



GEULAS YISRAEL

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MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

The Quiet Song

Keriat Yam Suf was one of the most dramatic moments in Jewish history. The sea split before us, opening a dry path to freedom. Behind us thundered the Egyptian army, closing in for the kill. Then the waters crashed back into place, swallowing Pharaoh's forces and ending Egypt's pursuit forever.

Additionally, Keriat Yam Suf brought an unprecedented revelation of Hashem. Chazal comment that a simple maid-servant perceived Hashem more clearly at Yam Suf than did Yechezkel, despite his extraordinary prophetic visions. We erupted in joy and song. Moshe led the nation in a stirring shirah of praise and gratitude. Az Yashir contains some of the most iconic pesukim in the entire Torah:

זֶה קְלִי וְאֶנְהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי וְאֶרְמְנֶנּוּ

“This is my God and I will glorify Him; the God of my father, and I will exalt Him.”

ה' אִישׁ מְלַחְמָה ה' שָׁמוּ

“Hashem is the Master of war; Hashem is His Name.”

ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

“Hashem shall reign forever and ever.”

Keriat Yam Suf was a once-in-history spectacle, and the grandeur, regality, and majesty of Az Yashir capture that transformative moment.

THE SECOND SONG

There is only one other national shirah in the entire Torah, and it appears in Parshat

Chukat. It is much shorter and much quieter. It does not celebrate grand and spectacular miracles. It does not capture a breathtaking encounter with the Shechinah. There are no vanquished enemies, nothing dramatic, and nothing loud. It is the Shirat HaBe'er, the Song of the Well.

To be sure, Chazal do provide a dramatic backstory. Our Emorite enemies attempted to ambush us by forcing our route through a narrow valley surrounded by steep mountains on either side. We would have been sitting ducks as we passed beneath the looming cliffs. Hashem caused the mountains to converge and crush the ambushers waiting to massacre us. Their blood flowed down through the valley and was carried by the waters of the be'er. We were completely unaware of the danger and only discovered our rescue when we saw the blood-stained waters surrounding the well.

According to Chazal the shira of Chukat celebrates a dramatic military miracle. Yet this is not the simple reading of the shirah. The song itself makes no mention of the defeated ambushers. Instead, it briefly celebrates the well that accompanied us through the desert and the water that sustained us throughout forty years of wandering.

In other words, this song does not focus on a dramatic miracle but on Hashem's daily care. It celebrates water and the other gifts

that sustained us in the desert. Significantly, the song's progression leads directly to the word **נְתַתָּהּ**, which can be understood as “the inheritance of God” or “the gift of God,” evoking the greatest gift we received in the desert — Hashem's Torah.

The contrast between the Torah's two national songs is striking. One celebrates overt and dramatic miracles. The other celebrates the quiet routines through which Hashem sustained us during forty difficult years in the desert. Both experiences warrant song, though the praise each inspires is expressed very differently.

HEARING HASHEM IN ROUTINE

The balance between these two songs is vital for our lives and even more vital as we navigate our return to Israel and the process of redemption. We naturally sense Hashem's presence during life's dramatic moments. We more readily sense Hashem's presence when we experience events at either end of the emotional spectrum. Routine often masks His presence.

This challenge is even greater in the modern world because our daily lives have changed. On one hand, life has become more stable. Science and technology have created a more predictable world, making it harder to sense our dependence upon Hashem. This is one reason why COVID was so unsettling. In earlier eras, people were far more vulnerable to disease, and epidemics, though tragic, were not as shocking or apocalyptic. We assumed that advances in medicine had largely tamed infectious disease, and COVID shattered that confidence.

Additionally, the pace of modern life has become frenetic. We are constantly busy, connected, and distracted, leaving less time for contemplation and reflection. Together, these

two factors make it more difficult to sense Hashem's presence in everyday life.

The second shirah of Chukat, the Song of the Well, reminds us to recognize Hashem not only in dramatic moments but also in the quiet rhythms of daily existence. It teaches us to find Him behind the curtain of a world that appears stable and highly functional.

This lesson carries even greater significance in Israel. We believe that our return to Eretz Yisrael is divinely inspired and marks the beginning of a process that will ultimately culminate in redemption. When trying to identify redemptive moments in our national return, we naturally focus on the miraculous: great military victories, stunning moments of national achievement such as the return of hostages, or historic shifts such as our return to the biblical heartland in 1967. We are always searching for moments that resemble Kariat Yam Suf.

Baruch Hashem, we have experienced many such moments. The Hallel we recite on days of national triumph and the gratitude we feel for the restoration of Jewish sovereignty reflect our recognition of these extraordinary moments.

We are less accustomed to identifying redemption in the ordinary and the everyday.

REDEMPTION IN THE ORDINARY

My rebbe, Rav Amital, noted that the final berachah of Sheva Berachot is rooted in Yirmiyahu's description of the sounds that will fill a redeemed Yerushalayim. However, when Chazal incorporated the prophecy into the berachah, they modified its ending in a

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notable way. The original prophecy is:
קול שְׂשׂוֹן וְקול שְׂמֵחָה קול חֲתָן וְקול כַּלָּה קול
אֲמָרִים הוֹדוּ אֵת ה' צְבָקוֹת כִּי טוֹב ה' כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ
מִבָּאִים תּוֹדָה בֵּית ה'

“The sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say: ‘Give thanks to Hashem of Hosts, for Hashem is good, for His kindness endures forever,’ as they bring thanksgiving offerings to the House of Hashem.”

Yet when Chazal formulated the concluding berachah of Sheva Berachot, they replaced the fifth voice with a different one:

קול מִצְהָלוֹת חֲתָנִים מִחֲפָתָם וְנִעָרִים מִמְּשֵׁתָה
גְּיִינִתָם

“The sound of grooms rejoicing from their chuppot and young men from their festive celebrations and song.”

Rav Amital suggested that Chazal intentionally shifted the focus. Instead of highlighting the sounds of pilgrims bringing korbanot to the Beit HaMikdash, they emphasized the sounds of ordinary life. They wanted us to recognize redemption not only in great religious ceremonies or dramatic national moments, but also in the simple joy of young people celebrating together. Redemption is found not only in the spectacular but also in the everyday.

Similarly, Zecharyah, whose prophecies often employ sweeping and apocalyptic imagery, describes redemption in remarkably ordinary terms:

עוֹד יֵשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזִקְנוֹת בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ
מִשְׁעֲנֵתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מֵרֹב יָמִים

“Old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with a staff in hand because of great age.”

Zecharyah trains us to recognize redemption not only when the sea parts, but also in

the slow and steady progress of ordinary life.

READING OUR MOMENT

As these wars continue, the story has become more difficult to read. There have been important victories, but there have also been painful losses. The confidence that accompanied the early stages of our response to October 7 has gradually given way to uncertainty. More recently, the conflict with Iran has left many Israelis wondering how history will assess this chapter.

These questions matter, but we cannot allow this ambiguity to distract us from the larger arc of our national story. Redemption does not always announce itself through dramatic moments. Sometimes it advances quietly.

Our state is stronger and more secure than at any point in Jewish history. Baruch Hashem, our economy continues to flourish. For the first time in nearly two thousand years, more Jews live in Israel than in any other country. Hopefully, we are moving toward a reality in which the majority of world Jewry will once again live in the Land of Israel.

These are not minor achievements, even if they are less dramatic than the military victories we celebrate or the historic breakthroughs for which we continue to hope.

It is easier to stand at the edge of a splitting sea and sing to Hashem. It is harder to stand in a desert and thank Him for slower and more gradual progress. The second shira of the Torah reminds us just how important that quieter song can be. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.