development principles that are shine brightly through our traditions and bring perspective to our Torah learning in terms of it being a positively life-fulling force..

Overwhelming, indeed. But constantly seeing yourself as Torah-conversant with Quality Mastery of Shas and Poskim is a vital part of the journey in itself. In making it your destiny, you make it your identity, as you're striding the way, and a very long one at that. You're not just learning when you feel like it. You're looking at that destiny along the path of work and focused commitment. You see each step, each *daf* and halacha mastered as another brick in your own Torah-constructed palace. You form deepening personal connections as you gravitate to those with similar goals and to those who can help you to that reality.

This then is a vital key. To constantly and consistently see your identity as already being inside your target as you strive to achieve it making it part of you, step by step. Imagining yourself already there enables you to slowly gravitate to there, and take the challenges and frustrations in the strides to that destiny. ■

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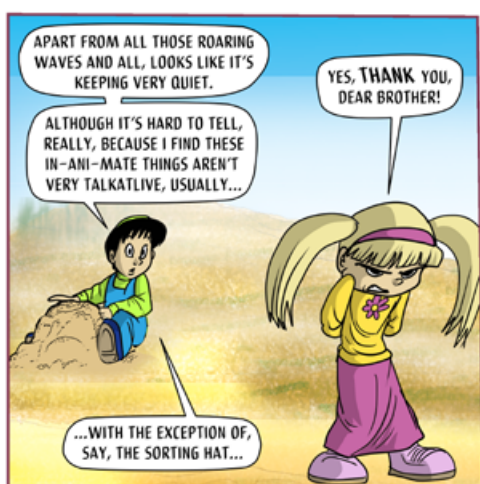
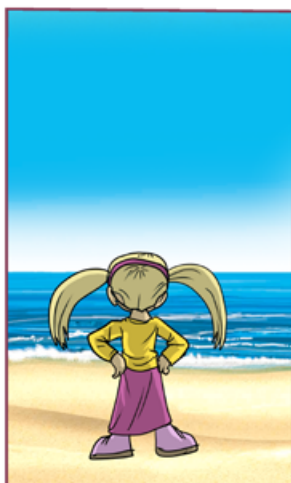
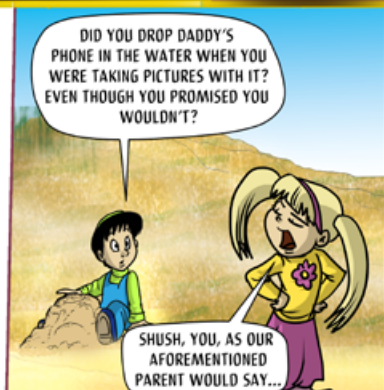
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HOLDING ON TO FAITH AFTER THE MIRACLE

After ten miraculous plagues, this week's parsha reaches its dramatic climax with Kriat Yam Suf. Imagine how it must have felt—the sense of awe and closeness to Hashem as Bnei Yisrael sang together, celebrating their new-found freedom. As their journey in the desert begins, their excitement quickly gives way to outrage and complaints. Almost immediately, concerns about hunger and thirst replace the declaration of “Hashem is my G-d and I will praise Him,” with desperate cries that it would have been better to die in Egypt.

Although it might seem impossible, we can become complacent with the miracles that Hashem does for us. Even after experiencing the highest spiritual moments, when our expectations aren't met, our inspiration can quickly fade. As the Midrash Tanchuma explains, this lack of emunah made Bnei Yisrael vulnerable, allowing Amalek to attack. This is exactly why Yehoshua, rather than Moshe, had to lead the battle. As a descendant of Yosef, Yehoshua had the ability to maintain closeness to Hashem through both blessing and hardship.

Hashem is always performing miracles for us, some revealed and some more hidden. Our challenge is to maintain that awareness

and trust in Him, remembering that even when it is difficult to see, the miracles are there. Just as the manna was provided daily for forty years, Hashem will always provide for us. As long as we put our trust in Him, even if it is not exactly as we expect, miracles will continue to come our way.

Shabbat Shalom.



MEIRA RUBIN

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TRUE FREEDOM BEGINS AT THE SEA

In this week's parsha, Beshalach, we witness some of the greatest miracles in our history. After the ten makkot, Am Yisrael finally leave Egypt and begin their journey toward freedom. But then, something confusing happens: instead of marching straight toward Eretz Yisrael, Bnei Yisrael turn back toward Egypt.

Suddenly, they are trapped, the sea in front of them and the Egyptian army charging from behind. In panic, they cry out to Moshe, “Why did you do this? It was better for us back in Egypt!”

At first glance, their reaction is hard to understand. Hashem had just performed open miracles for them; why couldn't they trust Him? The answer is that while they were physically out of Egypt, Egypt was not yet out of them. They were still carrying the mindset of slavery. Hashem led them back toward their fear so they could face it and

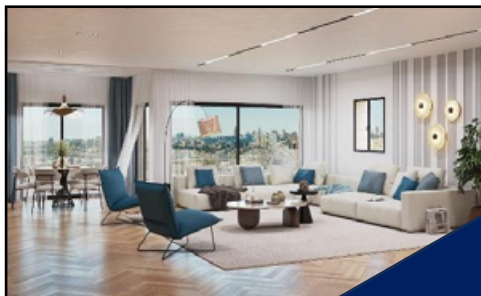
overcome it, teaching them that true freedom isn't just about where you are—it's about how you think.

We experience similar moments in our own lives. We take steps forward, try to grow, and then suddenly feel stuck or overwhelmed. The lesson of Kriat Yam Suf is that Hashem doesn't just remove obstacles; He strengthens us through them. Trusting Him means knowing that even when the path is unclear, He is guiding us forward. When we feel like we've reached a dead end, Hashem may actually be opening a new way, one we never imagined possible. ■

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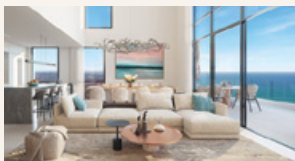


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