TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



בשלח

לעילוי נשמת



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Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought.

שָׁם שָׂם לוֹ חֹק וּמִשְׁפָּט וְשָׁם נִסָּהוּ - *"There He established for [the nation] a decree and an ordinance."* (15:25)

Rashi explains **בְּמָרָה נָתַן לָהֶם מִקְצָת פָּרָשִׁיּוֹת שֶׁל תּוֹרָה שֶׁיִּתְעַסְּקוּ בָהֶם** - that in this place, called "Marah," Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael regarding some of the mitzvot. - Why?

R' Eliezer Friedman answers: When a person is lacking in spirituality, all the riches in the world will not bring him lasting happiness. Marah took its name from the fact that the water there was bitter. Imagine! Bnei Yisrael had just gathered the riches which washed ashore at the Yam Suf/Red Sea, and they should have been on top of the world. - If they were so unhappy with their lot that they could complain about the taste of the water, this was a sure sign that they needed the Torah. (**Emunat Yirmiyahu**)

וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ כִּי הַשְׁבֵּעַ הִשְׁבִּיעַ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹקִים אֶתְכֶם וְהַעֲלִיתֶם אֶת־עַצְמֹתַי מִזֶּה אִתְּכֶם - "***Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him, for he had caused Bnei Yisrael to take an oath, saying, 'Elokim will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones mi'zeh / from here [literally, 'from this'] with you'***." (13:19)

What did Yosef meaning by the word **מִזֶּה** "from this"?

R' Yosef Moshe z"l (1735-1815; maggid / preacher in Zborov and Zalozice, Ukraine) explains:

"**זֶה**" / "this" is a reference to Moshe Rabbeinu, as in the verse (Shmot 32:1), **כִּי־זֶה מֹשֶׁה הָאִישׁ** / "***For this man, Moshe*** ..." Thus, "**מִזֶּה**" / "from this" would mean "from Moshe."

Yosef hinted: I know that Moshe will take my remains out of Egypt. However, Moshe will not enter Eretz Yisrael, so he won't finish the job of burying me. Therefore, "you shall bring up my bones **מִזֶּה**," i.e., from Moshe. (**Brit Avram**)

וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירְאוּ הָעָם אֶת־ה' וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ "***Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt; and the people revered Hashem, *and they believed in Hashem* and in Moshe, His servant.***" (14:31)

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) asks: Didn't the Torah already say, when Moshe first spoke to Bnei Yisrael in Egypt (Shmot 4:31), **וַיַּאֲמֵן הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי־פָקַד ה' אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה אֶת־עָנְיָם וַיִּקְּדוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ** "****The people believed*, and they heard that Hashem had remembered Bnei Yisrael and that He saw their affliction, and they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves***"?

He explains: In fact, although the Torah says that the people believed Moshe, the elders who agreed to go with Moshe and Aharon

to Pharaoh slipped away one-by-one until Moshe and Aharon were left alone.

This teaches that although a person has emunah, i.e., he "believes" in G-d, there is complete belief and incomplete belief. This is why the Ani Ma'amin declarations that many people recite after Shacharit every morning state: "I believe with *complete* faith .." (**Zechor L'Miriam** ch.21)

לִקְטוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ... אֵישׁ לַאֲשֶׁר בְּאָהֳלוֹ תִּקָּחוּ - *"Each man, for those in his tent he shall collect [mahn]."* *(16:16)*



A couple once came to **R' Asher'l Horowitz of Rimanov z"l** (died 1935) with a problem. The woman complained that her husband could not earn a living because he was "too" honest. Did he have that right, his wife wanted to know, when his family was starving?

R' Asher'l answered: A person's obligation to support his family is learned from the above verse regarding the mahn. This verse was said at a time when Hashem openly sent food to each family according to its needs. No one took another's share, and no one cheated. [And if someone did cheat, he gained nothing from it, as the Torah testifies.]

Similarly, now, even though Hashem's ways are less obvious, each person can, and must, support his family honestly, without any question of wrongdoing. (**Iturei Torah**)

וּבְרוּחַ אַפֶּיךָ נֶֽעֶרְמוּ מַיִם - "*At a blast from Your nostrils, the waters became cunning*." (15:8)



The above translation of the verse is in accordance with the Aramaic translation of Onkelos. - Can waters then be cunning?

R' Eliyahu, the Vilna Gaon z"l (1720-1797) writes that we should not be surprised by this translation. After all, man was formed from a clod of earth, and only when G-d "blew" a soul into the lifeless form of man did man become capable of intelligence.

It is no more difficult for G-d to "blow" from His "nostrils" and give intelligence to water. (**Aderet Eliyahu**)

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה עַד־אָנָה מֵאַנְתֶּם לִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתָי "*Hashem said to Moshe, `How long will you refuse lishmor / to observe My commandments and My teachings*?'" (16:28)

R' Chaim Aryeh Leib of Yedvobna z"l (19th century; Russia) asks: How could Hashem level this seemingly untrue accusation against Moshe? Moshe certainly observed Shabbat! He answers:

Proper mitzvah observance requires preparation and anticipation. This is how one demonstrates that he values the mitzvah, and how one sets the tone for the mitzvah's observance. This is why we are commanded to remember Shabbat every day.

However, our parashah indicates that Moshe did not tell Bnei Yisrael until Friday that there would be no mahn on Shabbat.

Since Moshe deprived Bnei Yisrael of the chance to anticipate Shabbat and prepare mentally for the day, he is held

accountable for their desecration of Shabbat. [Ed. Note: Based on this interpretation, the word "lishmor" in our verse can have a double meaning and can also be translated as "anticipated" (see Rashi to Bereishit 37:11).] (**Sha'ar Bat Rabim**)

וִידֵי מֹשֶׁהׇ כְּבֵדִים וַיִּקְחוּ־אֶבֶן וַיָּשִׂימוּ תַּחְתָּיו וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלֶיהָ וְאַהֲרֹן וְחוּר תָּמְכוּ בְיָדָיו מִזֶּה אֶחָדׇ וּמִזֶּה אֶחָד וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֱמוּנָה עַד־בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ "***Moshe's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and placed it under him and he sat upon it, and Aharon and Chur supported his hands, one on this side and one on that side, and he remained with his hands in faithful prayer until sunset***." (17:12)

The midrash **Mechilta** states: "They took a stone and placed it under him" refers to the good deeds of the Patriarchs. "He sat upon it" refers to the good deeds of the Matriarchs.

R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (Germany; died 1217) writes: In a certain community, a certain old man used to lead the prayers on Yom Kippur. One year, he had no strength to stand for the prayers. Some members of the community said that since he was the most qualified chazan available, he should be permitted to lead the prayers sitting down. However, the elders said that it is preferable to have a less qualified chazan who is able to stand.

The proof that the chazan must stand is the midrash quoted above, writes R' Yehuda He'chassid. What induced the author of the midrash to interpret our verse in a non-literal manner?

Apparently, the midrash could not tolerate the literal interpretation of the verse, according to which Moshe Rabbeinu actually prayed sitting down. For the same reason, when we read (Shmuel II 7:18), "[David] sat before Hashem," the midrash interprets the verse as teaching that David "settled his heart," i.e., he concentrated on his prayers. (**Sefer Chassidim No. 756**)

This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

Shabbat Parashat Beshalach: One should rejoice with great feeling on this Shabbat because, if one is sensitive to such things, one can sense that G-d reveals Himself somewhat every year when we read about His revelation at the Yam Suf / Reed Sea and the salvation that He brought about there. (**Ramatayim Tzofim, Zuta 16:7**)

Some have the custom to put out food for birds on this Shabbat. However, many authorities consider this practice to be halachically- problematic since, as a rule, one may not feed a wild animal on Shabbat. - One suggestion that has been offered is to place the food outdoors before Shabbat in a container covered by a plate. Then, on Shabbat, one can remove the plate (without moving the food, which is now muktzeh). (**Luach Davar B'ito p.530**)

Several reasons are given for this custom:

(1) Our parashah records that some of Bnei Yisrael went out to collect mahn on Shabbat, but they did not find any. Our Sages explain that these people had placed the mahn out of doors in order to embarrass Moshe Rabbeinu, who had said that mahn would not fall on Shabbat. However, when those individuals were not looking, birds ate the mahn.

(2) Bnei Yisrael are compared to birds in many verses [e.g. throughout Shir Ha'shirim]. By feeding the birds, we indicate just as the birds are cared for by others, so G-d will sustain us if we dedicate ourselves to Torah study.

(3) The song of the birds alludes to the Song at the Sea. (Luach Davar B'ito p.530, 534-535)

Many communities read Az Yashir aloud verse-by-verse during the morning prayers on this Shabbat. (Luach Davar B'ito p.532)

Some eat dishes containing wheat kernels or kasha on this Shabbat to recall the mahn. (Luach Davar B'ito p.530)

13 Shevat 5705 (1945): The liberation of Auschwitz occurred on this day.

Tu B'Shevat: One should pray on this day that he will find a good etrog for next Sukkot. (Bnei Yissaschar: Shevat 2:2)

17 Shevat: This day is "Purim Saragossa" (i.e., Syracuse, Greece) because of a miracle that occurred there. (Luach Davar B'ito p.548)

וַיִּקַּח שֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בָּחוּר וְכֹל רֶכֶב מִצְרָיִם וְשָׁלִשִׁם עַל־כֻּלּוֹ - "*He took 600 elite chariots and all the chariots of Egypt, with 'officers of thirty' on them all. (14:7)*



Why did Pharaoh take 600 chariots? Also, why did he have one officer for every thirty men?

R' Yehonatan Eyebschutz z"l (1690- 1764) explains:

We read (Devarim 32:30), **אֵיכָה יִרְדֹּף אֶחָד אֶלֶף וּשְׁנַיִם יָנִיסוּ רְבָבָה** -"***For how could one pursue a thousand?***" Pharaoh knew that there would be a time when Hashem would cause one pursuer to defeat 1,000 of Bnei Yisrael, and he assumed that this was that time. Thus, to defeat the 600,000 adult men who left Egypt, Pharaoh needed 600 soldiers.

In addition, there were 22,000 Levi'im among the Jews. Twenty-thousand is 1/30 of 600,000, so Pharaoh took a one-to-thirty ratio of officers to soldiers. As for the last 2,000 Levi'im, Pharaoh assumed that he himself, being the king, could defeat twice as many Jews as each of his soldiers could. (**Tiferet Yehonatan**)

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם - ***'And armed, Bnei Yisrael went up from Egypt.'*** (13:18)

R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad (died 1909) writes: Rabbi Akiva taught (in the Pesach Haggadah) that each of the ten plagues in Egypt consisted of five separate plagues. Thus, the ten plagues were, in reality, 50 plagues.

This, explains R' Yosef Chaim, is the meaning of "**וַחֲמֻשִׁים**" which can also be read as "chamishim" (the number 50). The Torah is saying that through the 50 plagues that were brought on the Egyptians, Bnei Yisrael were able to leave Egypt.

Rabbi Akiva also teaches that there were an additional 250 plagues at the Red Sea. This is hinted at by the letter "vav" at the beginning of word "**וַחֲמֻשִׁים**." The gematria of the letter "vav" is six, and 6 x 50 ("vav" times "chamishim") equals 300 - the total number of plagues in Egypt and at the Red Sea combined. (**Aderet Eliyahu**)

וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי־יָד עַל־כֵּס יָ־הּ מִלְחָמָה לַה' בַּעֲמָלֵק מִדֹּר דֹּר

"He said, 'For the hand is on the kais / throne of Kah; Hashem maintains a war against Amalek, from generation to generation'." (17:16)

Rashi z"l writes: What is the implication of "kais" instead of the usual word for throne, "kisai"? Likewise, why is the Divine Name divided in half [i.e., yud-heh ("Kah") instead of yud-keh-vav-keh]?

He answers: The Holy One, blessed be He, swears that His Name will not be perfect nor His throne perfect until the name of Amalek is entirely blotted out. -What does this mean?

R' Moshe Alsheich z"l (1508-1593; Turkey, Greece and Eretz Yisrael; author of a popular Tanach commentary) writes: Do not think that Amalek is powerful enough to be the nemesis of G-d! No, he is like straw blowing in the wind before Him! Rather, Amalek

symbolizes the yetzer hara, whose destruction is a precondition to the full revelation of G-d's Name. And, since man is tasked with taking the initiative to destroy the yetzer hara, albeit with assistance from G-d, it is as if Hashem Himself appears helpless to overcome this enemy until the end of time. (**Torat Moshe**)

A Torah Tour of the Holy Land



R' Yechiel Michel Tikochinski z"l (1871-1955; editor for 51 years of an annual calendar documenting the customs of Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim) writes: Tu B'Shevat begins the new year for trees for purposes of terumah and ma'asrot / tithes, and for orlah / the prohibition on eating the fruits of a tree in its first three years.

This day is the dividing line for determining whether one separates ma'aser sheni (which is taken in the first, second, fourth and fifth years of the shemittah cycle and eaten in Yerushalayim) or ma'aser ani (which is taken in the third and sixth years of the shemittah cycle and given to the poor).

If, before Tu B'Shevat, fruits reached the stage of development where tithing is required, they are considered produce of the old year. But, fruits that reach that stage after Tu B'Shevat are produce of the new year. For fruits, that defining stage is chanatah (approximately, when the blossom appears), except for the etrog, for which the defining stage is picking. One is forbidden to mix fruits of different years when tithing.

R' Tikochinski writes further: In Eretz Yisrael, where these laws apply, Tu B'Shevat is observed as a minor holiday. The Ashkenazim are content to observe the day by eating the fruits of the Land and distributing fruit packages to children. In contrast, R' Tikochinski writes, the Sephardim gather to eat fruit in groups, amidst joy and song. Over every fruit, they recite chapters of Tehilim, poems, and songs that praise the Land and its fruit.

The wise men of the Sephardim remain awake on the night of Tu B'Shevat and recite "Tikkunim" which are composed of verses from Torah and Ketuvim, and from the words of our Sages, especially from the Zohar, which relate to the fruits of the Land.

They also take pains to eat many types of fruits, both tree fruits and produce of the ground. For kabbalistic reasons, they eat 30 types of fruits.

They also honor each other with reciting the blessings over the fruit. (R' Tikochinski adds that the reason for these rituals is that each species of fruit has a different "root" in Heaven and requires a separate "tikkun.") (**Ir Ha'kodesh Ve'ha'mikdash, III ch.25**)



וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו מָן הוּא כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ מַה־הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם הוּא הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה' לָכֶם לְאָכְלָה - "***Bnei Yisrael saw and said to one another, 'It is mahn!'–for they did not know what it was. Moshe said to them, 'This is the bread that Hashem has given you for eating***'." (16:15)

Rashi explains: "Mahn" means "food," but they did not know its proper name.

R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l (**Chida**; 1724-1806; Chevron and Livorno, Italy) writes: The Gemara (Ta'anit 24b) teaches that one should not benefit from an item that is the product of a miracle. This is what our verse means: "It is mahn (**מן**)" — an acronym for "**מעשה ניסים**" / "the product of a miracle" — "for they did not know

what it was" — i.e., they did not know if it was permitted to benefit from it. Moshe answered them, "This is the bread that Hashem has given you for eating." "The bread" — i.e., it is a reward for another bread, namely the bread that Avraham Avinu fed to his guests.



He continues: Certainly, one can benefit from a miracle if it is a matter of life or death. This is why the Torah emphasizes (Devarim 8:3), "He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the mahn that you did not know." Because you were starving, you were permitted to eat the mahn.

Chida writes, if the item already exists and it miraculously changes its nature because of prayer, one is permitted to use it. Thus, for example, the sage Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa was permitted to light Shabbat candles with vinegar (Ta'anit 25b). (**Torat Ha'Chida**)

R' Zvi Pesach Frank z"l (1873-1960; Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim) quotes Chida as writing that only an individual may not benefit from a miracle, because the miracle might have been at the expense of his reward in Olam Haba. However, a tzibbur / multitude does not have to worry about that. [Their collective merit is presumed to be sufficient to justify a miracle.] Therefore, the mahn which fell for everyone could be eaten.

This would explain, as well, why the Jewish People were allowed to benefit from the one jug of oil that miraculously lasted eight days (i.e., the Chanukah miracle). (**Mikra'ei Kodesh: Chanukah p.15**)

וַיַּ֤רְא יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶת־מִצְרַ֔יִם מֵ֖ת עַל־שְׂפַ֥ת הַיָּֽם "Yisrael saw Egypt '**מֵת**' on the seashore." (14:30)



This verse is commonly translated, "Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." However, **R' Eliezer Nachman Foa z"l** (rabbi of Modena, Italy; died 1701) translates it differently: "Yisrael saw the Egyptians **dying** on the seashore." As a precedent for this translation, he cites Bereishit 35:18, **וַיְהִ֗י בְּצֵאת֙ נַפְשָׁ֣הּ כִּי־מֵתָ֔ה וַתִּקְרָ֥א שְׁמ֖וֹ בֶּן־אוֹנִ֑י** - "***And it came to pass, as her [Rachel's] soul was departing-ki maitah / for she was dying-that she called his name Ben Oni***." Although some translate **כִּי מֵתָה** as "she died," this cannot be correct, for how could she give her son a name after she died?

What is the significance of the fact that "Yisrael saw the Egyptians dying on the seashore"?

R' Foa explains that just as the Jewish People saw the Egyptians dying, the Egyptians saw in their last moments that the Jewish People had survived. This increased even more the sanctification of G-d's Name that resulted from the miracle. (**Haggadah Shel Pesach Midrash B'chiddush p.110**)

The Mishna Brurah (51:17) states* - וְיֹאמַר שִׁירַת הַיָּם בְּשִׂמְחָה, וִידַמֶּה בְּדַעְתּוֹ כְּאִלּוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם עָבַר בַּיָּם, וְהָאוֹמֵר בְּשִׂמְחָה מוֹחֲלִין לוֹ עֲוֹנוֹתָיו. - *"And one should recite the 'Song of the Sea' with joy, and imagine in his mind as if on that very day he crossed the Sea; and one who recites it with joy is forgiven his sins."

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרָיִם וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם - "***On that day, Hashem saved Yisrael from the hand of Egypt, and Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore***." (14:30)



R' Yosef Yozpa Han Norlingen z"l (1570-1637; Frankfurt, Germany) writes: It is written in Sefer Chareidim that among the ten things that bring about atonement of a person's sins without any suffering is to recite this verse [during prayer] with joy and song, with the same immense joy that it was recited at the time of the splitting of the Yam Suf.

Because of this, R' Yosef Yozpa concludes, I myself have the practice to recite the verse with the trop, like one reading the Torah. (**Yosef Ometz no.281**)

אָשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם. עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָ-הּ וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה "***I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea. The might and vengeance of G-d was a salvation for me*** ..." (15:1-2)

R' Baruch Zvi Moskowitz z"l (post-WWII rabbi in Budapest, Hungary and Vienna, Austria) interprets: I shall sing to Hashem- although I know He is exalted and doesn't need my praise. Nevertheless, because He was mighty and vengeful on my behalf, therefore I will sing to Him. As a reward for this, He will again be my salvation.

R' Moskowitz adds: The Gemara (Berachot 54b) states, "Four types of people **need** to give thanks." [This is the source of the blessing

known as Birkat Ha'gomel.] The Gemara does not say, "Four types of people are **obligated** to give thanks." Rather, R' Moskowitz writes, they **need** to, for it is the act of giving thanks which opens the "pipes" that carry additional beneficence from G-d to man. (**Tenuvot Baruch: Tinyana, Vol. I, introduction, p.10**)

וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגָבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יָנִיחַ יָדוֹ וְגָבַר עֲמָלֵק - "It happened that when Moshe raised his hand Yisrael was stronger, and when he lowered his hand Amalek was stronger." (17:11)



The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 3:8) asks: Did Moshe's hands fight the war?

It answers: When Moshe would raise his hands, Bnei Yisrael would look upwards and subjugated their hearts to Heaven, and then they would be victorious.

R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (Belarus; 1749-1821) explains: It is a wonder that we pray that Hashem save us from suffering, for we know suffering cleanses our sins and is for our own good!

Praying that we do not suffer is like a child covered in mud asking his mother not to bathe him. How, then, do we justify such prayers?

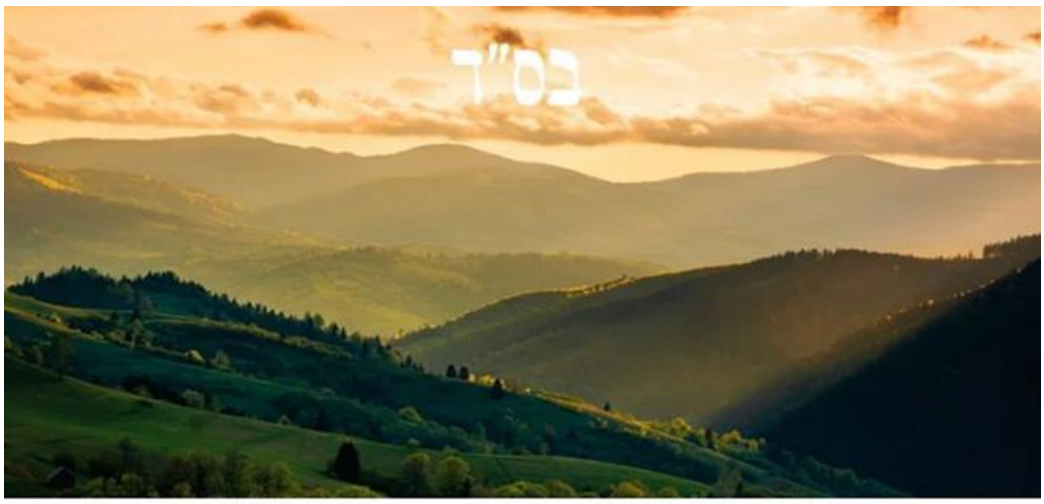
Our Sages teach that Hashem, too," suffers" when we suffer; He wants to do only good for us, but He is "frustrated" when we sin and force Him to punish us. - If we "look Heavenward," focusing on Hashem's desire to do good, rather than praying for our own needs, then we are justified in praying. (***Ruach Chaim* 3:2**)

זֶה אֵ-לִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ - ***"This is my Kel and I will beautify Him." (15:2)***

From this verse, we learn that one should spend extra money to beautify his Mitzvah performance–for example, paying a premium for Tefilin or for an Etrog, or placing beautiful decorations in a Sukkah.

However, notes **R' Yoel Sirkes z"l** (Poland; 1561-1640; known as the "**Bach**"), the verse says, "Beautify Him!" Be sure that your intention is for Hashem's honor, not for your own.

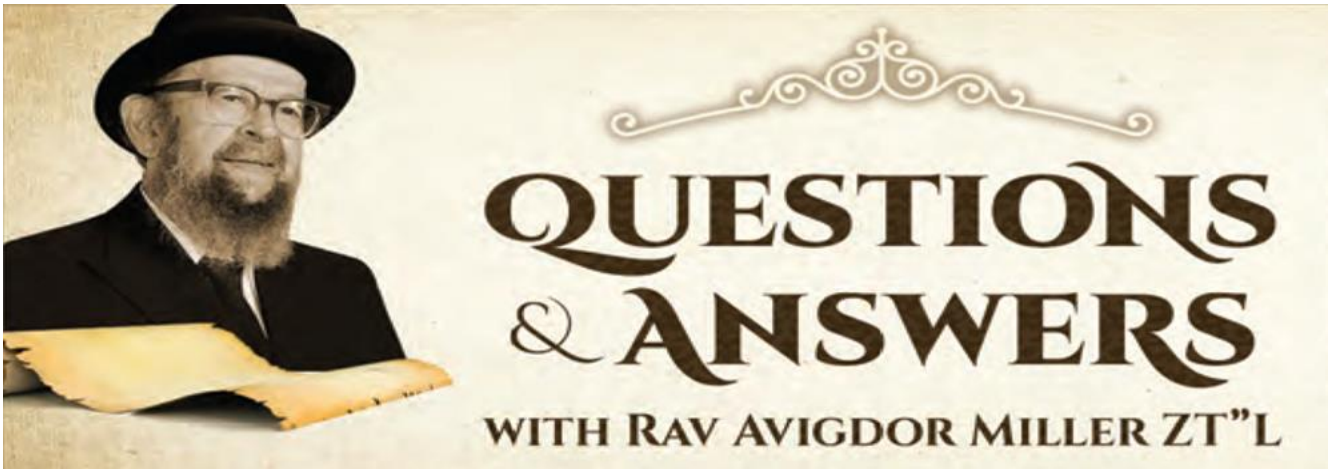
Also, imitate Him! Just as Hashem is compassionate toward those in need, so you should be. (***Meishiv Nefesh* 2:8**)



אין עוד מלבדו

Ein od milvado!
I believe with complete trust that
Hashem is surley helping me and I'm
thankful in advance.
I believe that Hashem will grant me
what I need as a free gift. I thank him
and fill my heart with positive thoughts

אני מאמין באמונה שלימה באוצר מתנת חינם





Is it good to weep when one prays or says Tehillim if he's praying for a refuah shleimah for a loved one?

The truth is it's good to weep anytime that you're saying Tehillim. It's good to weep when you're standing for shmoneh esrei. It's a lost art. Jews used to weep a good deal when they prayed. But they didn't weep only from sadness; they wept from gladness too. They wept from happiness.

It's a remarkable fact. In the olden days, I remember there were Jews who wept in shmoneh esrei on the weekdays. And they enjoyed it. These were tears of love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And they expressed their love in such a heartfelt manner that they were so moved that their tears flowed copiously.

But certainly, if a person is praying for a loved one, he should shed tears because Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to prayers accompanied by tears. Why? Because it's more heartfelt. It's not a dry request like somebody writes on a slip of paper and he hands it in at the window. No. It's something that comes from the heart, and it enters into Hakadosh Baruch Hu's own heart.



Should a person ever give in to his desires?

Absolutely! Absolutely you should give in to your desires. You have a desire to eat, give in. When you feel hungry, when you feel a desire to eat, that's a message min hashamayim, and it's a mitzvah to eat.

It's time to go to sleep? Give in to that desire. Don't hang around and talk. Give in to your desire and go to sleep early; certainly. Go to the bathroom. Don't hold yourself in! It's very unhealthy, and it causes constipation. Give in to your desire and go to the bathroom; certainly. - All of the good desires that Hashem made, give in to them.

But let's say your desire is only to waste time, then don't give in to that desire. Why give in to desires that lead you nowhere? A desire to eat nosherai? For what purpose?!

Develop a desire to learn. What a pleasure it is! A person can develop a cheshek to learn, and he loves learning; he desires learning. Get a desire to learn, a desire to look in a sefer. There's so much happiness in that desire.

You have to acquire the hobby of learning. I use the word hobby – chas v'shalom, it's not a hobby, L'havdil! It's a desire that you should develop. Get into the cheshek of learning, of always looking into seforim. That's a desire to give in to. And it's a tremendous achievement.

"Without Hashem it is impossible to Cross a doorway. With Hashem, we Can split the sea." ~ The Lechovitzer Rebbe.



Since we must thank Hashem for all the kindnesses He gives us in this world, is there anything that Hashem can do that is not kind?

Yes. Sometimes Hashem takes *nekamah* - **אֵ-ל נְקָמוֹת ה׳**. Yes, He takes revenge on wicked people in this world, and certainly when He takes revenge in the World to Come it is not a kindness to them. But know, that unkindness, is really the essence of kindness. It's kindness to those who deserve it.

Now pay attention. The kindness that Hashem does to the righteous people will never be complete unless Hakodosh Baruch Hu metes out punishment to the wicked. The punishment, the retribution on the wicked, is part of the reward of the righteous.

The righteous know, they are fully aware, that the man who did something wrong cannot get away with it. That's essential in the Plan of a rational universe. To say that a man can be wicked and get away with it, that's impossible. And it's not enough to say that he doesn't get Olam Haba, that he doesn't go to the happiness of the Next World. That's not enough. It's against all logic. And it's against all human feeling to allow him to leave this world without retribution.

And therefore, anything that Hashem does, it's called **דרכי השם חסד ואמת**, but it's not always *chessed* and *emes* to the person who is getting the treatment. - When Pharaoh was drowning with his army in the Yam Suf, it was a great joy – but not to Pharaoh. It was **אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** - It was a joy to *them*.

So certainly Hashem does only kindness, but kindness means to those who deserve the kindness. To the others it could be retribution. But even then, it's a kindness to the righteous who are aware of the retribution on the wicked.



What should a man do when he loses his job?

The very first thing to do is to look for another job. That's number one because nobody should be idle.

Idleness is only a form of self-affliction because eventually it causes illness. And therefore, even if you haven't found a new job yet, you must find something to do.

If somebody is capable of utilizing his time properly then idleness is a very great blessing – he's being given a sabbatical by Hashem and so he can retire for a little while and learn a mesechta or learn sefarim until he regains his job.

But most people are not capable of utilizing idleness and as a result they contract illnesses. - **שֶׁהַבַּטָּלָה מְבִיאָה לִידֵי שִׁיעֲמוּם** - ***Idleness brings to depression.*** (Kesuvos 59b).

It's very important to be busy. In case you don't know what to do, then do mitzvos. There are plenty of good things to do in this world; there are plenty of mitzvos you can do to keep yourself busy.

But the main idea to keep in mind is that a person should not be idle! He should always have something to do just for the sake of his own health.

"The very worst darkness is not when you cannot see where you are going. There is a deeper darkness – where you cannot see your brother; You only see yourself."

~ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer Zt'l.



וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם֙ חוֹמָ֣ה מִֽימִינָ֔ם וּמִשְּׂמֹאלָ֖ם – *'The water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left.'* (14:29)

The Red Sea was divided into twelve parts, allowing each tribe to walk though separately. **The Sfas Emes** explains that Hashem did this to teach them that each individual tribe has its own singular mission and, thus, deserves the miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea for its own sake.

In Sefer Tehillim 136:13, David Hamelech records the miracle, **לְגֹזֵ֣ר יַם־סֻ֣וף לִגְזָרִ֑ים**, "***Who splits/divides the Red Sea into parts***." Surprisingly, the pasuk is written in the present tense, as if Hashem continually splits the Red Sea. (Veritably, the commentators translate it in the past tense, but **לְגֹזֵ֣ר** is present tense). This begs elucidation, since obviously, the sea reverted to its original position.

In an earlier pasuk (136:7), David Hamelech writes, **לְעֹשֵׂ֣ה אוֹרִ֣ים גְּדֹלִ֑ים**, "***Who makes great lights***." - In his Nefesh HaChaim, **Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl**, explains that Hashem constantly renews the act of creating the world. He did not create the world and then leave it on auto pilot. Every second, He recreates the world. This might explain the luminaries, but this explanation will not provide a solution for the present tense concerning the splitting of the Red Sea.

Horav Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub, zl (quoted by Horav Shlomo Levenstein in the name of Horav Avraham Brode), explains this based upon an incident that occurred with **Horav Mordechai Pogremansky, zl**:

Rav Pogremansky was a singular gadol who had earned the esteem of the greatest Torah giants of the previous generation. His brilliance and unparalleled erudition were only matched by his total devotion

and commitment to Torah and mitzvos. He passed away in Switzerland one year after he married. His body was brought to Eretz Yisrael where he is buried in the cemetery in Bnei Brak.

Following his funeral, which was attended by many gedolim, the **Chazon Ish** stood over his freshly sealed grave and wept bitterly until the ground became wet with his tears.

During his illness, he lay in a hospital in France wracked with pain. Constantly at his side was his close student Rav Yosef Roth. One time, when Rav Mottel, as he was endearingly called, thought no one was with him in the room, Rav Roth heard him plead, "Ribono Shel Olam, without mercy! Without mercy! Give me what I deserve! I want to achieve a pinnacle of purity. I beg no mercy!"

Rav Weintraub related that when he was together with Rav Mottel in the Kovno Ghetto, Rav Mottel once approached two yeshivah bachurim, and asked, "What do you think Hashem wants of us?"

"Is that the question now?" one of them responded. "Now, we are starving to death. The question is where will we obtain food? Who is thinking about what Hashem wants of us?"

Rav Mottel was acutely aware of the source of their response. They were all starving. He had an important message, however, to convey to them via his question. (This is how he lived. He was a deep thinker, and, as a result, his mind was in a different realm of activity than those around him.)

"Let me explain my question to you," he began. "How valuable is the blood of a Jew?" he asked.

Their immediate response was, "Absolutely nothing." Jewish blood during the war in the Kovno ghetto, where they were exterminating Jews right and left, had no significance and, hence, no value.

"What would happen if someone came along now and murdered a Jew? Would he be found guilty and sentenced as a murderer?" he asked. - "No," was their response.

"Let me ask you," and he pointed to a group of Nazis who were standing a few hundred feet away. "Those Nazis, do you think they want to kill Jews – or not?"

Their reply was to be expected. "Certainly. They know that there are no consequences. Jewish blood is worthless. Sure, they want to kill us."

"Now, listen to what you are saying," Rav Mottel said (this time with emotion). "They have no qualms about murdering us. In fact, they probably want to. No one will arrest them because no one cares. Jewish blood is cheap. In fact, if they would commit murder, no one would either question them or care. It would be absolutely nothing.

So, let me ask you: Why do they not kill us? There can be only one reason: Hashem does not allow it. I have no idea what will occur in sixty seconds, but right now I know that Hashem wants us to live. The greatest proof of this verity is that we are still alive! Why does Hashem want us alive? Obviously, He expects something of us. - That is my original question to you: '***What does Hashem want of us?***'"

Rav Weintraub continued: "At times, the normal situation/climate in the world is to live. There are times (such as during war, famine, etc.) that the normal circumstance is death. People are dying all over. Yet, despite the climate of death all over, some people are not dying. Why? It is because Hashem wants them to live. He expects something of them.

The question that confronts the 'survivors' is: 'What does Hashem want of us?' Why is He changing what seems to be the normal climate of death and allowing us to live? "What is the natural/normal matzav, situation, in this world? Apparently, one would posit that it is life. That is what we might assume."

Rav Weintraub explained, "Chazal, however, do not agree. The Midrash (Tanna Dvei Eliyahu Zuta 5) relates that everyday Malachei Chabalah, angels whose mission it is to harm, come before Hashem

prepared to cause great harm to the world. If it would not be for the shuls and batei midrashos where Torah scholars are immersed in prayer and Torah study, they would destroy the world. In other words, the normal situation in the world is not life, but death.

At any given time, the world could be destroyed. Why is it not? Because Hashem refrains from doing so as a reward to those who devote themselves to Torah study.

At the Red Sea, Hashem wrought a singular miracle that went against the natural order of the world. Naturally, when a person plunges into the sea, he drowns. The Jewish People entered and miraculously lived.

In our everyday world, Hashem is constantly saving us from what normally would occur if the Malachei Chavalah had their way. Thus, our very existence, our everyday 'normal' life, is actually not so normal. As a result, the pasuk is written in present tense.

Every moment of our existence Hashem continually acts against the forces of 'normalcy,' just as He did when He split the Red Sea. As He went against nature, transforming it to serve His people, allowing them to pass safely through, so, too, does He constantly fend off those who would do us harm. - All in the z'chus, merit, of the Torah that is studied. - We must ask ourselves, '***What does Hashem want of me now?***'"

'This world is like a hotel. If a guest sits in his room and waits politely, everything he needs will be brought to him by the hired help. But if a person rushes to the kitchen to take his food, he will have to attend to himself. Similarly, a person who has bitochon will be given his needs. But one who puts <u>excessive</u> efforts into pursuing his livelihood will find that he is forced to do so.' ~ R' Yosef Yozel Hurwitz zt"l, the Alter of Novardok.

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם֙ חוֹמָ֣ה מִימִינָ֔ם וּמִשְׂמֹאלָֽם – '***Bnei Yisrael came within the sea on dry land***.' (14:22)

Did all of the people immediately enter the Red Sea? Nachshon ben Aminadov made the first move. Everybody followed his lead.

Chazal (Sotah 36b) quote a debate that takes place between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehudah: *Rabbi Meir teaches that when the Jewish People stood at the banks of the Red Sea the tribes began to contend with one another, each one declaring, "I am going in first!"*

Rabbi Yehudah disagrees. He claims it was the opposite, with each tribe giving the "honor" of entering the water first to the other tribe. In the end, it was Nachshon ben Aminadov who took the plunge and walked in until the water reached his mouth. He then cried out to Hashem: "Save me, G-d, for the waters have reached until my soul" (Tehillim 69:2).

In his Dudaei Reuven, **Horav Reuven Katz, zl**, explains that Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Meir are really not in disagreement. In fact, this apparent disagreement actually represents the foibles of human nature.

Anyone who has ever been party to a meeting convened to discuss a pressing issue, and to devise a plan for addressing the problem, has been privy to such debate. The assembled people come to a unanimous decision that they must establish an institution/organization that will officially deal with the issue at hand.

Once they all heard the problem and were inspired by the passionate speeches, the decision was unanimous. Now, however, when it comes to actually volunteering to support the institution – everyone volunteers his neighbor. - They are willing to be "on call" whenever necessary, as long as it is not during the day or night, weekend, etc. In other words, as long as the institutions are in the theoretical

stage, everyone wants to participate. Once action must be taken, they casually move to the back of the line.

It was no different when our ancestors stood at the banks of the Red Sea. Moshe Rabbeinu declared, "Let us move forward into the water!" - Everyone excitedly cried out, "I am first!" - This is Rabbi Meir's opinion.

Rabbi Yehudah interjects, "Perhaps that was their original reaction, but, when they came to the water, they each encouraged the 'other one' to enter. - How fortunate are we that Nachshon ben Aminadov took the initiative. Otherwise, who knows?"

Let me follow this up with an anecdotal vignette that underscores Nachshon's eternal contribution and what we should derive from his action: It was Chol Hamoed Pesach; a young kollel fellow entered a shul between Minchah and Maariv. The congregants who were assembled took notice. Since he appeared to be a scholar, they asked him to deliver a short dvar Torah. He demurred, claiming that he was not a speaker. The congregants were relentless, asking him again and again, until he acceded to their request.

"Rabbosai!" he began. "In two days, we will be celebrating Shvii shel Pesach, when we will read a description of the Splitting of the Red Sea from the Torah. Everyone knows (or at least can imagine) what went through the people's minds at that moment.

Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were all standing between the waters of the Red Sea and the approaching Egyptian army. The fear and trepidation that enveloped them must have been overwhelming.

After over two centuries of misery, pain, persecution and murder, they were finally liberated, only to meet their deaths either by drowning or at the hands of their oppressors. What should they do?

"During those moments of fear and hesitation, one man – by the name of Gershon ben Aminadov – moved forward."

Suddenly the congregants, realizing that the speaker had erred, "quietly" corrected him: "Nachshon," not Gershon.

The speaker ignored their correction and continued speaking: "Gershon hesitated. On the one hand, he felt it was the correct and proper action to take, but, on the other hand, he thought, 'What about my wife and children who would be left alone (if the water does not split and I die)?'"

During this time the congregants were getting upset. How could he, a learned scholar, continue to make the same mistake over and over again? It was Nachshon, not Gershon!

"Therefore," continued the speaker, "seeing that unless someone made a move and jumped into the water, nothing would happen (clearly an act of mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, was critical at this point), Gershon ben Aminadov finally decided that he was going to take the plunge.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Nachshon ben Aminadov ran forward and jumped in! He beat his brother by a few seconds. Indeed, had Nachshon not run forward, history would have recorded Gershon as the one who had catalyzed the miracle.

The entire miracle is identified with Nachshon ben Aminadov. Why? Was not Gershon the one who was about to jump in? - But he did not. It was Nachshon. Thus, he receives the credit."

A similar idea applies to so many mitzvos. Let us take minyan, for example. It takes ten Jews to complete a minyan. Everyone else davens with a minyan.

The first ten, however, comprise the minyan. They receive the bonus reward for providing a minyan for the others.

It is all about who arrives first. That is the way concerning all mitzvos.

וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם - '***It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people***.' (13:17)



Finally, after 210 years of brutal slavery, the Jewish People were free! - The Exodus is among the most seminal experiences of our collective Jewish history. Every year we devote an entire festival to commemorating our freedom, our liberation from servitude. **זכר ליציאת מצרים**, "***In remembrance of the exodus from Egypt***" is a critical part of many tefillos, prayers.

It has been over three thousand years since that auspicious moment of mass exodus from a tyrannical monarchy bent on destroying our people – and we still commemorate that moment.

We must, however, sit back for a moment and ask ourselves: Have we always been free? I think that, if we were to study Jewish history, we would note otherwise. Perhaps we lived in freedom until the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash, but what followed after that? The Greeks and the Romans were followed by the Crusaders and the Arabs, the barbarians of Western Europe whose anti-Semite pogroms went on for a thousand years until the Nazis completed the cruelty they had initiated. The Russians certainly had nothing to be ashamed of in terms of their ability to persecute the hapless Jew. - All in all, I would not posit that these last three thousand years have been idyllic.

We reiterate the question: How could the Jewish People have celebrated their freedom during these thousands of years of exile?

Furthermore, we have celebrated this freedom in the most unfree places and circumstances.

My parents celebrated the Pesach "Seder" running from burnt-out house to burnt-out house in the Warsaw Ghetto – and they were certainly not the only ones! Russian Jews celebrated Pesach under the tyrannical, brutal Communists. We all have celebrated Pesach and its message of freedom, but how do we do so amidst oppression, brutality and genocide?

The Maharal m'Prague asks this question (Gevuros Hashem 61) and offers an answer which defines our People, post – Egyptian exodus: We make the mistake of thinking that yetzias Mitzrayim was a one-time event during which slaves who had heretofore been subjected to cruel bondage were now released and free to go as they pleased. - Wrong.

Maharal explains that the Exodus created within the Jewish psyche a freedom mindset. We were no longer slaves; we had become free men. Freedom became part of our essence; no longer would the Jew be subservient to another nation. We rise above servitude. It goes against our grain.

Veritably, throughout the millennia, we have been conquered, reviled, abused, oppressed, hunted and murdered. Despite all of the travail, we have never altered our mindset. We are free men, subservient only to Hashem. Despite the suppression, our minds have remained free. Never have we acquiesced to the abuse. It is almost as if we have been sprayed with a Teflon coating of "freedom" which protects us from becoming tainted by the tyranny that has often been our lot. Those of our People who sadly do not understand this concept continue to wonder why we did not fight back during World War II. Why did we go like "sheep to the slaughter"?

This has become the catchphrase for all the self-loathing, myopic Jews who do not understand the true meaning of freedom. The Jew will always be free – regardless of his situation and circumstance.

We are a nation that was granted freedom by the Creator of all men, and, with His help, we will remain free throughout time.

It is up to the individual Jew to maintain the spiritual integrity, the courage and the strength, to see to it that our minds remain unshackled and that we each remain a citadel of freedom and a beacon of hope to our People and to all mankind.

Having said this, we ask why it is that there are so many of our brethren who lack this sense of freedom, who feel enslaved, who cringe when the word "anti-Semite" is mentioned, who will do anything to be accepted by a world whose envy of the Jew precludes the ability to see his G-dliness.

I think the reason is that a sense of freedom mandates a sense of responsibility. No longer can a person hide behind the veil of travail. He has no valid excuses. The shackles are off. We are free! -**The Baal Shem Tov** was wont to say, "***You are where your will is***." If one wants to be free – he is free. The one who fears freedom remains a slave. Freedom is an intrinsic part of the soul of the Jewish People. It is, thus, wholly understandable that the leaders of many of the "movements" and "isms" who have spoken out against repression of any kind were Jewish. Sadly, though, their outspokenness was not against spiritual tyranny, but for social advancement.

Likewise, children should be encouraged to express themselves. Often our children are suffocated by peer pressure, parental fears and media messages which demand that they conform to the society around them, so that they will not be excluded, disliked, or even hurt. The boy or girl who has "questions" about religion should not be stifled. Obviously, the person giving the answers should be erudite and blessed with an inordinate balance of common sense and compassion.

What is it about the young student who does not fit into the prefabricated mold that the individual religious community has

adopted? Should he/she be shunned? Is he/she a sinner just because he/she is exercising the individual gift of self-expression? If we suppress the children's innate sense of freedom of expression, they might be forced to go "elsewhere" – like the others who attribute their alienation from religion to having their religious inquisitiveness either ignored or suppressed.

Questions should be encouraged, so that the child can learn to understand and appreciate the beauty of Judaism. Obviously, he should reach a point in which he accepts, through a leap of faith, what his limited mind cannot comprehend. One must be led to faith upon the building blocks of understanding. This only occurs once he has been inspired and encouraged to respond to his inner calling, his inherent Jewish DNA, the yearning for freedom. - When there is a will, there is a way.

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם – '***And Bnei Yisrael went out from the land of Egypt, (well) armed***.' (13:18)



What benefit did the Jewish slaves – now turned free men – have from the weapons which they brought with them from Egypt?

The commentators interpret **חֲמֻשִׁים** as armed. This then provides proof positive that when Bnei Yisrael battled Amalek they had weapons to use against the enemy.

Having weapons and knowing how to use them are quite different matters. Perhaps by the time Amalek attacked them, they had already trained somewhat in weaponry and battle. What would men

who knew nothing but slavery for 210 years do with weapons? Why did they take something with them that they did not know how to use? - We must, therefore, conclude that 'armed' has a different meaning.

The faithful Jew is acutely aware that success or failure has nothing to do with physical prowess or state-of-the-art weaponry. It is all in the hands of Hashem. If we merit – we triumph. If we do not merit – or Hashem feels that this is not a time for success – we do not triumph. - Klal Yisrael's weapons were their faith in Hashem. True, they required the Giving of the Torah and a forty-year sojourn in the wilderness, completely relying upon Hashem's beneficence for survival, to achieve the pinnacle of faith which guided their lives when they entered Eretz Yisrael.

Hashgachah pratis, Divine Providence, for those who faithfully obey His mitzvos, was capable not only of saving them from destruction, but also of ensuring their day-to-day survival – no matter what challenges they might have encountered. The spiritual education garnered through forty years of wandering in the Wilderness provided them with the curriculum for this successful transition from slave to independent member of Klal Yisrael. Bnei Yisrael did not enter the wilderness spiritually bereft of faith. They had "weapons"; they had proven in Egypt that they were capable of rising to the challenge of the wilderness. - They had manifest faith in Hashem while still in Egypt. This was their weaponry.

It is related (Haggadah Chashukei Chemed) that every year on the Seder night, the saintly **Chasam Sofer, zl**, would say to his children the following: "My children and grandchildren, listen carefully. Prior to the Exodus our People experienced two nisyonos, tests, and these two tests will (also) be the final two nisyonos prior to the ultimate Redemption, with the advent of Moshiach Tziddkeinu.

"The first nisayon was one of money/wealth/material abundance. During the plague of choshech, darkness, Klal Yisrael was exposed

to the enormous wealth of their Egyptian oppressors. Needless to say, they became obsessed with a burning desire to grab whatever they could as a form of revenge against these miserable, cruel despots, who had mercilessly persecuted them for over two centuries. What held them back from losing it? What prevented them from ransacking the Egyptian homes?

Their faith and belief in Hashem's promise that, in the end they would leave this miserable country with tremendous treasure.

"The second nisayon was one of fear. On that night, the Jews hiding in their homes heard bloodcurdling screams, shrieks of pain and misery, emanating from the Egyptians who witnessed their firstborn sons dying before their eyes. The Jews were unaware of the nature and source of these screams: were they only from Egyptian homes, or were Jewish homes also being affected by the plague?

"Nonetheless, in spite of their fear, they listened to Hashem's command and did not leave their homes until the morning. They believed and trusted in Moshe Rabbeinu's word that the chilling screams which they heard were the result of – and reaction to – the deaths of the Egyptian firstborns.

"Am Yisrael withstood these tests because of their faith in Hashem and Moshe Rabbeinu. These two tests will also appear in the days preceding the advent of Moshiach. Just as the Jewish People were saved in Egypt because of the merit of their faith in the leaders of their generation, so, too, will their descendants be spared and redeemed because of the faith and trust they will place in the leaders of their generation."

Klal Yisrael had these weapons of faith when they left Egypt. This constituted their armour that protected them from the enemy. It was upon this foundation of faith that they built their growing relationship with Hashem during the next forty years.

וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם נֹסֵעַ אַחֲרֵיהֶם – '***Bnei Yisrael raised their eyes and behold! – Egypt was journeying after them***.' (14:10)



Klal Yisrael saw the united Egyptian Army coming after them. The word **נֹסֵעַ**, traveling, is written in the singular, rather than in the plural form, nosim. - Rashi explains that the Egyptians came after the Jews **בְּלֵב אֶחָד כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד**, "***with one heart, like one person***."

In a similar exposition in Parshas Yisro, Rashi comments concerning Klal Yisrael's coming to Har Sinai. **וַיִּחַן־שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל**, "***and Yisrael camped there***" (Shemos 19:2). - Vayichan is singular, as opposed to vayachanu, which would be the proper plural conjugation form. - Rashi expounds, **כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד**, '***as one person with one heart***.'

Notably, concerning Klal Yisrael's description of their unity, Rashi places ish, person (echad), prior to lev, heart; unlike, concerning the Egyptians, it was the heart first, b'lev echad, followed by ish echad, one person. Was there a difference in the relative types of unity?

In a well-known exposition, **Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl**, explains that Egyptian unity is based upon a common cause, not a common attribute. The Egyptians have only one characteristic in common with one another: their hatred of the Jews. This is what unified them. Otherwise, they were each self-serving, lacking any allegiance to one another. Thus, they were b'lev echad, one unified heart/cause, which made them into ish echad.

The Jewish People are different. They are k'ish echad, all compared to varied components of one body. All aspects of the body work

together as lev echad. Their lev echad is the result of being an ish echad. The Jews, by definition, are one unit bound by their collective body. When one organ of the body is in pain, the entire body suffers. Klal Yisrael does not require a common cause to unite us. We are one unit, because we are all components of one body – Klal Yisrael.

We derive from here an important principle with regard to unity. One type of unity is synthesis unity, which is a composite of varied forms, people, elements to form an amalgamated front, position, stand.

While this works under most conditions, the individuals involved are committed to a common goal – not to one another. In a symbiotic unity, a blending, a cooperative relationship exists between two persons or groups, whereby the two focus on unity among themselves in such a manner that the two become one.

We have as of late been plagued by movements who have positioned themselves with a common goal to undermine traditional Orthodoxy, to modernize halachah by transforming it to state-of-art status. The individuals involved each have his/her own personal agenda but are united by a common goal.

Such unity is like the Egyptian unity which was a synthesis of variant persons united under a common banner. Such unity, because it involves various personalities and egos, each devoted to no one other than him/herself, will not endure.

Unity must be symbiotic, whereby everyone not only works for a common goal and under a common banner, but each individual component abnegates him/herself to focus first on self-unity before addressing the issues.

"Hashem is our only true source of security, and trusting in Him is the key to finding inner peace." ~ Rabbi Zelig Pliskin.

וַיַּ֣רְא יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אֶת־הַיָּ֤ד הַגְּדֹלָה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֣ה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַ֔יִם – *'Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt.'* (14:31)



"Great hand" is explained by the **Chafetz Chaim, zl**, as far-reaching. At times, years could go by before we see the great hand. Things happen; some (apparently) positive, and others which appear to be negative. We do not understand why, but we maintain our faith that these are not haphazard occurrences. Everything is a piece in Hashem's Divine Plan; everything has its assigned place. - When we will be privy to the complete big picture, we will see with clarity how everything fits neatly into the puzzle of reality.

Klal Yisrael suffered cruel and bitter persecution at the hand of the Egyptians. Surely, they must have had questions during those 210 years of servitude. They waited 210 years to see their oppressors perish in the Red Sea, while they were spared in the greatest miracle of all time.

We, too, have questions, but we wait patiently for that glorious day when they will all be answered, when we will see the great hand of Hashem.

What keeps us going? What preserves our faith? - The great hand. The knowledge that, at times, the path to the explanation is a long one, and, until we reach the end of the road we will really not understand. In retrospect, we understand that everything has taken place at the perfect time.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the story of Reuven and Shimon (fictitious names), who were the best of friends. They both took an accounting course and completed it successfully. Reuven

immediately landed a job at a company and did well there over the years.

At one point, the company was in the market to fill another accounting position. Reuven mentioned the name of his good friend, who eventually impressed his boss so much that he was hired. Years went by with Reuven and Shimon growing in stature at the company. When the position of director opened up, they both submitted their resumes – since such a prestigious position would help ease the financial challenges each one had endured as their individual families grew. Indeed, the director's position paid over three times what they were presently earning.

Since Reuven had seniority, he was certain that he would be selected for the position. How shocked and dismayed he was when Shimon was picked for the position over him. The dismay soon turned to anger – first at management, and then at Shimon, who, through no fault of his own, had become his competitor. Reuven was upset, but he internalized his feelings. He could have lashed out, but he kept it to himself.

Nights went by that he did not sleep. Many a dinner with his wife and children was disrupted by these negative internal feelings, but, to the best that he was able, he shored up his faith in Hashem, trusting that eventually things would smooth themselves out. After all, whatever comes from Hashem has to be good. We might not see it right away, but, eventually, it all comes together.

Time does not stop for anyone. Reuven's children grew up, and his oldest son was now of marriageable age. He had an enviable reputation both as a scholar and a yarei Shomayim, G-d-fearing.

A shadchan, marriage broker, approached Reuven and suggested a shidduch with an outstanding young woman, whose reputation appeared to be a perfect fit. The shadchan added that he had taken the liberty of mentioning the boy's name to the girl's family, and they

were very receptive, to the point that they are prepared to give the "couple" a four-room apartment in Bnei Brak.

Reuven seemed fine about the whole thing until he enquired regarding the girl's family. When he heard that it was none other than his old friend, Shimon, he was floored. The shadchan reiterated that the girl's father was ready to give his entire savings to have such a fine young man as a son-in-law.

A few weeks later Reuven and Shimon – once best friends – now celebrated the engagement of their children.

Now, let us ask ourselves: What would have happened had Reuven lost his cool and lashed out against Shimon when he was appointed director of the firm? Both Reuven and Shimon would have lost out, since the shidduch probably would not have materialized. Patience, forbearance, silence in the knowledge that we are all part of Hashem's Divine Plan proved determinative.

Who understands the inspired life of a boy growing up in a home knowing that his father accepts Divine decree with complete equanimity?



וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם... וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ
'***Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt… and they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe***.' (14:31)

Krias Yam Suf, the Splitting of the Red Sea, left an indelible impression of faith in Hashem on the Jewish People. While they had witnessed varied miracles in Egypt, the miracles that accompanied Krias Yam Suf (Yalkut Meam Loaz enumerates fifty miracles) had a compelling effect on the Jewish spiritual mindset.

Horav Asher Weiss, Shlita, relates the story of a father and his young son at the Seder table. The father was extolling the miracles connected with the Splitting of the Red Sea, when suddenly, his young, wise son interjected with a question. "Tell me, Father, why

are we so impressed with the Splitting of the Red Sea? If Hashem created the sea – certainly He is able to split it in half!"

Although impressed with his son's level of perception, the father maintained his composure and proceeded to answer the question with a parable: An expert sculptor once made an image of a horse that was so incredibly perfect and so lifelike that it was almost impossible to discern the difference between the sculpture and the real thing.



The sculptor proceeded to take his sculpted horse outside where people could see and admire his work. When a few days passed with no one stopping to admire his handiwork, the sculptor became anxious. How could anyone walk by his extraordinary piece of art and ignore it? How could they walk by without complimenting the brilliance of the sculptor?

Unable to hold in his feelings, the sculptor stopped a passerby and asked, "Why have you not taken notice of the amazing horse that appears so realistic?"

The man replied, "Exactly for the reason you mentioned. Since your sculpture looks so real, it does not capture anyone's interest. The street is filled with horses. What is one more horse?"

The sculptor accepted the reason with some reservation. "If that is the case," he thought out loud, "why did I spend so many hours of precious time to make such a brilliant sculpture? It looks so real. Yet, no one appreciates it. Why did I spend years in school and hours

upon hours of practice to achieve a sculpture that no one appreciates?"

Hearing him muse out loud, a wise man who happened to be walking by, stopped and said, "Let me give you a bit of advice. Cut your horse in two parts and place the two halves next to one another. This image will certainly capture the attention of anyone walking by. Who would not want to see this 'real' occurrence of a horse cut into two parts?" This is the idea which the father sought to convey to his son. If we would have the proper insight to be impressed by the wondrous creation of the sea and, indeed, all of nature, the synchronized daily miracles which we accept as natural, there would be no need for Hashem to split the sea.

Since, however, we suffer from the disease of complacency, whereby we get used to seeing miracles, they become habit-forming. Since we are no longer aroused by nature, it was necessary to "get their attention" by splitting the sea, so that they be inspired by both the large and small miracles.

Krias Yam Suf is an incredible miracle made necessary because we have become "spoiled" by miracles, thinking that we are entitled to them.

תְּקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵרוּתֵנוּ - Sound the great Shofar for our Freedom.

Horav Levi Yitzchak, zl, m'Berditchev, was known as Klal Yisrael's advocate, their defender who viewed everything through a positive lens. One Rosh Hashanah, following his derashah, lecture, preceding Tekias Shofar, he turned around, his back to the congregation, his face facing the Aron HaKodesh – and he began to cry bitterly.

The congregation obviously waited patiently for their Rav – despite his incessant weeping, which seemed to go on and on. No one could think of a reason why specifically now, of all times, he was crying so passionately. Suddenly, he stopped crying and spoke softly to



Hashem, like a son speaking to his father, "Ribono Shel Olam, You commanded us in Your Torah to blow Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. According to Halachah, we are able to fulfill the mitzvah with merely nine tekios, blasts. Yet, we blow 101 blasts. This is all because of one single mitzvah which You gave us. Furthermore, we are not the only ones doing this. Every congregation, in every city in the world, under all conditions, each and every year – year in and year out – has been doing this for thousands of years. Millions of tekios have been blown – all in Your honor, to glorify You. All that we ask of You is one single tekia, one solitary blast, that will herald our Redemption. **תְּקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵרוּתֵנוּ!**"

The Rebbe concluded his supplication and once again burst into bitter weeping. What an incredible story to think about when we recite the tenth blessing of the Shemoneh Esrai.

וְיָצְאוּ הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנַסֶּנּוּ הֲיֵלֵךְ בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם־לֹא - '***Let the people go out and pick each day's portion on that day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My teaching or not.***' (16:4)

The Manna that descended from Heaven daily like clockwork was a test from Hashem. Would they receive the Manna daily, or would it suddenly stop and leave them without sustenance? Would they not put Manna away for the next day? Would they not seek it on Shabbos? Would a lack of food impede their relationship with Hashem? Would they become so complacent in their food

expectancy that they would balk if it did not arrive as usual in a timely fashion?

We have become so accustomed to receiving our daily fare that we cannot imagine what it would be like if, for some reason, it did not materialize. We take so much for granted until it is taken from us. We are then shocked, not knowing what to do; at times, we are even moved to anger. How could this have happened? Why?

We conveniently forget the years when everything was going so well. Perhaps, had we been more appreciative, we would have acknowledged our debt of gratitude before we realized that it is neither a given, nor is it owed to us.

A shailah, question, was brought up during a shiur. The halachah is clear that one who sins b'shogeg, unintentionally, must atone for his actions by offering a Korban Chatas, Sin-offering. The question was raised about a Jew who was born, raised and lived on a faraway island, never having had the privilege of meeting his coreligionists and never becoming aware of the meaning of mitzvah, aveirah, sin, etc. He was a person who grew up clueless about Torah and, one day, he discerned his heritage and found out what it means to be a Jew. Is he compelled to atone for his past with a Korban Chatas?

The rebbe to whom the question was addressed responded with a story: An observant fellow, a good person both ethically and morally, was one day informed that that day was to be his last day at work! He was being replaced.

The fellow left quite dejected. After all, he had no idea how he would provide for his sizable family. He did not sleep that night.

The next morning, he arose early, figuring that he would quickly scan the classified section of the newspaper. How surprised he was to see a crisp 200-shekel bill fall out from in between the pages. He checked every page of the paper, then checked the bill. It was real. The next day, the same thing happened. Inside his paper, he

discovered a crisp 200-shekel bill. This continued for two months – every day, a 200-shekel bill lay between the folds of his newspaper.



One morning, his paper was left on his lawn closer to his neighbor's house. He ran over there, insisting on retrieving his paper. His neighbor thought that he had become unhinged. "What difference is there whose paper you have?" he asked.

"No, I insist on my paper."

"Well, I used your paper as a tablecloth for my children's breakfast!"

"No problem. I will take it in whatever condition it is in."

After picking up the soiled paper, he went home to once again find his 200-shekel bill! This scenario continued for four years! Why should one work when he receives his livelihood in his morning paper?

People began to wonder. Their neighbor did not work; yet, he seemed to have enough money to serve his needs.

One morning, as he was about to pick up the paper, he noticed someone's shoe pressing down firmly on the newspaper. The nerve of the person to step on his paper, impeding him from retrieving his livelihood!

He was about to raise his voice and tell the individual to get off or else, when he heard a voice say to him, "What about some gratitude?"

"What? What are you saying?" the man asked.

"Why do you not say thank you? For four years, you have received 200 shekels daily in your newspaper, and not once did you say thank you."

"Please, sir, you must understand, I had no idea who you were. To whom was I supposed to show my appreciation?" he asked.

"This is exactly what bothers me about you. For years, you eat my bread, drink my water, satiate yourself with my food. Did you once think – perhaps I should find out who is my benefactor? You took it for granted that it would always be there. Today, when my shoe prevented you from taking your money, you finally raised up your head to find out who is doing this! Had I not come by you would never know that I exist, because you would never have looked!"

We go through life taking everything for granted. A Jew – regardless of his spiritual and physical locus must recognize and acknowledge the existence of Hashem. Therefore, if, after years, he discovers that, due to his unawareness of Torah and mitzvos, he has transgressed unintentionally – he must atone for his actions.

We should not wait until the "foot" is pressed down on our livelihood to acknowledge Who our true benefactor is.

וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה ***And Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem***. (14:10)



Rashi cites **Yalkut Shimoni** who comments: תָּפְשׂוּ אֻמָּנוּת אֲבוֹתָם, "***They adopted the craft of their Forefathers***."

The Avos HaKedoshim, holy Patriarchs, conversed with Hashem through the medium of prayer. Apparently, what was good for the Avos was good for their offspring.

Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, zl, derives a powerful lesson from the Yalkut: A craft is one's trade, his vocation, the medium by which he earns a living. Prayer is **our** trade, our umnos. One who has a

profession must be serious about it, or his work will be for naught. Someone who has studied a trade, mastered a course, and received a degree attesting to his ability will do everything to ensure that he is successful in his chosen vocation. He will rise early, be on time, maintain his commitments. In short – he will not play around. After all, this is his umnos.

Should our davening be any different? It is our umnos. Without proper davening, we will receive nothing. To skip parts of the tefillah, cut corners, come late, leave early, is no way to run a business – unless one seeks to ensure bankruptcy.

Imagine someone who has a business and shows up whenever he is in the mood, treats his customers in accordance with how well he slept the previous night; stands outside schmoozing with his friends, ignoring what is taking place in the store. This is certainly not the way to guarantee a successful business venture.

Should davening be any different? It is our business venture with Hashem. How can we hope for a positive response if we are outside discussing the latest gossip? How can we entreat Hashem for His favor if we do not even bother to wait around in shul for an answer?

If tefillah is our umnos, we had better do it properly, or risk foreclosure.

אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה׳ – '***Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael chose to sing this song to Hashem***.' (15:1)

The Shabbos during which the Shirah is read is unique. Indeed, it is called Shabbos Shirah – the Shabbos of the Song.

Horav Yitzchak, zl, m'Varka once asked the **Chidushei HaRim** why the Shabbos on which we read the Shirah has become Shabbos Shirah, when this phenomenon does not occur on any other Shabbos. We do not refer to the Shabbos on which we read Parashas Yisro (which records Kabbolas HaTorah) as Shabbos Mattan Torah.

Likewise, other Shabbosos do not derive their name from the contents of the parsha that we read on that particular week.



The Chidushei HaRim replied that the uniqueness of the Shabbos and its relationship with the Shirah are evident from the way the Shirah is written in the Torah, namely, אֲרִיחַ עַל גַּבֵּי לְבֵנָה, "***brick on top of brick***." This is a reference to the way in which the text is written in the Sefer Torah. Rather than in straight long columns, it is written, "A half brick above a whole brick."

A half brick refers to the written part of the song, and the whole brick refers to the blank space which is twice the size of the written part. This format is followed throughout the Shirah. Thus, the Shabbos is given a special name, due to its uniqueness as evinced in the way it is written out in the Torah.

In honor of Shabbos Shirah, I have taken the liberty to relate a story that is perhaps more well known in Chassidic circles. Since it is "water related," it is appropriate for this Shabbos:

The Mezritcher Maggid, zl, announced to his students, "I see an overwhelming darkness, descending upon the world. It will envelop the Jewish world with devastating effects. - He was referring to the Haskalah, Enlightenment, which had a deleterious effect on German Jewry, before it spread its poisonous tentacles to the rest of western Europe and Russia.

In order to prevent the desolation that would result from this spiritual infamy, the Maggid dispatched his two primary students,

Horav Shmelke and his brother, **Horav Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz**. Rav Shmelke went to Nikolsburg and established a yeshivah. Rav Pinchas, the distinguished author of the Sefer Haflaah, went to Frankfurt.

While these illustrious brothers did not succeed in changing the tide of assimilation, they did succeed in mentoring two young men who became giants in Torah and indefegatible fighters for Torah. Rav Pinchas was the Rebbe of the **Chasam Sofer**, and Rav Shmelke mentored **Rav Mordechai Binet**. These two giants of Torah fought relentlessly and successfully against the secular scourge created by the Haskalah movement.

When Rav Shmelke arrived in Nikolsburg, the Jewish community poured out en masse to greet him. He sat with his Tallis over his head and did not gaze beyond the immediate four cubits in front of him.

Among those who approached the illustrious Rav was Moses Mendelssohn of Dessau. Mendelssohn was considered the father of the German Reform movement, a virulent form of secular perspective whose goal was to destroy Judaism as a religion and lower it to the level of a culture. Thus, the Jew would have no ties with G-d, since religion would no longer be a part of the Jewish portfolio.

Rav Shmelke immediately pulled back his hand and said, "I want this rasha, evil man, together with his followers, to be asked to leave this house!"

Mendelssohn did not take this insult lightly. He wasted no time in planning his revenge.

He immediately dispatched a letter to the governor of Vienna stating that a new "Rabbi," who is totally unschooled, has assumed the rabbinate in Nikolsburg. He stated that the Rebbe was not

conversant in the German language and was unable to read or write in the mother tongue.

Rav Shmelke was summoned to appear before the magistrate in Vienna. Mendelssohn's henchmen arranged that the day of Rav Shmelke's presentation would be Monday. To ensure that the Rav would not arrive on time, they saw to it that the letter arrive on Friday afternoon. There was no way that the Rav could reach the capitol by Monday – being that he was Shabbos observant.

When the letter arrived, Rav Shmelke's family reacted as expected – with great fear. This was a set up. How could the Rav arrive on time?



Rav Shmelke implored them not to worry. Everything would work out in due time.

Motzei Shabbos, Rav Shmelke hired a driver and two assistants, and the small group set out for Vienna by carriage. Midway, the three men dozed off, "allowing" the horses to gallop to their hearts' content.

When the men woke up at daybreak, they were shocked to see that they were at the Danube River, on the outskirts of Vienna.

Rav Shmelke sought a boat and captain to take him across the river. He was not successful, due to the climate. The frozen river was beginning to melt, and it was difficult to navigate a boat between the large chunks of ice. - If a boat were to be struck by ice, it would mean the end of the boat and its passengers. No one was moving. - Finally, one of the shipmasters, sensing that Rav Shmelke was a holy man, stepped forth and agreed to take him across the Danube.

Meanwhile, the Rav of Prague, the venerable **Horav Yechezkel Landau, zl**, author of the Noda b'Yehudah, was well aware of Mendelssohn's evil slander. He was close with Rav Shmelke, and, as a result, he had traveled to Vienna to intercede with his friends in the government.

The Noda b'Yehudah and the mayor walked together to the banks of the Danube to watch the melting ice. Apparently, this was a sight to behold, and thousands poured out to watch this phenomenon annually.

They were watching as the large chunks of ice were moving toward a small boat in which a regal man, a rabbi, stood praying. What they did not know was that, as the ice came hurtling toward their boat, Rav Shmelke had stood up, and, with deep devotion, began reciting the Shiras HaYam. Miraculously, every block of ice that came toward them was "somehow" repelled, as their little boat made safe passage through the Danube.

All this was witnessed by the government official who stood next to the Noda b'Yehudah. Unquestionably, Rav Shmelke was a holy man, but sanctity was not the criteria for a rabbinic position in Germany. The judge still had to see whether the complaint against Rav Shmelke was true or slanderous.

When the judge asked Rav Shmelke whether he spoke German, the Rav responded in impeccable German. When asked if he could write German, he proceeded to write an entire intellectual thesis in HochDeutch, high German, the language spoken by royalty. - Obviously, Mendelssohn's allegations had been vicious lies, which, sadly, have been the trademark of his followers throughout history.

Rav Shmelke was granted permission to punish his detractors. He refused but asked them to leave Nikolsburg. They moved to Berlin, where their nefarious impact was felt for the next century.

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם - '***Bnei Yisrael were armed when they went up from Egypt.***' (13:18)



Rashi defines chamushim as armed. **אֵין חֲמוּשִׁים אֶלָּא מְזֻיָּנִים**

Taking a journey through the wilderness is not like a walk in the park. One can encounter pernicious challenges at almost every step of the way. Additionally, the pagan nations inhabiting Eretz Yisrael would certainly not take kindly to the idea of being displaced by the Jewish People. The fact that G-d promised the Land to the Jews had very little bearing on the pagan mindset.

On the other hand, the Jews were not a warrior nation. For the past 210 years, their primary vocation had been slavery. Thus, the people took along weapons as preparation for any contingency.

Having said this, we wonder why, when the people were being pursued by the Egyptians, Hashem resorted to the overt miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea. Why did He not just simply have them pick up their weapons and fight? - True, they were not soldiers, but the miracle of their vanquishing the Egyptians using conventional warfare was definitely less overt than splitting the sea. Why did Hashem have to call such attention to the nation?

The Chasam Sofer derives an important principle concerning our moral behavior. Mi'derech ha'mussar, from the point of ethical correctness, it was inappropriate for the Jewish people who had established residence in Egypt for 210 years to personally raise up their weapons and fight their "benefactors."

This is the reason that the Torah instructs us not to hate an Egyptian, for **בֵּירָא דִּשְׁתֵּית מִינֵּיהּ – לָא תִּשְׂדֵּי בֵּיהּ קָלָא** - "***a well from***

which one drinks water, he should not throw stones."(BK 92b) When one derives benefits from another fellow – regardless of its nature and the benefactor's motivation – he still owes him.

This is truly a powerful statement. One would think that after 210 years of slavery, the Jews had repaid the Egyptians a thousand-fold for being their host country. Apparently, we view hakoras hatov, gratitude, from a different vantage point. We separate the good from the bad. True, the Egyptians were a cruel, abominable and morally bankrupt nation, who treated us in the most reprehensible manner. This allows us even more reason to despise them and to want absolutely nothing to do with them.

Jews, however, answer to a different calling. We understand that if someone benefits us, we owe him. Hashem will deal with the rest – his attitude, motivation and ill-treatment. We must be grateful for their hospitality. Leave the punishment to Hashem. Otherwise, we are no different than the pagans and despots who have cruelly mistreated us throughout the millennia.

נָטִיתָ יְמִינְךָ תִּבְלָעֵמוֹ אָרֶץ – '*You stretched out Your right hand – the earth swallowed them*.' (15:12)



Rashi explains this pasuk as sort of a reward for the Egyptians, because they had acknowledged Hashem's justice, when (ibid 9:27) they proclaimed, **ה' הַצַּדִּיק**, "***Hashem is righteous***." He showed His infinite mercy by allowing them to be buried following their ordeal. This is the meaning of, **תִּבְלָעֵמוֹ אָרֶץ**, "***The earth swallowed them up***."

A powerful lesson may be derived from here. Regardless of who a person is, his previous negative actions notwithstanding, when he acts appropriately, when he performs a positive act that either serves as a vehicle for glorifying Hashem or assisting a (fellow) Jew – he will be rewarded commensurate with his current actions.

We see that Hashem rewarded the Egyptians with a proper burial, despite their nefarious past. Once they declared, Hashem HaTzaddik, they glorified His Name. For this, they were rewarded.

Interestingly, they did not do much. They reacted to the wondrous miracles that were shaking up their country. Such a reaction was, for the most part, inevitable. Yet, Hashem rewarded them because every good deed deserves to be rewarded.

We observe also that one never knows the effect of a positive action. They said only two words, but these two words had a positive cosmic effect, which was reciprocated with an incredible reward for a people whose negative actions had been beyond contempt.

Hashem looks at the benefit engendered by a person's action. If it has had a positive effect on someone else's life, it will certainly generate great reward.

The following episode, related by *Rabbi Berel Wein* and quoted by **Horav Moshe Toledano, zl**, is a classic example of this concept: Rabbi Wein had occasion to daven in a large shul in Yerushalayim in which the worshippers sat by tables one facing another, rather than on rows of benches (back to back). Thus, when one faced the fellow opposite him, he would get a very clear view of his face.

At the beginning of davening, a tall man with blonde hair walked in with his three sons, who were also blonde. They all had blue eyes. Rabbi Wein could not help but notice their Aryan looks. While he was used to seeing people from diverse and somewhat "not-mainstream" backgrounds, he was not accustomed to seeing an Aryan countenance in Eretz Yisrael. It was not simply their unusual appearance (unusual

to meet them in a shul), it was the way in which they davened. They prayed with amazing intensity and unusual fervor. The children acted with impeccable manners, taking every word of the prayer service seriously.

Rabbi Wein was sufficiently impressed, to the point that he asked his friend about this family. His friend replied that the father was a microbiology professor at Hebrew University. His life story was truly unique, but if Rabbi Wein wanted to hear, who better than the man himself to relate his background.

Rabbi Wein agreed, and his friend said, "I would like to introduce you to Rabbi Berel Wein. He would love to hear your life story."

"Sure, I would be happy to tell you about my background. I am sure it is quite different than anything that you have ever heard before:

I was born and raised in Germany; hence my Aryan features. My father was a captain in the dread S.S. They were the worst of the worst. It was their function to exterminate the Jews. He served 'with distinction' throughout the entire war and somehow managed to elude discovery.

His sins were reprehensible, but, like so many others, he avoided detection until sometime after the war. My father was finally apprehended, judged and sentenced to only ten years in prison. Apparently, due to his already advanced age, any sentence more than ten years would have been considered a life sentence. In the end, he served only four and a half years.

"My father never spoke about his past. I knew nothing about his evil past and how he spent his war years. I knew that he was a decorated soldier but was totally ignorant concerning for what it was that he had been decorated.

During the trial, the newspapers maintained a running account of his life story. You cannot imagine the shock, hurt and shame that enveloped me when I read what kind of fiend my father was.

When the family visited him in prison, he refused to see me. He was ashamed, and he did not want his precious son to see him in a prison uniform.

The one good thing that resulted from the ordeal was that – after much study – I realized how cruel the Nazis had been.

"I was now very troubled. If my father had risen to such a lofty position in the hierarchy of the S.S., perhaps I, too, carry that murderous gene within me. Would I, too, become a murderer? Would I view anyone who was not Aryan as a parasite worthy of being stomped to death? I felt the need to study the Nazi mindset, the psyche of a cultured nation that overnight threw away their morals and future to become murderous beasts of the lowest order.

I decided to go to Israel to study the people, to get to know them, to discover what it was about this peace-loving nation that invoked so much gentile hatred.

"I began to study Judaism, its laws, philosophy and culture. I was so impressed that I fell in love with the religion, and I decided to remain in Eretz Yisrael. I applied for citizenship. After two years of intense study of Judaism, I was determined to become a ger, to convert to the religion which I had come to love so much.

Several years after I converted, I received my doctorate in microbiology. The next step was to find an appropriate wife whose ideals coincided with mine. I was blessed to meet a wonderful woman who also hailed from Germany, closer to Alsace Lorraine. - Like me, she is a giyores, convert, whose love of Judaism parallels mine.

"I am certain that a psychologist would posit that my entire transformation from a German youth, son of a Gestapo officer, was a response to my overwhelming guilt. It is not true. I view my conversion as part of my destiny, as a milestone along my journey to become a devout member of Klal Yisrael. We neither speak – nor

think – of our roots. As far as we are concerned, we are a devout, committed Jewish family.

"One year ago, I received a message from Germany that my father, who was already ninety years old, was ailing. The end appeared to be near. My wife felt that this would be an appropriate time to return to Germany and make amends.

At first, my response was negative. I feared returning to the country that I had begun to revile so vehemently. Why would I want to return to the country that was responsible for the wholesale murder of six million of my co-religionists?

After a while, I realized that I had nothing to fear. I was no longer a part of that world. I was now a member of Klal Yisrael.

"I took a one-year sabbatical from the university, and, together with my family, flew to Germany. We traveled to Darmstadt, my hometown, to the nursing home where my father was now a patient. It was an image to remember: a Jewish father and mother together with their three sons, the boys bedecked in conservative clothes, long payos and large velvet yarmulkes. Obviously, the blond hair and blue eyes were dead giveaways. Indeed, as we walked through the nursing home, through this bastion of German culture, we stood out – with pride and dignity.

"When my father first saw us, he looked away. He could not bring himself to embrace or kiss any of his grandsons – or his son, for that matter.

Something was bothering me. My father lived a very evil life; yet he lived to be over ninety years old, a very ripe old age, even by contemporary standards. He merited to see three grandsons who became bnei Torah, fully committed Jews, a nachas to their parents and community. How did he merit such good fortune?

"I explained to my father that, as Jews, we believe that nothing just happens without rhyme or reason. Everything comes from the

Almighty for a specific reason. Therefore, if you merited long life and such grandchildren, you must have done something special during your life to have warranted such reward.

"My father slowly replied, 'I cannot think of anything that I did in my life that might be considered of a positive nature. I was no different than most of my compatriots. We thought we were the best, the Aryan race, and everyone else was a parasite unworthy of living. Perhaps, however, there was one thing that I did which might be worthy of consideration. - We were in Frankfurt rounding up Jews, when I had the singular opportunity to spare three little Jewish children who were hiding in a Catholic orphanage. For some reason which, until today, I did not understand, I allowed them to escape. I have no idea whatever happened to them, whether they survived the war or not. I just know that I let them live'.

"I thought a moment about my father's 'good deed' and I said, 'You know, had you saved four children, quite possibly you would have had four grandchildren sitting here today.'"

The story is intriguing. Imagine the seed of an accursed Nazi converting to Yiddishkeit, who today is a devout contributing member of his community. His children – like the man and his wife- are deeply committed Jews, whose life revolves around Torah, avodah, mitzvos and good deeds. Why? Because the grandfather, a man who was a member of the most cruel, despotic collection of human refuse – a Nazi who murdered Jews – saved three children. He merited to have three vibrant, staunchly observant, Jewish grandchildren.

One never knows how much he achieves with every single positive endeavor: a visit to the hospital to encourage someone; giving assistance to the elderly – not only by helping them up the stairs, but by asking them about their lives, learning with them, making them feel relevant.

We conjure up every excuse known to mankind just to get out of doing the little things that are not always so geshmak, pleasant, and do not garner much attention for us. Hashem does not view them as little, because those who are affected by them do not consider them to be little. - Indeed, those "little things" can be life-altering.



וְכֹל בְּכוֹר אָדָם בְּבָנֶיךָ תִּפְדֶּה – '*And you shall redeem every human first born among your sons*.' (13:13)

The mitzvah of Pidyon HaBen is a rite of passage mitzvah in which the firstborn son is redeemed for five silver coins. This is an important mitzvah, in that the child/b'chor/firstborn is like a Kohen, since the priesthood was once the domain of the firstborn. They lost it, and it was transferred over to Shevet/Tribe of Levi, of which the Kohanim became the replacement b'chorim. Thus, every firstborn harbors a degree of sanctity which must be redeemed since he cannot use it.

In the following incident, we see exactly how important the mitzvah of Pidyon HaBen really is:

Rav Meir Gruzman is Rav in Tel Aviv and also teaches a Judaism course for Israeli soldiers in the military academy. This course covers basic Judaism, its history and hashkafah, philosophy, heralding back to the Revelation at Har Sinai, and continuing on to the issues confronted by Jews in modern times.

One day, following an especially spirited class explaining the concept of nevuah, prophecy, and the unique nature and distinction of those chosen by Hashem to be His prophets, he was asked by one of his students, a captain, "Do we still have such men of stature who represent the spiritual elite to the Jewish People?"

Rav Gruzman responded with a short discourse on the thirty-six tzaddikim, righteous Jews, in whose merit this world is sustained. He talked for a few minutes about the truly righteous Jews of past

generations and their achievements. - He saw, however, that the student was not buying his reply:

"I am not asking about the past. I want to know about the here and now. Do we have such righteous people today?"

Rav Gruzman was about to navigate the topic to a different subject, when, suddenly, one of the students raised his hand to speak. He was a decorated colonel by the name of Samuel:

"I would like to share with the class a perspective to which I was personally privy. It is a story of a great man, who, I think, will fit the bill.

"Let me first introduce myself. I was born in Bucharest, Romania, during the Communist occupation. The country was agnostic, G-d playing no role whatsoever in the lives and outlook of its citizens. My parents were no different. We knew that we were Jewish, but we did not know what being Jewish meant – other than being reviled by the Communists.

As a young child, I was healthy physically. My first three years of life were no different than that of any other young boy. "Suddenly, as if out of nowhere, I began fainting whenever I heard a noise. The slightest sound, even a cup falling to the ground, would cause me to faint. If a bus passing my house would make a loud noise, I would convulse and faint.

My parents feared the worst. They stuffed my ears with cotton and took me from doctor to doctor. There was no specialist that we did not see. They exhausted me with tests covering my entire body – all to no avail. They remained clueless to my illness. No one knew why an otherwise healthy boy was constantly fainting when he heard noise.

"We finally returned to Bucharest, exhausted and wasted. My mother wanted to keep on hoping for some type of cure, but the doctors were not very reassuring. They could not figure out the source of my problem.

My mother was sitting there one day, bemoaning her life and my predicament to a close family friend, who, albeit also assimilated, did have some knowledge of Judaism.- 'Have you gone to a tzaddik, righteous person, for a blessing?' the woman asked my mother.

'Never,' my mother replied. 'What can a tzaddik do that the greatest specialist could not do? Is he a doctor? Does he know anything about medicine? How could he help me?'

"The friend was adamant: 'You cannot give up hope until you have tried everything. Go to this tzaddik and petition his blessing. What do you have to lose?' she asked.



"We went to this holy Jew. I was a four-year-old boy, but I remember his eyes. They were piercing – yet soft and caring. His entire countenance and bearing bespoke a man who carried enormous responsibility on his shoulders. I never saw an angel, but, if I had to imagine the appearance of an angel, I would describe the image of this tzaddik.

"He asked my mother various questions concerning my symptoms, who the doctors were with whom we had consulted, and which medical centres we had visited.

Finally, after obtaining a complete image of my medical picture, he asked my mother, 'Since he is your firstborn, did you perform the Pidyon HaBen rite with him?'

My mother had no idea what he was talking about, and she said so. 'What is a Pidyon HaBen, and what impact does it have on my son's health?' she asked somewhat impatiently.

"The holy tzaddik was very patient as he described the entire procedure to my mother, explaining the significance of the mitzvah. Meanwhile, worshippers were entering the building on their way to the shul to pray the Minchah, afternoon service.

The tzaddik called in a minyan, quorum of ten men, including among them a Kohen, and performed the mitzvah of Pidyon HaBen. I remember that, at the conclusion of the ceremony, the tzaddik took my hand in his and said, 'In the merit of the mitzvah you will be healed.'

"From that day on, I became a changed person. Noise no longer bothered me. The windows of my house could now be kept open; no more cotton in my ears. I no longer needed them."

Obviously, everyone wanted to know the name of this holy Rebbe. Samuel said it was the **Bohusher Rebbe Harav Yitzchok Friedman Zt'l**. Samuel added that every year on Erev Rosh Hashanah he, together with his family, visit the Rebbe and petition his blessing for a healthy new year.

וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם – '***It happened when Pharaoh sent the nation***.' (13:17)



In the Talmud Megillah 10b, Chazal state that the word וַיְהִי, "***and it was***", implies sadness. The Midrash says that Vayehi is a combination of two words: *Vay* – woe; and *v'hi*, as in *nehi*, which means mourning. These two words describe anything but joy. -This brings us to ask: What about the Exodus

engendered sadness? This was Klal Yisrael's finest moment; surely nothing about it would provoke sadness.

Furthermore, the phrase בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה, "***when Pharaoh sent (the people)***," raises a question: When did Pharaoh send out the people? He had nothing to do with it! It was Hashem throughout Who manipulated and orchestrated the events of that evening. Pharaoh was a mere spectator. Why should he receive any mention?

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, Zt'l, suggests that the latter questions actually answer the former. Clearly, it was Hashem Who orchestrated all of the events of that night. Pharaoh, however, thought it was all about **him**: **he** was making the decisions; **he** allowed Bnei Yisrael to leave.

- Is this true? Absolutely not! Pharaoh fought them every step of the way. Yet, in all reality, we must face it.

The next day, the headlines of the local Egyptian newspaper screamed: "**Pharaoh allows the Jews to leave**!" No mention of Hashem – only Pharaoh. - This is the meaning of Vayehi.

A seminal event, unparalleled in the history of mankind, whereby an entire nation of slaves leave their masters after being subjected to 210 years of brutal persecution, and the headlines attribute their exodus to Pharaoh's benevolence! - How ludicrous!

Rav Galinsky takes this bizarre development one step further. Perhaps the degree of lucidity required of a secular Egyptian reporter might be less than expected of a Jew, but regrettably, the facts do not support this premise.

The Maggid relates the following episode: The village of Mir, Poland, was a tiny hamlet situated on the outskirts of Grodno. Every week, the peasants of the surrounding area would travel to the village to sell their wares.

An old battered bus that had seen better days was driven by each farm, picking up the peasants and depositing them in Mir. At the end

of the day, they returned home with the few rubles which they had earned.





One day, the rickety bus carrying a full complement of peasants crossed the bridge. For years, people were warned not to cross the bridge for fear that it might snap – well, it did, and forty peasants plunged to their untimely deaths.

Immediately following the tragedy, the blame game began in earnest. The bridge was faulty; the bus driver was drunk; the bus was overloaded. At the end of the day, they sought everywhere for a sacrificial goat upon whom to lay the blame.

Hearing this, the Mirrer Mashgiach, the venerable **Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl**, spoke to his students to give them the Torah's perspective on this incident.

"On Rosh Hashanah we recite the words: **בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתֵבוּן וּבְיוֹם צוֹם כִּפּוּר יֵחָתֵמוּן. כַּמָּה יַעַבְרוּן. וְכַמָּה יִבָּרֵאוּן. מִי יִחְיֶה. וּמִי יָמוּת. מִי בְקִצּוֹ. וּמִי לֹא בְקִצּוֹ** - '***On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on Yom Kippur it is signed. Who will live; who will die; who according to his predestined time and who not on his predetermined time***.'

The method of death is also determined whether by water, fire, sword or wild animal. This judgment applies *l'chol bnei olam* – to all members of the world – everyone – Jew and gentile alike.

"This past year, it was decided that forty peasants from different villages were to die by drowning. These were people from all walks of life and various areas of endeavor. How did they all come

together? How was this Divine decree to be facilitated? By bus! A bus was sent to pick up the peasants, gather them together, so that the execution could be carried out.

"Now, if we were to make the following test: One group of students would read the popular Mussar sefarim, ethical discourse, before Maariv, while the other group would read a newspaper. Whom do you suppose will pray with greater kavanah, intention/concentration?

Certainly, the group which studied Mussar. The other group – the newspaper readers – would invariably focus on, 'It happened that Pharaoh sent out the people' – rather than on, 'G-d took them out of Egypt.'

"This is human nature. We see what we want to see – and it usually is not the Hand of Hashem that enters our limited line of vision. This is the 'vayehi' of our generation, of our lives. It is always the physician, the driver, the illness, the business partner, the husband, the wife. It is never about Divine decree. It is never about Hashem.

-**It should be**. - What we thought about on Rosh Hashanah should remain in our minds throughout the year."



וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מַה־תִּצְעַק אֵלָי – '*Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me?*"' (14:15)

More than once in his lifetime, a man will face a situation from which there is no escape. He is up against the wall. Anxiety, fear and trepidation set in. What does he do? To whom does he turn?

Horav David Bliacher, z.l., one of the preeminent disciples of the **Alter m'Novardok**, cites this above pasuk in his response to the problems that so many of us face during the course of a lifetime. Klal Yisrael was up against the proverbial wall. In front of them, was the Red Sea; behind them were the cruel Egyptians, intent on "recovering" their slaves. Their alternatives were truly bleak. They cried out in fear.

Hashem criticized Moshe Rabbeinu for the fact that Klal Yisrael cried out to Him. Why? What else should they have done?

Horav Bliacher gives an insightful response: Undoubtedly, Klal Yisrael had no other alternative but to turn to the Almighty and supplicate Him with emotion-filled prayer to save them.

Had the time for this arrived? They were not yet at the shore. The water was not yet enveloping them.

Hashem was saying to Moshe: Why are they crying – **now**? The situation is not yet hopeless. They still have a few more steps before they arrive at the water. **Then** they should cry – not before.

With this idea in mind, we can understand a difficulty in the parsha of Shemittah. The Torah states in Vayikra 25:20 that the people will ask "**מַה־נֹּאכַל?**", "***What will we eat?***"

Chazal consider this to be an admission of a lack of faith on their part. They should have trusted in Hashem to provide for them. - When should they have asked this question? Obviously, not during the seventh year, since Hashem has assured us that there will be an increase of grain output during the sixth year that will suffice for the seventh year. We must, therefore, say that the question is to be asked during the beginning of the seven-year cycle, in the first or second year.

The critique of the question is that they were bothered by what might or might not happen in the future. One should not worry prematurely. There will be enough time to worry about the lack of food when the seventh year arrives.

The lesson is clear and simple. Even during a period of concern some time remains, an avenue of relief and cure is available. Do not despair so long as there is an opportunity for salvation. Hashem has His own timetable for granting us deliverance from misfortune. It does not necessarily coincide with our own.

אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ - '***For every man according to what he eats***.' (16:16)



Horav Moshe Kramer, zl, became rav in Vilna. Prior to his ascent to the rabbinate he was a grocer. Hence, the name Kramer, which in Yiddish is a grocer. His illustrious grandson, **Horav Eliyahu Kramer**, was none other than the **Gaon, m'Vilna**. The great sage, who has continued to illuminate the minds of thousands of Torah students throughout the last two centuries, was the product of a home built upon middos tovos, good character traits, and incredible trust in the Almighty.

When Rav Moshe was asked to accept the position of rav, he accepted the position on the condition that he would take no salary. Apparently, his grocery provided him with the funds necessary to live.

A short while after accepting the rabbanus, Rav Moshe noticed that there was more money available in their home. He wondered why. After all, he made approximately the same amount every week, his expenditures and accounts receivable allowing him a small profit. From where was this newly-found money?

His wife explained that ever since he had become rav, more people were shopping in his store as a ruse to provide him with added income. Knowing that he would never take a donation, or even a gift, they were determined to help him by supporting his store.

Rav Moshe was aghast. He was causing the other grocers to lose money! If everyone would support the rav's store, what would the other vendors do?

He came upon a course of action. After figuring out how much money he needed to sustain his family, he divided it into the days of the week and told his wife, "When you achieve the daily goal that I have set up for us, you must close the store in order to enable the other grocers to earn a living also.

The Torah writes, אֵישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ, '***each man according to what he eats***.' We should be no different."

This is the type of people who were the progenitors of one of the greatest Torah scholars of all times.



וַיֹּאמֶר אִם־שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמַע לְקוֹל ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ... כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפְאֶךָ – '***And he said, "If you will hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d… any of the diseases that I placed upon Egypt, I shall not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer***.'" (15:26)

The Talmud Sanhedrin 101a questions the message of this pasuk. Inasmuch as Hashem has promised that He will not place any disease upon us (i.e. that we never become ill in the first place), then why do we have a need for His healing?

The Talmud replies that the pasuk is self-explanatory. If one hearkens to Hashem's voice and observes His mitzvos, he will not be stricken with disease. However, if he will not listen to Hashem and will not faithfully carry out His mitzvos, then the diseases of Egypt will be placed upon him. - There is one "plus": Hashem will cure you, because He is your Healer.

This is the meaning of the seemingly contradictory language of the latter part of the pasuk. The question seems to remain. The pasuk clearly implies that if one does not listen, he will be stricken with a disease. What is the purpose of the healing? Obviously, he is receiving the disease because he has rebelled against Hashem. There is a purpose in the punishment.

Eitz Yosef explains that the purpose of the afflictions is to cure the person of the spiritual malaise that caused him to sin in the first place. Hence, the afflictions are therapeutic – not punitive. Thus, the healing comes after one has realized the purpose of the affliction.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, explains that, while it is true that one who sins will be stricken, a distinction exists between the affliction meted on the nations of the world and that which is received by a Jew who has sinned.

When Hashem afflicts a gentile, the disease is purely punitive. Hashem is taking revenge on those who scoff Him. When He afflicts a Jew, however, the disease has one purpose: to stimulate his teshuvah, repentance. - The afflictions experienced by Jews are remedial. They are powerful motivational forces which inspire remorse and repentance.

The hands of two people may have to be cut off, yet their situations differ. The first one stole with his hand. He is incarcerated, awaiting punishment. His punishment is that his hand will be cut off. The second person's hand is also going to be cut off, but it is being performed as a surgical procedure, administered in a hospital, to prevent an infection from spreading to the rest of his body.

Two people – two hands – two surgeries – two disparate reasons. One is punitive; one is remedial.

If we do not listen – Hashem will afflict us. Since He is our Hashem, this disease will serve to expiate our sins – not simply hurt us. - It is only concerning the Jewish People that affliction is a "good" thing.

"Trusting in Hashem means having faith that He will provide for us, even when we cannot see how." ~ Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov.

כִּי־יָד֙ עַל־כֵּ֣ס יָ֔ הּ מִלְחָמָ֥ה לַיהוָ֖ה בַּעֲמָלֵ֑ק מִדֹּ֖ר דֹּֽר - "***For the hand is on the Throne of G-d: Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation.***" (17:16)



Sensitivity to the feelings of others is a given. No decent, upstanding ben Torah would knowingly hurt his fellow Jew. What about our behavior toward Hashem? Are we cognizant of the effect our actions and words have in the Heavenly sphere?

While the concept of "feelings" "emotions," are corporeal and, thus, do not apply in the spiritual dimension – certainly not to Hashem – that should not excuse our thoughtless behavior.

The following vignette is an example to what I am alluding: When the **Chafetz Chaim, zl**, reached an advanced age, his congregants took note of the fact that the chair which he used in shul was literally falling apart. In his honor, they purchased a new one for him.

When they brought the chair into shul, the Chafetz Chaim took umbrage with their choice of gifts. They were shocked. Perhaps he had developed an affinity to his chair, as it had "served" him for so many years. But still it did not seem a reason to become agitated.

In a voice laden with despair, the Chafetz Chaim explained: "It is written in the Torah that Hashem's hand is on His Throne. The word used for throne / chair is kais, instead of kisei. - The incomplete spelling prompts Chazal to derive an important message; As long as

Amalek exists, Hashem's Throne is incomplete. - Apparently, you show greater concern for my honor than for Hashem's. How can I sit on a new chair as long as Hashem's Throne is deficient?"

What a powerful statement! Do we feel the "pain" of Shechinta b'galusa, the Divine Presence in exile? Do we understand the concept of Imo Anochi b'tzarah, "I am with him in his affliction?" Hashem feels our pain. Do we feel His?

וְיָצְא֣וּ הָעָ֔ם וְלָקְט֥וּ דְבַר־י֖וֹם בְּיוֹמ֑וֹ לְמַ֨עַן אֲנַסֶּ֤נּוּ הֲיֵלֵךְ֙ בְּתוֹרָתִ֔י אִם־לֹ֖א - ***Let the people go out and pick each day's portion on its day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My teaching or not***. (16:4)



The daily gift of manna, Klal Yisrael's Heavenly food, was actually a lesson in Jewish spiritual survival. The Jewish People had witnessed incredible miracles leading up to, and including, the exodus from Egypt.

Life is all one miracle: an important lesson that so many of us tend to ignore. Many of us go through life with the notion that we are in charge, we make decisions, and we carry out what we have determined is the correct course to follow. It is always "we" or "I". Whatever happened to Hashem? Why do we always impose upon Him a reason to remind us that He is there – always, constantly and in every aspect of our lives?

In the Talmud Sotah 48b, Chazal remark regarding the above pasuk: **כָּל מִי שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ פַּת בְּסַלּוֹ וְאוֹמֵר ״מָה אוֹכַל לְמָחָר״ — אֵינוֹ אֶלָּא מִקְטַנֵּי אֲמָנָה** "***Whoever has enough to eat today and says, 'What will I eat tomorrow?' has little faith***."

Horav S.R. Hirsch, z.l., submits that by limiting the manna to a daily allocation, Hashem showed Klal Yisrael that He was their Provider at all times. Furthermore, by providing a double portion for Shabbos, He demonstrated that Shabbos observance would never impede one's livelihood.

We are taught that it was necessary for the generation that accepted the Torah to have first proven their faith and trust in Hashem through the vehicle of manna. Only a nation that has been taught to rely upon the kindness and consistency of Hashem could receive His Torah. - Faith is not a simple attribute to develop. Indeed, in our sophisticated society, faith is sorely deficient. In today's culture, some view the faithful Jew, the one whose fidelity to Hashem never wanes, as somewhat simpleminded.

In the Torah world, however, the Torah scholar who has been endowed with a brilliant and erudite mind also possesses a soul that is committed unconditionally to Hashem. Many narratives portray the unequivocal faith of both the scholar, and simple, common Jew. I have selected two stories which demonstrate this commitment and also convey an important lesson to us:

There was a Rosh Yeshivah in Europe whose dedication to his students was legendary. The yeshivah regrettably had no money and consequently, could not always provide meals. Yet, the students demonstrated unfailing devotion to their rebbe. Often they went to bed satiated spiritually, but physically starved.

One day the Rosh Yeshivah heard that a wealthy philanthropist lived in a neighboring community, who was very generous to yeshivos. The Rosh Yeshivah decided that he had no alternative but to go to the philanthropist and appeal for his assistance. He bade farewell to his students and left for the train station.

While he was waiting for the train, one of the town's outspoken sceptics appeared. "Rebbe," he asked, "what brings you out of the yeshivah into the 'real' world?"

The Rosh Yeshivah ignored the derogatory stab and responded, "I am going to the next town in an attempt to raise money for the yeshivah."



"Have you purchased your ticket?"

"No," replied the Rosh Yeshivah.

"What do you mean? You do not have a ticket? The train will arrive any minute, and you will be left here!"

"I have no money for a ticket, but I am not concerned – *G-t vet helfen*" (G-d will help). Hearing this, the sceptic shook his head, muttering under his breath, "These frum, observant, Jews are out of their minds." He decided to hang around the station to see what would occur. Would G-d really help the Rosh Yeshivah?

Five minutes later, the train whistle sounded and the train pulled into the station. "Tickets, tickets," the conductor called out. "Have your tickets ready."

To the man's bewilderment, the Rosh Yeshivah proceeded to get into the line. "Rabbi, what are you thinking? How do you get into line without a ticket?"

"Do not worry," answered the Rosh Yeshivah. "*G-t vet helfen*." The skeptic scratched his head in amazement. "I cannot figure out the rabbi. He has no money to buy a ticket. Yet, he gets into line to board the train."

As he got closer to the train, he said, "Ok, Rabbi, I am going to give you the money for the trip now, but do not rely on me again. How could you be so naïve as to think that G-d will help?"

Here we have a case of a believer and a non-believer. The believer had no doubt that he would get on the train. The non-believer was so obsessed with his heresy that he never realized that he was the medium through which Hashem helped the Rosh Yeshivah – to sustain his entire yeshivah. His bias prevented him from believing that "*G-t vet helfen*."

The second narrative demonstrates how deeply committed one can be in his belief and to what extent this faith will carry him. It is a story about two chassidim who visited their Rebbe annually on Succos; Each year, they would stop overnight at the same inn.

One year, the innkeeper approached them humbly and said, "You know, I am neither a chassid nor a disciple of your Rebbe, but I have a great favor to ask of you. My wife and I have been married for ten years, and, unfortunately, we have not yet been blessed with a child. Please ask the Rebbe to pray for us."

The chassidim agreed to do so. The very next morning, the innkeeper's wife began parading around the neighborhood with an expensive baby carriage. When her friends came over to wish her mazel tov, she explained that while she did not yet have a child, she soon would, since the Rebbe was going to pray for her.

Hearing this, the two chassidim were somewhat embarrassed, because they knew that prayers did not always produce the desired result. They said nothing and continued on their journey, faithfully carrying out their mission when they arrived at the Rebbe's court.

When the two chassidim returned the following year to the inn, the baby's Bris, circumcision, was in progress. The innkeeper understandably was quite elated and thankful to see them, treating them as guests of honor.

Later on, when they arrived at the Rebbe's home, one of the chassidim entered the Rebbe's office and complained, "Rebbe, you do not even know the innkeeper. Yet, you prayed for him –

successfully. I have been your trusted disciple since I was a child. I visit you every year just as my father did before me. Yet, I am married for twenty years, and I have made the exact same request of you – and my wife has still not conceived. Rebbe, is it fair?"

The Rebbe took his trusted chassid's hands and looked deeply into his eyes, asking, "During all those twenty years, did you ever go and buy a baby carriage? How great was your faith in comparison to that of the innkeeper's wife?"

Bitachon, trust in Hashem, has to be unequivocal. We either believe, or we do not. To believe when it is convenient, to trust when there is no other alternative, is not trust. It is self-serving and hypocritical. - When we say we believe, when we express our trust, we have to be prepared to purchase that baby carriage.

אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה׳ – '***Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael chose to sing this song to Hashem***.' (15:1)



Klal Yisrael praised Hashem for the miracle of Krias Yam Suf, the splitting of the Red Sea, through a shirah, a song of praise. This rare, sublime expression of gratitude to Hashem is unique in its form and meaning.

We should address a pressing question regarding the shirah. Krias Yam Suf was not the first miracle that Klal Yisrael had experienced. Many miraculous occurrences had preceded it. There were the Ten Plagues that befell Egypt. Were they so "natural" that they paled in

comparison to the splitting of the Red Sea? Why did Klal Yisrael wait so long to sing shirah to Hashem?

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, distinguishes between the miracle of Krias Yam Suf and the other miracles: The miracles of the Ten Plagues and their accompanying miracles were all the handiwork of Hashem - with no accompanying participation from Klal Yisrael. Hashem performed, and Klal Yisrael were the fortunate recipients of His beneficence.

Krias Yam Suf was a different phenomenom. There, Klal Yisrael engaged in prayer and mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, which earned them the splitting of the sea. They acted, and Hashem responded to their action. Their actions and belief in the Almighty sustained the miracle. This is the underlying motif behind the phrase, "זֶה אֵ-לִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ",- "***This is my G-d, and I will beautify Him***." This is my G-d whom I have sanctified in the world. I am an active participant in the miracle.

Horav Alpert applies this idea to explain the noted Midrash that relates that the angels sought to sing shirah. Hashem told them, "My handiwork/creations are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing shirah!" - Why did Klal Yisrael say shirah? If it was inappropriate for the angels, should it not also have been inappropriate for Klal Yisrael?

According to the above thesis, we can understand the distinction. The angels did nothing to efficate the miracles - neither in Egypt nor at the Red Sea. The only difference between the miracles that occurred in Egypt and those which occurred at the Red Sea is in their definitiveness and finality - the Egyptians died. Consequently, the shirah which the angels would have sung would have been in praise of Hashem for killing the Egyptians. That would be callous.

Klal Yisrael, however, were expressing their gratitude at being able to withstand the trials of the Egyptian bondage. They were declaring their willingness to give up their lives for the sake of the Almighty.

With this in mind, we can also understand why we do not recite the complete Hallel on the seventh day of Pesach. In reality, the miracle of Krias Yam Suf should have occurred immediately when Klal Yisrael left Egypt. It was dependent only upon Klal Yisrael's withstanding the test of emunah, belief in the Almighty, when they "believed in Hashem" - "**וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ**." - For rising to the challenge of faith, one does not say Hallel; for everything is in the "hands of Heaven, except for yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven." We are given the opportunity to "make it" on our own.

The miracles of the Exodus, on the other hand, were all clearly initiated by Shomayim. Consequently, we recite Hallel in gratitude.

According to the above, we postulate that Hallel is said only when the miracle that is commemorated is one that was initiated and engendered entirely by Hashem, exclusive of Klal Yisrael's participation. This is why the miracle of Chanukah, which is commemorated through Hallel, only became worthy of Hallel after they found the flask of oil that had miraculously burnt for eight days. - That portion of the miracle was initiated by Hashem. Their triumph in battle over the forces of evil, in which "rabim," "many," fell into the hands of "me'atim," "few", however, was a miracle initiated by mesiras nefesh, personal sacrifice, in battle and prayer. Thus, this miracle does not warrant Hallel.

This thesis gives us the opportunity to analyze the concept of which miracles warrant the recitation of Hallel by Klal Yisrael.

וַיַּסַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ מִיַּם־סֽוּף וַיֵּצְא֖וּ אֶל־מִדְבַּר־שׁ֑וּר וַיֵּלְכ֨וּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת־יָמִ֜ים בַּמִּדְבָּ֗ר וְלֹא־מָצְא֥וּ מָֽיִם – '***Moshe caused Bnei Yisrael to journey from the Yam Suf...they went for a three-day period in the wilderness, but they did not find water***.' (15:22)

Moshe had to force the people to leave the Yam Suf. Had it been up to Klal Yisrael, they would have remained there gathering up the immense spoils of the Egyptian army.

Chazal tell us that the Egyptians, assured of their impending victory over the Jews, bedecked their horses with every type of jewelry, gold and silver. After it was all over, the Jews had a "difficult" time coping with the enormous wealth that was now theirs for the taking. As a result, they refused to leave.

Their behavior is mind-boggling! It is understandable that people seek wealth for a number of reasons. First, there is envy. It is difficult to tolerate your friends' wealth when you are just managing financially. Second, money gives one access to material pleasures that would otherwise be unattainable. No bills to pay, a beautiful home, a new car, expensive clothes and exotic trips, are but a few of the luxuries one can acquire with money.

Certainly, this alone would be a reason for seeking wealth. While these reasons are not necessarily the Torah orientation, they at least give us some rationale for the behavior manifest by those that are driven towards material excess.

This brings us to Klal Yisrael at the shores of the Yam Suf. What provoked them to seek so much wealth? What drove them to resist leaving the area, to begin their ascent to Eretz Yisrael? Whom did they envy? All of them had come from the same place - with nothing. No individual was better off financially than the next one.

Furthermore, what were they going to do with their money? Food came from Heaven, water from the well of Miriam; what would they have wanted to purchase in the desert? Their clothes remained the same for forty years. - Why were they so obsessed with wealth?

Horav Eliyahu Schlessinger, Shlita, addresses these questions. He believes that there is no rationale for the behavior exhibited by Klal Yisrael. A willingness to denigrate oneself for the sake of money, especially when that money could not help them, did not apply at Krias Yam Suf. - We must, therefore, suggest that there really is no rationalization that validates their behavior. A taavah, desire, for money under such circumstances is a form of **מחלות הנפש**, quasi-

spiritual deficiency, that plagues people. It is irrational. Klal Yisrael's desire to gather riches transcended the rational. They had nothing to gain but money - which under their present conditions was totally superfluous.

The fact that Moshe had to force Klal Yisrael to leave the area of the Yam Suf indicates how far this sickness had progressed. After all is said and done, we derive from here that **תַּאֲוַת הממון** , an irrational desire for money, is a sickness.

This can explain the behavior of those who hoard their wealth, although they either have no one with whom to share it with, or an excess that will go around many times over. They literally refuse to benefit others.

Only one who understands that our wordly goods do not leave with us -- that it is our good deeds that are our real possessions -- shares his wealth with those not as fortunate as he. - Hopefully, this realization will come before it is too late.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה נְטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הַיָּם וְיָשֻׁבוּ הַמַּיִם עַל־מִצְרַיִם - '***Hashem said to Moshe: "Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the water will go back upon Egypt.***'" (14:26)

Bnei Yisrael were saved from certain death when the waters of the Red Sea miraculously split before them. Hashem's Divine decree altered the course of nature for His People.

What happened afterwards when the people had passed safely through? The waters should have reverted to their original state. That is what should have happened. The Torah, however, records that Hashem commanded Moshe to "stretch out your hand over the sea, and the waters will go back upon Egypt." Why did they not simply fall back to their original position? - Once the purpose of the miracle had been fulfilled and its effect confirmed, we expect that the waters would have "returned" on their own!

Horav Mordechai Gifter, Zt'l, derives a remarkable insight from this pasuk: We have become so accustomed to believing in the concept of "nature" that we fail to realize that *teva*, nature, is actually *neis*, miracle. The natural order of Creation, and the functioning of the world, has license to exist only as a result of the will of Hashem.

When Hashem expressed His desire that the waters separate, that reality immediately became the new order of "nature." Life does not simply return to "business as usual" after the miracle has ended. In order for the sea to have reverted to its original state--its pre-miracle standard--another miracle was needed.

Indeed, it is our goal to be able to perceive the constant miracles in what we consider to be "routine" nature.

וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְּׂמֹאלָם - "***And the water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left***." (14:29)



The Midrash, cited by the **Daas Zekeinim**, comments that when Bnei Yisrael approached the Red Sea, menacing waters confronted them. There seemed to be no hope. The Angel Gavriel came forth and declared, "Let the waters in front of Bnei Yisrael move aside in deference to the nation who perform the Bris Milah. The waters which are to the right of Bnei Yisrael should likewise defer to the nation that accepted the Torah from Hashem's 'right Hand.' The waters to the left should submit to the nation that puts tefillin on the left arm, and the waters behind them should move

away before those who don the tallis and cast the tzitzis over their shoulders."

The zchus, merit, of these mitzvos rendered Bnei Yisrael worthy of Krias Yam Suf, the splitting of the Red Sea. - These mitzvos, however, seem to have little in common with one another. Although tefillin, bris milah and tzitzis/tallis are all related to the body, Kabbolas Ha'Torah from Hashem's right Hand is not something which we do with our body. Our right hand did not receive the Torah; rather, it was Hashem's right Hand that gave it to us! - What, then, is the parallel between Torah study and the other three mitzvos?

We suggest that a profound lesson can be inferred from here. The three mitzvos mentioned here, and, in fact, all mitzvos, are primarily active in nature. This means that one performs them on his own; the element of instruction is not an integral component in the framework of the mitzvah.

Torah study, on the other hand, is unique in that it must be studied from a rebbe, Torah teacher. Torah is transmitted from teacher to student in a chain of transmission from Har Sinai until this very day. Moshe received the Torah from Hashem Yisborach and "handed it over" to Yehoshua, who, in turn, handed it over to the next generation. Similarly, every Torah teacher transmits the Torah to his student.

This method of Torah study is an integral part of the mitzvah of limud Ha'Torah. One does not study on his own; he receives it from his rebbe and reviews it until it becomes part of his consciousness. Only then is he able to transmit to others that which he has absorbed within himself. One cannot transmit something he has not absorbed.

Moshe received the Torah and "handed it" over to Yehoshua. He did not "give it" over. To give something over implies a transfer of ownership. One gives over what one possesses. To hand or turn over means to transfer the message as is -- preserved in its entirety.

This is the trust of every rebbe in Klal Yisrael from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu -- to see to it that the Torah in its immutable form is transmitted through the generations, as pristine as we received it at Sinai. - Consequently, it is the receiving of the Torah from Hashem's right Hand that characterizes the significance of the mitzvah.

Limud Ha'Torah is an active mitzvah which is fulfilled through the submissive reception of a talmid from his rebbe.



Believe in Yourself

Reb Tzadok HaKohen (*Tzidkas HaTzaddik* 154) writes:

"Just as one must believe in Hashem, one must also believe in *himself*." - This means to believe that Hashem is interested in him. He must believe that his soul comes from Above, and Hashem has pleasure from him and has enjoyment when he does Hashem's will.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (Shmos 14:31) **וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ** - ***'And they believed in Hashem and in Moshe***...' - *Moshe* represents the six-hundred thousand Yidden of that generation.

They believed that Hashem desires them and derives pleasure from them and from the good that's in them."

It is hard for people to believe that Hashem wants them, because they know their faults. However, faults and errors are part of the creation of the world. - This shouldn't prevent us from believing that Hashem wants us.

Baalei mussar write that just as a person must know his weak points, where the yetzer hara is likely to catch him, it is even more

important for a person to recognize his strengths. If he doesn't know his strength, he can be compared to a craftsman who doesn't know the tools he has at his disposal.



I heard from a member of our chaburah, a tzaddik and yirei Shamayim, who was recently in Argentina, where a wealthy member of the community took him for a visit at the local zoo.

Over there, he saw something shocking. He saw visitors walk up to loose lions and hand-feed them. The lions were docile and treated the humans with respect.

The shocked visitor asked his host, "These lions act like young, peaceful children. How is this possible? Lions are ferocious, dangerous animals! How do people get so close, and why don't the lions attack?"

His host answered, "When these lions are born, they are raised together with dogs and fed all that they need. They never discovered that they are lions and that they possess mighty strength. They think they are dogs…"

It is said that elephants and camels also make this mistake. They have immense strength, but they aren't aware of it.

Most people also make the same error. They don't recognize their potential and strengths and are convinced that nothing much will come from them. Especially when surrounded by people who don't

accomplish much, they think they won't be different from their peers.

The truth is that everyone has amazing strengths, and when one devotes himself to Hashem's service, he can accomplish a lot.

So, you can believe in yourself, even if you are imperfect. In fact, your imperfections are the purpose of the entire creation. – This trait enables you to bring a nachas ruach to Hashem more than all the malachim in heaven.

Mann – Tzedakah

Rabbeinu b'Chayei says that if someone didn't collect their Mann early in the morning, people would give him a portion from theirs, and that is how they performed the mitzvah of tzedakah in the desert.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Incredible Care

We know the tremendous impact a caring Rebbe can make. Here are some stories that bring out this point: There was a yeshiva in Lakewood that decided to eject a boy in 10th grade from the school since he was bringing other boys downhill along with himself.

Although the Rosh Yeshiva intended to be in contact with the boy after he left the yeshiva, he got so busy that it slipped his mind. By the time he remembered, he was too embarrassed to call the boy and so he hoped that he would bump into him sometime.

Four years later, the Rosh Yeshiva bumped into the boy exiting shul with his hat and jacket and apologized for not being in touch with

him. They conversed and the boy mentioned the many yeshivos he attended after his ejection from the yeshiva in 10th grade. Over the course of the conversation, the Rosh Yeshiva asked him what spurred his turnaround.

The boy answered, "R' Horowitz, my 10th grade Rebbe. For the two years after I left the yeshiva until I attended yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael, he called me every Friday."

When the Rosh Yeshiva saw R' Horowitz next, he told him what the boy said. When R' Horowitz heard this, he began to cry, and said, "It's true. I called him every Friday for two years straight without a miss. But he never answered the phone once!"

This boy knew that his Rebbe cared, although his Rebbe was unaware that the boy got this message.



Let's move on to another story: On the night R' Yehoshua Hartman got engaged, he told his Rebbe, **R' Yitzchak Hutner**, about these plans. On this night of his engagement, he arrived home at 3:30 in the morning. At 3:45 in the morning, R' Hutner called him and wished him Mazel Tov! Then he asked, "Why didn't you call me?"

R' Hartman replied I was planning on calling at 830 a.m. when it is a normal hour. R' Hutner's reply: "If it was your father or mother, would you wait until then also?!"



Here is one final story: Someone was once pushing **R' Dovid Soloveitchik** to accept a certain student into yeshiva. R' Dovid said that the boy can learn in the Beis Midrash but cannot be accepted to the yeshiva.

The man asked incredulously if he can learn in the Beis Midrash, why can't he join the yeshiva.

R' Dovid told him that he davens and cries (The duration of his regular weekday Shemoneh Esrei, accompanied with tears, was between 45 minutes and an hour.) for the success of each boy in the yeshiva. But now that I have reached the quota of what I can handle, I cannot daven even for one more boy.

Noble Non-Jews



R' Ovadia Yosef was asked if it is appropriate to hold a ceremony with prayer in shul, similar to the Jewish ritual, for a Druze soldier killed in action in order to elevate his soul (*l'ilui nishmaso*).

He explained that it would in fact be a mitzvah, as the Druze people believe in one G-d, as well as in the afterlife. Furthermore, they are drafted into the Israeli army and give of themselves to protect the residents of Israel. They observe the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach, and are considered *chassidei umos ha'olam*, righteous among the nations.



There was a woman who saved eleven Jews during the Holocaust by hiding them in her basement and providing them with food and shelter. After liberation, when they wanted to repay her for what she had done, they discovered that she had died. One of the eleven that was saved then asked if he was allowed to say kadish for her. **R' Efraim Oshry** ruled that not only was it permitted but it was a mitzvah to say kadish with her in mind.

The Weekly Vort

● **הרם את מטך** – ***Lift your staff*** (14:16).

R' Bechaye says that "lift your staff" means: "Moshe, **remove** the stick from your hand. People have said that you can perform no wonders without your stick. Leave it and tell the sea to split." (**The Weekly Midrash**)

● **כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך** – ***…any illness that I put on Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem Who heals you*** (15:26).

There is a dispute in the Haggadah among the Tana'im as to how many punishments were included in each *makkah*. Why must we know the exact number of plagues inflicted upon Egypt? The Vilna Gaon answers using the above *pasuk*. Hashem told Klal Yisroel, "If you listen to Hashem… then any of the illnesses that I put on Egypt, I will not bring upon you."

Keeping the *mitzvos* guarantees that Klal Yisroel will be saved from all the punishments of Egypt. Consequently, the more punishments

they suffered, the more we are saved from! The Tana'im therefore consider the exact number of plagues brought upon the Egyptians quite significant. It is important for Klal Yisroel to know exactly how many plagues they will never suffer due to fulfillment of the *mitzvos*. (**A Gut Vort**)

Man Is Like A Tree - A Tu B'Shevat Story



It was the night of Tu B'Shevat (circa 1850's), and a large gathering of *chassidim* surrounded the table of the **Imrei Yosef**. At the head of the table sat the Rebbe, explaining the significance of Tu B'Shevat. He spoke of the things that men and trees have in common.

"With great effort and the investment of much energy, one can help a tree grow – even a crooked one that has lacked nourishment and water. Sometimes, through devoted and persistent care, we can turn a stunted tree into a blooming one." -

At that moment, a well-dressed Jew entered the room. He walked over to the table and set down a gigantic fruit basket.

Looking up, the Rebbe showed this man exceptional warmth all through the evening. None of the *chassidim* knew the stranger's identity. - Afterwards, they heard the story from the guest himself:

"I was born in Germany and arrived here only a few years ago. My father was with the Haskalah (Enlightenment) movement in Germany and raised me accordingly. On my arrival here, I opened a textile factory and became very successful.

Once, I purchased an enormous quantity of material at an exceptionally low price. I paid for it all in cash. A while later, the supplier of the materials walked into my office and demanded payment for what he had sold me.

I thought he was joking. It soon became clear that I had fallen into a trap. The man had not signed a receipt for the money I had paid. What remained was the contract, signed by me, authorizing the materials to be transferred and obligating me to pay for them.

Furious, I threw the man out of my office. He informed me that he planned to sue me in court. I felt frustrated and helpless. It was clear that he would win the case, leaving me impoverished.

I went outside for a breath of fresh air. I ran into an acquaintance and told him about my misfortune. He suggested that I accompany him to see his Rebbe, the Imrei Yosef, and ask for advice. - In my despair, I was ready to try anything.

I'll never forget the glow in the Rebbe's eyes when I first saw him. I could not check the tears that coursed down my cheeks, and managed with difficulty to tell the Rebbe what had befallen me.

The Rebbe asked if I kept Shabbos. I explained that a good deal of my business was done on Shabbos, making it impossible for me to refrain from working. The Rebbe then asked if I was careful to eat only kosher food. I answered in the negative. Then the Rebbe asked if I at least put on tefillin. Once again, my answer was no.

The Rebbe guaranteed that if I put on tefillin each morning, I would win the case. - I agreed to the Rebbe's request.

From that day on, I faithfully put on tefillin every day. One mitzvah pulls another in its wake, and from the mitzvah of tefillin I began observing other *mitzvos*.

My day in court arrived. It was Tu B'Shevat, exactly one year ago today. My chances of winning the case seemed nil, but I went to court in high spirits, placing my trust in the Rebbe's promise.

When I took the stand, I told the truth – that I had paid but had not received a receipt. The judge was persuaded of the truth of my story and acquitted me of any wrongdoing.

From that day on, my offices have been closed on Shabbos. Not only has this not harmed my interests, but business has boomed! I have begun to live a full life of Torah and *mitzvos*, though I am not an actual *chassid*."

The man finished his tale and smiled. "Today, on the anniversary of the day when I won my court case because of the Rebbe – and when I was, so to speak, reborn – I thought it proper to bring the Rebbe a basket of the best fruits." (**Stories My Grandfather Told Me**)

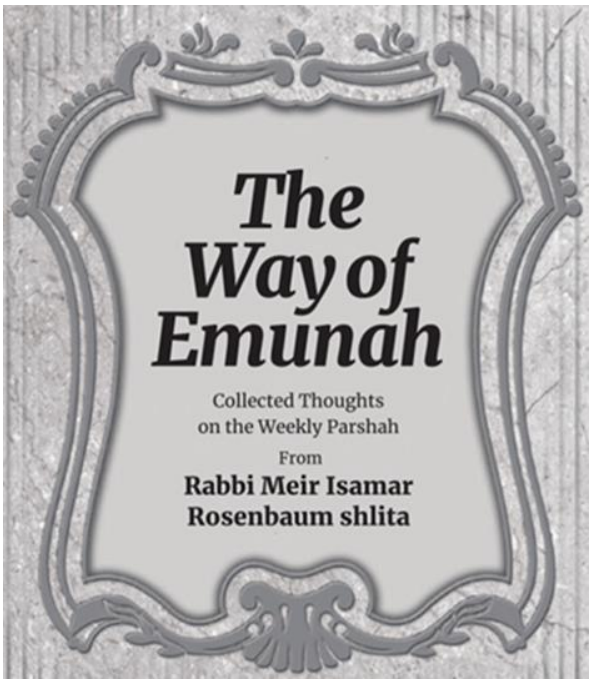


Chazal say that if a person davens and is not answered, he should daven again. **The Gra** writes that this refers to chazaras ha'shatz, meaning that he should pay attention to the shaliach tzibur's repetition.

The **Arizal** tells us that chazaras ha'shatz is like a super dose of tefilah b'tzibur that won't go unanswered. The fact that it is recited out loud signifies this. However, one must be aware of this in order to harness its power.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus likens this to one who bought a manual car and never switched it out of first gear. For years he was driving less than 20 mph, sometimes, if going downhill, he was able to go 35 mph. However if he learns to switch gears, he can go so much faster.

If we think that everything lies in our own shemoneh esrei, we are limited by the efficacy of our own kavana, but by focusing on chazaras ha'shatz, we can gain so much more power. Now, let's focus!



וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם וְלֹא־נָחָם אֱלֹקִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹקִים פֶּן־יִנָּחֵם הָעָם בִּרְאֹתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרָיְמָה – *'And it was when Pharaoh sent out the nation…because G-d said: Lest the people reconsider when they see war and return to Egypt.'* (13:17)

● The Difference Between Emunah and Hishtadlus

The Alter of Novardhok, Rav Yoizel Horowitz zt"l, would say that if a man would place his complete trust in Hashem and accept that he is the only one who can protect and save him, he would certainly be saved.

Unfortunately, many people fail to recognize think this and tend to believe that bitachon is a form of "extra hishtadlus". In other words, they think that they have to do whatever they can on their own, and, in addition to this, they also have to have bitachon. - Because of this erroneous mindset, they do not receive their salvation.

He explains this with a parable of a poor man who heard about the famed philanthropist, **Baron Rothschild**. He decided to travel to Germany to meet the wealthy baron and to ask for his help. He traveled for months until he reached his destination, and he returned home from his arduous journey with his cart loaded with expensive goods, and, in his hands, a huge sum of money that he received from the wealthy man. - His friend witnessed this and decided to try his luck as well. However, unlike his friend, he decided that while he was traveling to Berlin, he would stop by all the towns on the way and collect money there as well.

He was very disappointed when he met with Rothschild in his mansion and was handed a small donation. He began to complain and asked why he got such a small amount when his friend was given a fortune.

Rothschild replied, "There's a big difference between you and him. Your friend traveled all this way just to come to me. He saw me as the only person in the world who could help him and relied completely on my assistance. Therefore, I had mercy on him and gave him a lot of help. But you went around to many people for help and also stopped by me as well. Since you didn't rely solely on me, I didn't feel any need to give you more than a minimal amount."

So too, if we rely solely on Hashem and recognize that no one can help us besides Him, then He will give us whatever we need. But if we make our own efforts to try to help ourselves and also ask Him for help, He will not feel the need to take care of us.

● The Difference Between Pharaoh and Klal Yisroel

וּפַרְעֹה הִקְרִיב וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם – '***And Pharaoh drew close and the children of Yisroel lifted their eyes***.' (14:10)

The Zohar Hakadosh explains this pasuk to mean that Pharaoh drew the Jews close to their father in Heaven.

The Liske Rebbe zy"a (Sefer Ach Pri Tevuah) explains by quoting the **Shelah Hakadosh's** explanation of the words we recite in davening: **אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר־בָּנוּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים** - "***You chose us from all of the nations***."

The Shelah explains that even in times when Klal Yisroel are not learning as much Torah and not doing as many mitzvos as they should, they still are far superior to any other nation, which is why Hashem chooses us over all other nations.

With this in mind, the Liske Rebbe explains that Pharaoh drew us closer to Hashem because the difference between Klal Yisroel and him was so clearly evident.

● The Benefit of Reading The Shira

The Magid of Trisk zy"a (Sefer Magen Avrohom) writes that every year when the shira is read, the "Kesser Malchus" is revealed.

When a king puts on his royal crown, he acts leniently towards his citizens. So too, when Hashem puts on His crown, He certainly pardons Klal Yisroel from our sins and grants us many blessings in ruchnius and gashmius.

● Mann Affected Their Speech

Sefer Igra D'Kallah quotes Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov zy"a as asking why the pasuk refers to the mann as a "d'var". He answers that this is because the mann affected the people's speech (dibbur) and caused them to speak to Hashem properly and to avoid unnecessary or hurtful words. - Thus, the people would "gather words" every day, as each day required its own pure and new words to be said to Hashem.

● The Present is The Main Focus of Life

R' Avrohom Eliyahu Desler zt"l, Michtav M'Eliyahu, - "***The past is merely memories. The future is merely fantasy. The present is merely tests. But how you live your life is the main thing***."

The meaning of this is that it is a waste of time to worry about the past, which is merely memories and cannot be changed. The future is merely a fantasy and is not worth worrying about because no one knows what tomorrow will bring and the thing one is worried about may very well never happen. Therefore, one's main focus should be on the present. And when one focuses on the present, wisely utilizes every moment as it comes, and strengthens his emunah and bitachon, he will be living a truly good life.



Rav Yitzchok Shapiro of Neshchiz Zy"a Toldos Yitzchok (1788-1868) - 21 Shevat 5628

● **Healing a Sick Man Through Shabbos**:

The following story is related in Sefer M'Zekeinim Esbonen: There once was a man who was getting on in years and still had not been blessed with children. As he advanced in age, his first wife passed away. He married a woman who already had children from a previous marriage and had a son with her.

This man wanted to see nachas from this son and to know his grandchildren. Being that he was already 60 years old, he decided to marry him off young.

He wanted to marry off the boy when he was 13. However, before his bar mitzvah, the boy became very sick. The old man immediately traveled to Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz zy"a, arriving on erev Shabbos after midday.

He ran into the Rebbe's room and cried, telling him about his troubles. Hearing the man cry, Rav Yitzchok screamed, "Shabbos! Shabbos! Shabbos!"

The father walked out with a broken heart. He had no idea why the Rebbe had yelled at him.

When it was time for Minchah, he entered the bais medrash to daven. Later that night, he attended the Rebbe's tish.

Rav Yitzchok would dance with much enthusiasm at the tish, and when he began to dance, the old man started to dance with the rest of the crowd. He got deep into the dancing and momentarily forget his worries. As he joyfully danced, an acquaintance who knew about his problems walked over and asked how he could be so happy when his son was near death.

The old man replied that he had remembered that 25 years earlier, the Rebbe had spoken about the holiness of Shabbos and explained that Kayin was strengthened by this sanctity. Remembering this speech infused him with hope and encouragement and he decided that he must be joyful in honor of Shabbos.

On Motzoei Shabbos, a messenger arrived with a letter from his home, informing him that his son had taken a turn for the better and his life was no longer in danger. He immediately went to the Rebbe to give him the good news.

Rav Yitzchok told him, "When you came to me, I saw that the decree had already been sealed and there was no way that I could save your son. Therefore, I yelled the word 'Shabbos' at you three times, so that you would remember my speech about how Kayin was strengthened by Shabbos, and you too would be strengthened by Shabbos. In this way, I knew that your salvation could come about in the merit of Shabbos.

"And, in fact, I did succeed at bringing joy and d'veikus into your heart, and through this joy and the power of Shabbos, you put your pain out of your mind and Shabbos itself spoke up on your behalf and annulled the decree against your son."

● **The Merit of Seeing Him**:

In the year 5618, Rav Yitzchok visited the city of Kolik. Rav Yitzchok arrived late at night and all of the local residents gathered to get a glimpse of him. The peek into the windows of the house he was staying in, and the homeowner wanted to close the shutters so that

he would have some privacy. However, the Rebbe told him to leave them open. On the contrary, he told him to open the actual windows in order to give the people a clearer view.

He went and stood next to the open window and said, "If Jews want to look at me, let them look." He then quoted his father, **Rav Mordechai of Neshchiz zy"a**, who said, "Today, it is considered a big zechus to have seen the **Baal Shem Tov**. Perhaps there will come a day when it will be considered a big zechus to have seen me."

● **How He Merited Long Life**:

When the **Sar Shalom of Belz zy"a** lost his eyesight, he sent one of his sons to spend the Yomim Noraim with Rav Yitzchok and to ask him to daven for him to have a refuah sheleimah. Rav Yitzchok told him to tell his father, "He should not be stubborn, and he should accept his blindness."

After yomtov, he related, "In Shomayim, there was an empty space in the front row. They wanted to fill it by promoting someone from the second row, and they would fill the space in the second row with someone from the third row and so on. This would leave an empty space in the last row.

It was decided that the Belzer Rebbe should fill that space. Therefore, I davened that he should become blind. - Since a blind man is considered dead, he would be allowed to remain alive. (Kisvei R' Y. Prager, Ois 129)

● **Hashem Derives More Pleasure From Man Than From Angels**:

Chazal say (Pesachim 109A) that there is no joy without meat. Rav Yitzchok explains (in Sefer Toldos Yitzchok) this to mean that although Hashem has many angels who serve Him, He only derives joy when flesh and blood humans overcome their yeitzer hara and serve Him. This is because angels have no evil inclination and it is easy for them to obey him, whereas humans have to work hard to do the right thing.

● **The Kavanos of the Daled Minim**:

Rav Yitzchok related that he was in Berditchev during the last year of the life of **Rav Levi Yitzchok zy"a**. One day, Rav Levi Yitzchok called for him and said that he wanted to teach him the proper kavanos for the lulav and esrog. - Rav Levi Yitzchok's children were jealous and asked their father why he was teaching the kavanos to him and not to them.

He replied, "When I meet Rav Mordechai of Neshchiz in the next world and he asks me what I taught his son, I will have to have an answer for him. That is why I am teaching him the kavanos for the daled minim." - He then closed the door and taught him in private.

● **Sent to the Kozhnitzer Magid**:

Rav Yitzchok related that his father once told him that he should travel to the Magid of Kozhnitz zy"a. He said, "There are some people who do not support Kozhnitz (they were suspicious of him because he gave out kemeyos). But he is the crown of the Jewish nation. Therefore, you should go to him." - And he went.

● **Trusting Hashem for Parnassah**:

The Gemara (Kiddushin 82A) states: "Rav Shimon ben Elazar said: Have you ever seen an animal or bird that has a job? But they receive their sustenance without pain and they were only created to serve Hashem. I also was created to serve Hashem. Shouldn't I be able to receive sustenance without pain? However, because I corrupted my actions, He withholds my parnassah."

Rav Yitzchok quotes his father, Rav Mordechai, that, in truth, one's parnassah should come to him, and just like it is with animals, one should not have to work hard in pursuit of his livelihood. However, because of our "corrupt actions", we must pursue parnassah.

This corrupt action is the mindset that we must work to earn a living, which symbolizes a lack of trust in Hashem to provide for us. Because of this lack of bitachon, we must toil for our sustenance.

● **The Reason For Sleep**:

Rav Yitzchok said the following in the name of the Baal Shem Tov zy"a: Why do people need to sleep? - This question can be answered with a moshol of a prince who goes out to war. Before he leaves, his father, the king, commands him to send back to the castle whatever plunder he takes from the battlefield. Rather than waiting until he amasses a large amount of booty, he should send home whatever he captures as soon as he obtains it.

The prince asks his father, "Wouldn't it be better for me to take everything home in one shot? I would get much more honor if I would come home with a huge treasure!" - His father replies, "No. I am worried that the enemy might overpower you and take back whatever you have. Therefore, it is better to send it home as soon as you get it."

The nimshol is that every Jew obtains much Torah and mitzvos every day. When we go to sleep, our neshama goes up to Shomayim to store our treasures in a protected area. We always must worry that the yeitzer hara may overpower us some day and take whatever we have. Therefore, we sleep every day in order to send our Torah and mitzvos "home", so that the yeitzer hara can't take it from us.

With this in mind, Rav Yitzchok explains the Medrash that says that before Matan Torah, Klal Yisroel was asleep until Hashem came and woke them up. - Why were they sleeping at this momentous time?

Because the preparations for receiving the Torah created a great spiritual arousal that they needed to protect from the yeitzer hara. They went to sleep to take all they had already obtained to Shomayim in order to keep it safe.

● **May his memory be a blessing for all of Klal Yisroel**.





Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz zt"l - הרב יצחק בן מרדכי מנעשכיז זצ״ל Shevat 21 , 5628 Known As: Toldos Yitzchok

● Profile

Rebbe Yitzchak of Neshchiz (1789-1868), youngest son of Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz, close disciple of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, whose granddaughter he married. He was also a disciple of Rabbi Baruch of Medzhibuzh and the Chozeh of Lublin.

He was appointed Rebbe at a young age and served in this capacity for over 60 years. He was famous for his prayers and wonders and heavenly revelations.

Revered in all Chassidic circles as a holy man and exceptional Chassid. (Highly praised in a letter by Rabbi Baruch Shapira, an outstanding Chassid of Przysucha and of Kotzk). Rebbe Elimelech of Grodzisk and Rabbi Ya'akov Zvi of Parysów were among his celebrated disciples.

● Always on the Table

The *Tosher rebbe* once related:

Rav Mottel Neshchizer used to keep a copy of the *Rambam's Yad haChazaka* on his table at all times. When his son, Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz was questioned as to why his father had this custom, he explained: My father had a vision in which the *Rambam* appeared before him with a complaint: "Why do you not study my *sefer*?"

"I apologize," answered my father, "but with people coming to me day and night with their problems, I just don't have the time; I am simply unable to help them and also find time to study your sefer."

The *Rambam* then returned, "At least keep a copy of my *sefer* on your table," I promise that if you keep a copy before you on your table at all times, whenever you need to help a Jew and achieve some *yeshua* for someone, just open my *sefer* and take a look inside. I assure you that you will find some cure and manner of healing."

That is the reason for this custom, he concluded.

● **Only The Good**

Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz was once in Alik and, while wrapped in his *tallis* and crowned with his *tefillin*, one of his attendants entered and began to complain and tell the *Rebbe* about someone else's misconduct and misdeeds.

The *Tzaddik* grew very upset, and he grasped the door handle, saying to his *gabbai*, "You have been my attendant in this house for several years already. Don't you know by now that before a person even grasps hold of the *kolimka* – the handle of my door – that right away I can already sense everything that person has done since the day he was born?

What can I do? It says, regarding Hashem in *Bamidbar* (23:21) **לֹא־הִבִּיט אָוֶן בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא־רָאָה עָמָל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל** – '***He sees no iniquity or wrongdoing in Yaakov, and has seen no perversity in Israel***.'

Hashem does not look at the evil that *Bnei Yisrael* do, and if Hashem does not, how can I? - My way and custom is that I do not look at the negative side of people – only at their positive side, because if I did see their negative sides, I would never let anyone cross my threshold and enter through this door to see me!"

When the *Rebbe* Rav Yitzchok of Neshchiz left Berditchev to take over the leadership as *Neshchizer Rebbe,* he davened to Hashem and succeeded in achieving that he should never see the negative side of a person – only the positive side.

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky - Fear and Faith

וַיַּ֣רְא יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אֶת־הַיָּ֤ד הַגְּדֹלָה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֣ה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַ֔יִם וַיִּירְא֥וּ הָעָ֖ם אֶת־ה׳ וַיַּאֲמִ֣ינוּ בַּה׳ וּבְמֹשֶׁ֖ה עַבְדּֽוֹ **"*When the Yisroel saw the wondrous power which Hashem had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared Hashem; they had faith in Hashem and His servant Moshe*** (14:31).

This is the first time that the Torah mentions that the Jews believed in Hashem.

They went through the atrocities of slavery in Egypt, and the miraculous plagues and punishment – witnessing the downfall of the strongest nation on Earth, but they did not truly believe - until they lived through the miracles of the sea splitting and their miraculous passage. - Why is that?

A chosid of **Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk** was known for his attempts to show his piety, albeit sometimes exaggerated and unwarranted. One succos, he approached his rebbe, "Every night of succos," he began, "As I entered the succah, I actually saw the Ushpizin ("guests" – referring to Avraham Avinu etc) in my succah!"

The Kotzker Rebbe did not miss a beat, "True. But the rest of the Jews are on a higher level than you. They all believe that the Ushpizin come – even without seeing them!"

My grandfather, **Rav Binyamin Kamenetzky zt"l** quoted the Kotzker Rebbe. One can see miracles, and experience supernatural events. But as explained many times in these pages, without the proper mindset, it's all theory. Although experiencing miracles may boost one's theoretical belief, but without an honest and thorough fear of Heaven, they will not change you.

Now, at the Yam Suf, is the first time that the Jews feared Heaven, as it says, "The people feared Hashem." Only when one has true "yiras shomayim"- fear of Heaven, can he be a true believer. Good Shabbos!

Parshah Pearls

● Light or Darkness

וַיָּבֹא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הֶעָנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיָּאֶר אֶת־הַלָּיְלָה וְלֹא־קָרַב זֶה אֶל־זֶה כָּל־הַלָּיְלָה ***"And it came between the Camp of Egypt and the Camp of Yisrael, and there was cloud and darkness, whilst it (the Pillar of Fire) illuminated the night (for Yisrael)*** … " (14:20).

This is how Rashi translates the Pasuk.

The Rosh however, based on the opening Sugya in the Gemara Pesachim (which interprets the word 'Or' as darkness), translates it like this - "***And it came between the Camp of Egypt and the Camp of Yisrael, and there was cloud and darkness, which made it dark (for the Egyptians)***".

And that explains why, in spite of the Pillar of Fire that stood in front of K'lal Yisrael and lit up the night on their behalf, the Egyptians remained in darkness, and were therefore unable to attack Yisrael.

● Did One Survive or Not?

לֹא־נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד־אֶחָד - ***"Up until one did not remain***" (14:28).

This implies that one did remain. That one, says the Medrash, was Paroh, who some say, later became King of Ninveh.

The Da'as Zekeinim quotes a Pasuk in Tehilim (106:11) **אֶחָד מֵהֶם לֹא נוֹתָר** - "***not one of them remained***", implying that not even Paroh survived? That, they answer, pertains to his army, which perished entirely, but he himself remained alive.

The Medrash explains that Paroh went down together with his army, only Hashem performed a miracle and brought him up six months later, thereby reconciling the two Pesukim.

● The Heart of the Sea

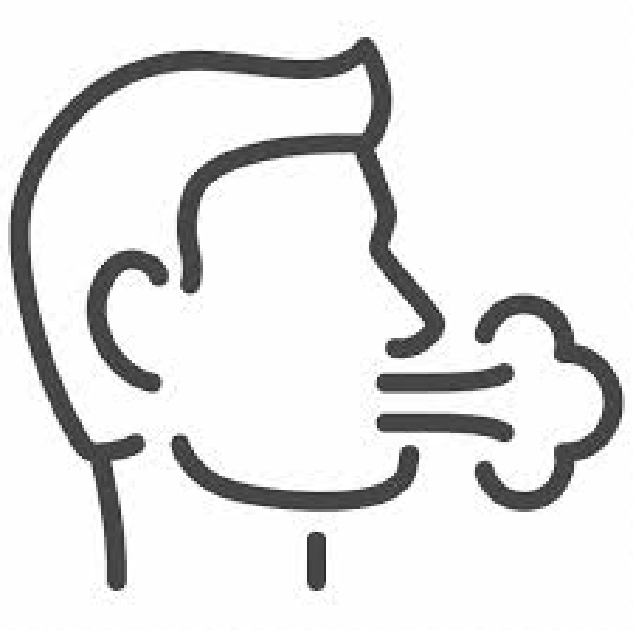
**קָפְאוּ תְהֹמֹת בְּלֶב־יָם - *"The depths congealed in the heart of the Sea*" (15:8).

Just as the heart of a person is one third of the way down his body, so too, did the Yam-Suf congeal one third of the way down, whilst the water that remained in the top third piled up at the sides, the **Da'as Zekeinim** explains.

Had it been the seabed that congealed, he says, Yisrael would not have been able to climb up on to dry land, due to the steepness of the banks.

● Double Distinction

**מִי־כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם ה' מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ *"Who is like You among the strong ones, who is like you Mighty in Holiness …* " (15:11).



One Pasuk describes how G-d caused the water to congeal and to pile up with the breath in His Nostrils, whilst another writes that when He breathed on the congealed water, it melted, covering the Egyptians and drowning them.

Considering that a human breathes hot air through his nostrils, which causes frozen things to thaw, and cold air from his mouth, which causes liquid to congeal, Hashem performed a dual miracle here, congealing with the breath of His nostrils, and thawing with the breath of His Mouth.

Hence the repetition of **מִי כָּמֹכָה** – '***Who is like You***'.

● True Leadership

נָחִיתָ בְחַסְדְּךָ עַם־זוּ גָּאָלְתָּ נֵהַלְתָּ בְעָזְּךָ אֶל־נְוֵה קָדְשֶׁךָ - *" You led them with Your strength to Your holy Abode"* (15:13).

Unkelus, Rashi points out, translates the word **נֵהַלְתָּ** as ***'You carried (them)***', rather than "***You led them***".

The reason for this, the **Chidushei ha'Rim** explains, is because this translation has connotations of 'patience', and patience (the ability to deal with each and every person at his level) is an intrinsic ingredient of leadership.

That being the case, Unkelus has not really changed the meaning of the word at all.

● Preparing for Shabbos

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי וְהֵכִינוּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־יָבִיאוּ וְהָיָה מִשְׁנֶה - *"And it shall be that on Friday, when they prepare what they bring, it will be double* … " (16:5).

Based no doubt on Chazal, who says that the word וְהָיָה always has connotations of Simchah (joy), the **Chidushei ha'Rim** extrapolates from this Pasuk that the joy with which one prepares for Shabbos, is part of the preparations of Shabbos.

What he presumably means is that one's enjoyment of Shabbos is commensurate with the joy with which one performs the preparations.

"We humans race across the world to discover things… Yet, one place we neglect to search is in our heart. And it is there that we will find Hashem." ~ Rav Tzadok of Lublin.

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משל למה הדבר דומה

וַיִּקְרְאוּ בֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־שְׁמוֹ מָן – '***The house of Israel named it manna***..' (16:31)



When **R' Elya Lopian *zt"l***, was a young man studying in the *yeshivah* in Kelm, he joined a select group of elite *Torah* scholars. At one point, the group decided to hold a nightly meeting at which each member would reveal any thoughts he might have had during the day that he felt could use improvement. This exercise, they hoped, would motivate them to make a greater effort to perfect themselves.

At the first meeting, one of the most pious members, **R' Tzvi Hirsch Broide *zt"l***, was called upon to begin. Facing the group, he tried to talk but instead blushed bright red. He cleared his throat and tried again, to no avail. Finally, he stammered to his esteemed friends that he simply couldn't bring himself to tell them about his lowly thoughts.

Later, R' Elya found himself in a private corner with R' Tzvi Hirsch. "For the sake of *Hashem*," R' Elya pleaded, "please reveal what it was that you found too humiliating to share with the whole group."

At first R' Tzvi Hirsch stammered and did not wish to respond, but then reluctantly agreed. - "That evening, just before *davening maariv*, I thought to myself, I hope my wife will prepare potatoes for supper ... Can you imagine entertaining a thought about potatoes, at a time when I ought to be preparing to stand before our Creator?!"

Hashem commanded Aharon to take a portion of *mann* and hide it in a jar. This צְנְצֶנֶת הַמָּן was hidden in the *Aron Kodesh* to show that *Hashem's* food was "Heaven sent" and provided for our every need.

This physical reminder was essential to emphasize the importance of not focusing on the pleasures of this world, rather trusting in *Hashem* that He can provide exactly what we need in this world.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

וְהִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת תַּחַת־תֹּמֶר דְּבוֹרָה – '***And she sat under the palm tree of Deborah***.' (Shoftim 4:5)

The *Haftorah* details "*Shiras Devorah*" - the *Shirah* sung by *Klal Yisroel* in the aftermath of battle between the Jewish Nation (led by *Barak ben Avinoam* and the tribes of Naftali and Zevulin) and the army of the Canaanite General, Sisera.

The *Navi* tells us that *Devorah HaNeviah*, "*Sat under the 'Palm of Devorah' [a palm tree]*" so that she would not violate the *Halachos* of *Yichud* when men would consult with her.

In fact, the word תֹּמֶר is the same numerical value (640) as the words צנועה היתה - "***she was modest***."

Haftorah Summary by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Haftorah Summary for Parshas Beshalach (Shoftim 4:4)

This week's Haftorah is found in Shoftim (Judges) chapter 4. It relates the story of Devorah the Prophet, who along with her husband Barak, ruled the nation for 40 years. The year was 2654 – 1107 b.c.e and the nation was subject to the rule of Yavin of Canaan and his evil General Sisra.

In a decisive battle at the foot of Mt. Tabor by the brook of Kishon, Hashem delivered the armies of Yavin into the hands of Barak and the Bnai Yisroel (Children of Israel). Sisra, the general, fled the battlefield on foot and sought refuge in the tent of Yael (a non-Jew). He asked for water, but she gave him milk, and he then fell into a deep sleep. Yael took a tent stake and drove it through the skull of the evil Sisra.

Reminiscent of the destruction of Mitzrayim by the Yam Suff (Sea of Reeds) and the Shira which was sung by the Bnai Yisroel, Devorah sang a magnificent song filled with the praises and glory of Hashem.

This Haftorah is the longest Haftorah in the course of the year. [*Haftorah Summary by Torah.org.]*

When you have a strong desire to fulfil a mitzvah, you are credited as if you have performed that mitzvah.

Rav Yisroel Salanter zt"l adds that when you perform an easy mitzvah, you can get rewarded as if the mitzvah was very hard. - How?

If you do a mitzvah with determination, thinking that you would also perform the mitzvah even if it the circumstances would make it a very difficult mitzvah, then you will be credited as if you had done the mitzvah under those difficult conditions.



The Siddur Speaks

Whenever **Rav Avraham Pam, zt"l**, was asked by a parent about how to raise good children, he would quote the words of the **Steipler Gaon, zt"l**.

He said that raising good children depends on two factors. Fifty percent of the success in raising a good child is Tefilah. He said that if there is one thing worth Davening for and worth pouring out one's heart for, it is that one should merit having good children.

The other fifty percent, the Steipler said, is Shalom Bayis, peace and harmony between the parents. When children see parents living together with love, cooperation, and having respect for one another in a calm environment, it profoundly affects the type of people they will become!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Someone once asked the Chofetz Chaim what he did to be become a Talmid Chacham. The Chofetz Chaim responded, "I didn't do anything extreme. I simply learned from the morning until the afternoon, took a short break, and then I learned again until the night. - If you do that too, you can also be a Talmid Chacham!"

A Wise Man would say: "Treat everyone with politeness and kindness, not because they are nice, but because you are."

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick

Moshe sent Yehoshua to fight against Amalek. Why did Moshe specifically choose Yehoshua?

The Ohr Hachaim answers that Moshe knew that the reason Hashem let Amalek start up with Bnei Yisroel was because they were being punished for slacking off from learning Torah. However, Yehoshua never slacked off from learning, as the פָּסוּק says, **לֹא יָמִישׁ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֹהֶל** - "***Yehoshua never left the tent***," (33:11) which means he didn't stop learning Torah. - Therefore, Moshe knew that only Yehoshua could win the battle against Amalek. [**ספר טללי אורות**]



During a snow blizzard in New York, it was very hard to travel. **Horav Shmuel Berenbaum זצ"ל** really wanted to go to Yeshiva to learn.

He remembered that Hatzalah ambulances had special chains attached to their tires to help drive through the snow. He called Hatzalah and explained his 'emergency' and asked them if they could drive him to Yeshiva to learn!

"During the war, our people were indiscriminately hated simply for being Jewish. After the war, we must respond by indiscriminately loving all Jews, simply for being Jewish." ~ The Bluzhover Rebbe – R' Yisrael Spira zt"l.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Tu BiShvat – Appreciating Hashem's World

The first Mishnah in *Maseches* Rosh Hashanah informs us of various 'new years'. These are times of the year that are considered the beginning of the annual calendar with regard to various laws. The Rosh Hashanah for trees is the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat, more famously known as 'Tu BiShvat'.

This day is considered a festive day, therefore *tachanun* is not recited. Further, there is the universal custom to make blessings on, and, eat a variety of fruit. The overall focus of the day is to thank Hashem for the gift of trees to the world and to recognize the wonders of nature.

Rav Yaakov Weinberg *zt"l* asks, why is there no similar concept of a celebratory day for the 'birthday' of vegetables? There is also a date for the new year for vegetables which has *halachic* [legal] ramifications. That being the case, why is there no festivity on their 'birthday'?

The Rosh Hashanah for vegetables happens to take place on the first of Tishrei, the day that is most well known as Rosh Hashanah. Thus, one may answer that the 'birthday' of the vegetables is completely overshadowed by the seriousness of Rosh Hashanah.

However, Rav Weinberg offers a different answer. He explains that there are numerous remarkable aspects about nature, that merit contemplation of the wonder of creation.

Many 'miracles' occur with regard to both vegetables and trees. For example, the taking root of a seed and its development into a tree, bush or vegetable is truly miraculous - it is only its regularity that takes away from our wonder at this astonishing occurrence.

Moreover, the process of photosynthesis that enables plant life to use the energy from the sun is another miracle that demonstrates the complexity of nature.



However, there is an additional miracle that is found specifically with trees. The process of nourishment for a vegetable is relatively straightforward; it is drawn directly from the ground into the vegetable itself. In contrast, the process of nourishment for a tree is far more complicated. The tree needs to be able to take the nourishment from the ground, draw it all the way up the trunk to its branches, and then to the fruit.

Rav Weinberg explains that every stage in a plant's development is a miracle, therefore we are instructed to be thankful for Hashem's numerous gifts in this area. Since trees are subject to more miracles than vegetables, it is appropriate that their 'birthday' is considered worthier of celebration than that of vegetables.

Rav Weinberg's explanation reminds us of the importance of focusing on the details of creation - it is very easy to ignore the numerous miraculous aspects of all of the natural world. Tu BiShvat awakens us to the importance of appreciating Hashem's gifts, particularly in the form of fruit. It is instructive to offer one small example of this, in order to arouse us to take note of the numerous miracles that surround us.

When a person eats a peach, he pays little attention to the hard stone that lies beneath the tasty fruit. However, **Rav Avraham Katz *shlita*** in his wonderful book called Designer World (pg. 7-13) teaches us about the great significance of this seemingly bland aspect of nature.



Like all fruit, the peach has a great problem - that is, how to ensure its continuity. Since it is completely immobile it has no way of spreading its seed so that it can procreate. Therefore, the peach seed develops a tasty flesh that surrounds it. This will cause humans and animals to eat the peach, thereby transferring it to other locations where it may be able to take root. However, there remains the difficulty of how the seed will not be consumed by its eater along with the rest of the fruit. Accordingly, the peach seed surrounds itself with a very hard casing that cannot be broken by the strongest teeth. In this way, the precious seed is safe. Nevertheless, the problems do not end there. If the casing is so strong, how will the seed be able escape so that it can take root?

The remarkable answer to this, is that the casing is lined with a seam running along its length, which is bounded by a powerful adhesive. Not even a metal hammer is able to crack it. And yet, when the case falls to the ground, there is a special enzyme in the soil that dissolves the glue and allows the seed to exit its casing!

This mundane seed is the subject of numerous miracles, and if any of them did not take place, then the peach would cease to exist. This is just one example of the testimony to the wonders of Hashem's creation.

On Tu BiShvat we take numerous fruits and say blessings on them before we eat them. This custom can help us focus on the numerous acts of kindness that Hashem performs for us in ensuring the creation of these wonderful fruit.

As a person goes through his daily routine, it is very easy for him to inadvertently close his eyes to the wonders around him. The analogy

is given of a person who visits the Louvre art gallery, and complains that all the paintings look like yoghurt. After some time, he takes off his glasses, only to realize that they had yoghurt on them! He was unable to appreciate the beauty of the paintings because his vision was blocked.

So too, a person can go through life with the proverbial 'yoghurt' blocking his vision, causing him to be blind to the numerous marvels that surround him. - Tu BiShvat gives us the opportunity to open our eyes and appreciate some of Hashem's wonderful gifts. (**R' Yehonasan Gefen**)



● "So Daven!"

After waiting for three long years to have children, **R' Avi Bensoussan** asked his brother, **R' Ari**, to ask **R' Chaim Kanievsky** what he should do. Many times, R' Chaim would suggest different ideas to be fixed to merit the *yeshuah*. Before hanging up, R' Avi told his brother, "I'm not sending you merely for a '*Brachah V'hatzlachah*' (although that was very special); we need something more."

When R' Ari went to R' Chaim's house, there was a wealthy individual before him who supported many institutions, organizations and the like, and the gabbai was rattling off all his praises to R' Chaim.

After he finished this *hesped*-like speech, R' Chaim gave him his famous "*Brachah V'hatzlachah*!" and that was it. R' Ari figured that he too would get the same.

When it was his turn, R' Ari gave R' Chaim his brother's name, his name, and those of two other siblings who also were waiting for children, R' Chaim read the paper from beginning to end and said: "*Brachah V'hatzlachah*!"

He built up the courage to ask R' Chaim what else can be done to guarantee them a *yeshua*. When R' Chaim heard the question, he started laughing. **"Daven!"** he said. Seeing R' Chaim laugh, R' Ari in return started laughing, and the gabbi followed along. He got what R' Chaim was conveying and left the room.

This was not uncommon for R' Chaim—to tell whoever was asking: "So daven!" He called back his brother to tell him the news, that R' Chaim had said: "Daven!" and within a short time doing so, R' Avi, R' Ari, and the two other siblings who were awaiting children *B"H* had a baby, (and some even had twins!).

R' Chaim knew that all the thousands of people he told this to, knew to daven, so what was he telling them that was so special?

R' Chaim was saying that the power of being answered lies in us. It's not something to seek out from others, but rather is within reach. All we have to do is trust in its power and remember that we have what it takes to get the salvation.

● "In Your Own Words!"

Many Yidden had to fight in World War One. Sometimes, for many years even, their wives didn't know whether their husbands were alive or dead, as communication was often interrupted and very difficult during war time.

Women came to the **Chofetz Chaim**, and they cried and pleaded that he daven for them. The Chofetz Chaim cried with them, bentched them, and told them they should also daven. He said, "Go to the *beis midrash*, open the *aron kodesh*, and pour out your heart before Hashem. Hashem wants you to daven."

The women asked the Chofetz Chaim, "What should we say?" They were accustomed to saying the *tefillos* printed in Yiddish in siddurim, such as the *techinos* for after lighting the Shabbos *licht* and or for Motzaei Shabbos. They didn't know how to create their own *tefillos*.

The Chofetz Chaim told them, "Tell Hashem what is on your mind. When a child is hungry, he doesn't look for *techinos*. He cries in his own words. Do the same. Pour out your heart before your compassionate Father." (*Sichos Chofetz Chaim*, vol. 2, p. 21)



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"L

The Power of Asher Yatzar

כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפְאֶךָ

***'All the sicknesses that I placed on Egypt, I will not place on you, because I, Hashem, am your Healer.'* (Shemos 15:26)**

● Preventative Medicine

Many people think this *pasuk* contradicts itself. First it says that we will not become sick. Then it says that *Hashem* is our Healer. If we aren't sick, why do we need healing?

The answer is a good healer, a good doctor, instructs people in healthy living habits so they won't fall ill and need to be healed.

Usually, people go to the doctor when they are already sick, and then the doctor typically prescribes medicine rather than teaching the patient what he can do to avoid illness in the first place.

However, there are people nowadays who are not so happy with antibiotic treatment. They prefer natural healing over conventional medicine. This has brought many people back to various methods that strengthen one's health and prevent sickness.

They remind us that the only way to stay healthy is to eat right. If a person eats without discrimination, and ruins his health, a doctor might not be able to help him.

When it comes to physical health, we all understand that we need to watch what we eat because we could damage our health in ways that can't be remedied by just taking a pill or a shot. We need to live a healthy lifestyle in the first place, so we won't end up in the doctor's office.

The same is true with spiritual means for health. Most of us know people who need our prayers. We *daven* for them and wish them a *refu'ah sheleimah.*

The question is what can be done about it? How can we diminish the number of sick people? - Some suggest that we should designate a *Yom Tefilah,* a day devoted to prayer. This is a wonderful idea, but it somewhat resembles going for a serious operation. It is a means to be reserved for cases of emergency.

We can't live routine life that way, just like we can't take antibiotics all the time. We should rather search for a spiritual lifestyle that will keep us in good health so we won't need days of *tefillah.etc.*

● The Segulah of Mitzvos

Everyone understands that a *mitzvah* brings health, happiness and satisfaction, and an *aveirah* brings tragedy, sickness and pain. However, each *mitzvah* has a special quality, a special *segulah,* that helps in a certain area.

For instance, *mezuzah* has the quality of protecting the home from thieves. *Chazal* say that *Hashem* stands at our doorway to protect us, so to speak. The Divine Name *Shadda-i* written on the *mezuzah* parchment stands for **שומר דלתות ישראל** , "He guards the doors of Yisrael." Thus, someone who is smart will check his *mezuzos* from time to time, rather than investing in locks and bolts.

So it is with other *mitzvos*. They have special qualities that help in specific areas. Whatever the situation, we should search for the part of Torah and *mitzvos* that is especially pertinent to it.

In this spirit, we need to think about what we can do in our regular daily lives that will protect our health. What spiritual "vitamin," what aspect of Torah and *mitzvos,* does *Hashem* offer us to keep us healthy?

We indeed have the blessing of *Refa'einu* in the *Amidah* prayer. However, this is a prayer for people who are already sick. It is more comparable to antibiotics. - We are looking for a spiritual form of preventative medicine.

In my opinion, the special blessing for preventing illness is *Asher yatzar*. It ends with the words **רוֹפֵא כָל בָּשָׂר וּמַפְלִיא לַעֲשׂוֹת** – "***He is the Healer of all flesh and works wonders***."

It doesn't says that *Hashem* "heals the sick," but rather that He is the Healer of all people. It begins ברוך אתה ה' – ***You, Hashem, are a*** בריכה , ***a "pool," a fountain of healing power***.

This blessing does not mention sickness. On the contrary, it praises *Hashem* for protecting our health: שֶׁאִם יִפָּתֵחַ אֶחָד מֵהֶם אוֹ יִסָּתֵם אֶחָד מֵהֶם - It seems to me that people do try to recite the *Refa'einu* blessing in the *Amidah* with *kavanah,* but the blessing of *Asher yatzar* is not always recited the way it should be, and sometimes people don't even say it at all. -The proof is how many sick people there are. - If we would recite this blessing properly, there would not be so many illnesses.

● The Healing Relationship

Chazal say about the blessing of *Refa'einu*: Why was healing placed as the eighth blessing in the *Amidah?*

Said R. Acha: Because *milah* is set to be performed on the eighth day, and *milah* needs healing. Therefore, the blessing of healing was placed eighth.

We see that the blessing of *Refa'einu* is associated with *milah,* but why? There are plenty of other illnesses and injuries that need healing. There are plenty of diseases much worse than the illness caused by *Milah*.

The point that *Chazal* are making is that *Hashem's* healing is a *bris,* a covenant, a relationship with Him.

If we would ask someone how he sees, he would likely answer, "With my eyes." Asked how he hears, he would say, "With my ears." How does he walk? "With my legs."

I will tell you a story about how I discovered that we don't walk with our legs:

Once I was in a traffic accident and my legs were injured. I was sitting in the wrecked car until someone came and said to me, "Get out of the car!" I responded, "I can't."

He showed me: "Look, you can get out like this."

I thought to myself: Right, if your legs are healthy, that's how you get out.

We don't walk with legs; we don't see with eyes and we don't hear with ears. Walking, seeing and hearing (and other bodily actions) do not come naturally, just because that's how the world works. - They all are a personal gift from *Hashem*. Because we are so used to them, we don't notice this, and only when the eyes stop seeing and then *Hashem* gives eyesight back, then a person starts to understand

that we don't see with our eyes. - We need *Hashem* to empower our eyesight.

There is one time when we are together with *Hashem* in a way reminiscent of being in *Beis Hamikdash.* This is when we are sick. *Chazal* say: שֶׁשְּׁכִינָה לְמַעְלָה מִמְּרַאֲשׁוֹתָיו שֶׁל חוֹלֶה - ***The Shechinah is above the pillow of a sick person***. (*Shabbos* 12b).

Normally, only the *tzibbur* may recite prayers that are in Aramaic. An individual needs to pray in Hebrew. The *tzibbur* is different because the *Shechinah* is there. However, a sick person may *daven* in Aramaic because the *Shechinah* is with him. When a person is sick, he is in a covenantal relationship, a *bris,* with *Hashem.*

The fact that the blessing of *Refa'einu* was fixed as the eighth blessing of the *Amidah* implies that healing is a miracle. This is because the number eight is associated with matters that are above nature. - Every time a person is healed, it is a miracle. The question is whether a person needs to be sick in order to attain this wondrous closeness to *Hashem?*

The answer is, of course, not. We can attain the same closeness by praying to *Hashem* before sickness comes. We learn this from Rachel and Leah. They both were barren. Rachel cried and received dear children, and Leah cried and received dear children.

Leah merited the same miracle that happened to Rachel, but with a big difference: Leah cried for years before she got married, and had children right after marriage. (We wouldn't even know that Leah was barren if not for the Torah revealing this to us, as mentioned in Rashi.) Rachel didn't cry before marriage, and afterward she needed to cry for years until she had children.

This illustrates *Chazal's* teaching: A person should always beg *Hashem* for mercy **before** he falls sick, because if he falls sick, he is asked to present merits in order to be healed.



Parshas Hamon

Did you say Parshas Hamon today?

The pasuk says: **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם** - '***So Hashem said to Moshe, Behold! I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven***.' (16:4)



What does the term '***rain down***' mean?

A man is walking down the street, and it's raining. It's pouring! He would like to slow down or stop the rain. - Can he do that? Or if he wants to increase the flow of rain, can he do that? – Of course not!

The same is with our parnasah which comes from heaven. Just as rain, which is something that we cannot control, the 'bread- your income' is also something that we cannot control either.

We are commanded to do hishtadlus – but don't think that you must make 77 phone calls towards this purpose. Of course we must do our part towards this hishtadlus, but do you know what kind of hishtadlus?

This Friday, there is a minhag to feed the birds. Did you ever notice how a bird feeds? It bends it head down, pecks at the food, and immediately lifts it head up again. This is repeated several times – just like a spring – down, up, down, up, down, up, etc.

This is how we should do hishtadlus. Do your hishtadlus, but immediately look up (to Hashem in heaven). Remember that all parnasah comes from Hashem.

The Shulchan Aruch tells us to recite Parshas Hamon and the Akeidah every single day! [Siman 1:5]

Rabeinu Bechayai says in this week's parsha – "Know that this is a segulah for every day! – This is a teaching that I have inherited from the chachamim."

"One who says Parshas Hamon every day, **is guaranteed** to never lack parnasah! He will never struggle with his livelihood."

The Tashbeitz quotes from the Talmud Yerushalmi, "***One who recites Parshas hamon every day, is promised to never see a decrease in his parnasah***." The Tashbeitz adds: "***And I guarantee this***!"

Do you realise what we are saying here? Today, people are looking for all sorts of segulos, but we have a guarantee right here from the Rishoinim! Why invest your efforts in the curse **בְּזֵעַת אַפֶּיךָ תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם** – Instead, invest in a few minutes to say Parshas Hamon with concentration!

Of course, do your hishtadlus – but get your priorities right.

Listen to the words of the Poskim: **The Taz** explains the segulah of saying Parshas Hamon – It is because by the Mann, the Yidden saw that all parnasah comes from Hashem in heaven.

And the **Mishnah Brerurah** adds to this [Siman 1]: By the Mann, we saw that anyone that collected more, didn't end up with more, and one who collected less, didn't end up with less. – This teaches us that overdoing your hishtadlus will not help at all!

"Emunah is the key to success in life. It is the belief that we can achieve anything we set our minds to, as long as we have faith in Hashem." ~ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Parsha Points to Ponder

What beracha was said before and after eating Manna?

Rav Yehuda HaChassid writes that the beracha said before eating Manna was **הנותן לחם מן השמים** – Who gives bread from heaven, while the **Rema MiPano** suggests that the proper wording was **המוציא לחם מן השמים** – Who brings forth bread from heaven, and the **Ben Ish Chai** posits that the blessing was **הממטיר לחם מן השמים** – Who rains bread from heaven.

The Mirkeves HaMishneh maintains that they recited the appropriate beracha for whatever food they caused their Manna to taste like. **Rav Chaim Palagi** posits that because the Torah describes (Shemos 16:31) the Manna as tasting like a cake fried in honey, the correct blessing would normally be **מזונות**, which is said over cake. Because they were **קובע סעודה** - made a meal on it, they therefore said **המוציא**.

The B'nei Yissaschar opines that no beracha was recited when eating Manna during the week, while on Shabbos, they said **אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וציוונו לאכול סעודת שבת** – Who has sanctified us with His mitzvos and commanded us to eat the Sabbath meal.

The Kli Chemdah cites the **Seforno**, who writes (16:27) that the Manna received nourishment from the ground, in which case the appropriate blessing was **בורא פרי האדמה** – Who creates the fruit of the earth.

After eating Manna, Birkas HaMazon was recited, as stated clearly in the Gemora.

"Hashem's kindness is constant, even during our most difficult times." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

whY I Matter

בשבילי נברא העולם (סנהדרין לז)

Edited by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַּיָּם - *'A horse and its rider He heaved into the sea.'* (15:1)

Rashi adds 'The two of them - the horse and the rider were tied together, and the waters would raise them to the heights and bring them down to the depths, yet they would not separate.'



What did the horses do they had to suffer and drown? And for what reason did the riders have to drown together with the horse? Why did the rider have to remain tied to the horse?

When a tragedy happens - a person suffers - a disaster occurs, there is always a tendency to look for the causes. I did this wrong - I did that wrong. If I would have done this differently, it would not have happened.

Here too, in the seconds before the rider drown, he would blame the tragedy on the fact that he was separated from his horse. 'If only I was able to remain mounted, I would not be drowning.'

Hashem sent down the riders attached to their horses so that they should understand that this was a miracle from Hashem. (**Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna**)

"When action is needed, the impossible is within our reach." ~ Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz.

כִּי בָאָ֤ה סוּס פַּרְעֹה֙ בְּרִכְבּ֣וֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁ֔יו בַּיָּ֖ם וַיָּ֨שֶׁב יְהוָ֤ה עֲלֵהֶם֙ אֶת־מֵ֣י הַיָּ֔ם וּבְנֵ֥י יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל הָלְכ֣וּ בַיַּבָּשָׁ֑ה בְּת֖וֹךְ הַיָּֽם (15:19) '***And the Children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.***'

People are impressed only when they see events which are truly "miraculous". They fail to realize that nature itself is a great miracle, in which they can behold Hashem's greatness each day. **(Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk)**

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

From The Mind of Rabbi Michael Skobac

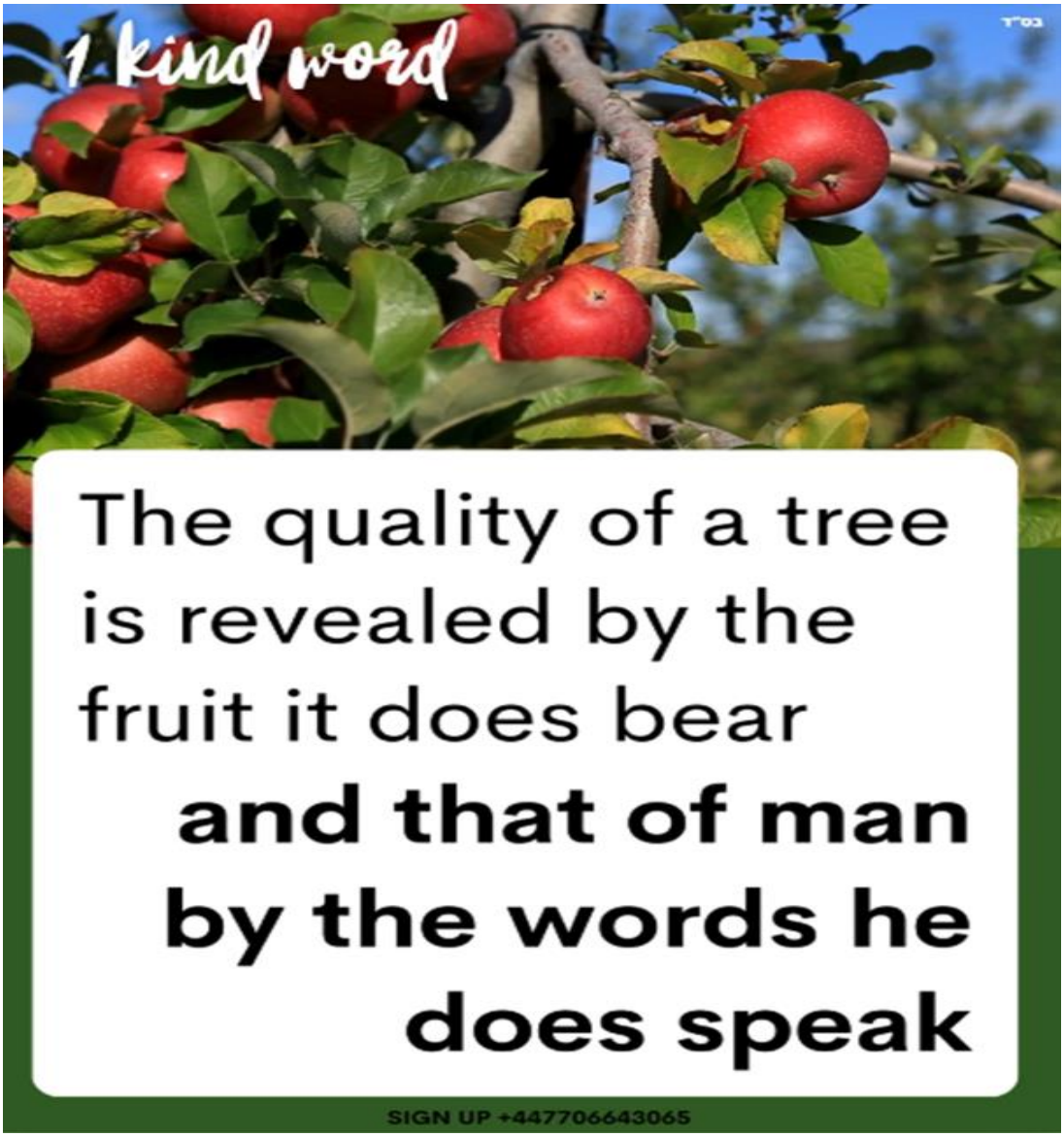
Hashem provided manna, heavenly food, to nourish the Israelites during their desert travels. According to the Midrash Tanchuma, the manna tasted like whatever food you were thinking of.

Someone asked the **Chafetz Chaim** what the manna would taste like if you weren't thinking of anything. The sage said: "If you're not thinking of anything, it has no taste!" - And in truth, anything we don't do mindfully is not a real experience and lacks taste.

According to **Rav Tzadok HaCohen of Lublin**, in his Pri Tzadik, the primordial blunder of Adam and Eve in the Garden was not so much what they ate – but how they ate it. It was the mindless eating of the tree's fruit. We are supposed to eat consciously, realizing that the food and its taste come to us as a gift from the Almighty. Adam and Eve's alienation from Hashem stemmed from their consumption simply for the physical pleasure. They ate in a way that disconnected them from the source of the food.

Our Shabbat meals are an especially appropriate opportunity to rectify this error and to focus our attention to eat mindfully.


YOUR WORLD IS OVERFLOWING WITH KINDNESS!
THANK YOU, HASHEM! WE LOVE YOU, HASHEM!


1 kind word
The quality of a tree
is revealed by the
fruit it does bear
and that of man
by the words he
does speak
SIGN UP +447706643065



WHEN YOU SEE ANOTHER YID:

Ignore his type of hat



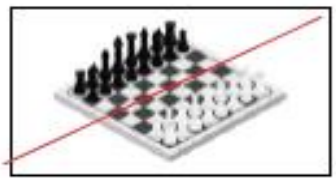
Ignore the color of his shirt



Ignore the style of his shoes



Ignore his level of intelligence



Don't accuse! Don't judge or convict!



THE SPRING HILL TIMES - KLAL YISRAEL'S NEWSPAPER



WHEN YOU SEE ANOTHER YID:

Remember that he is part of your family!



Notice his smile!



SEE BEYOND THE SURFACE!

See his holy Chelek Elokai m'ma'al- his glowing Neshama!



Accept him and love him to pieces!



THE SPRING HILL TIMES - KLAL YISRAEL'S NEWSPAPER

The Spring Hill Times

Freezing Cold Outside?





It was freezing inside too besides for the immediate area around the fireplace. All the children would take turns sleeping closest to the fire...

It was a job to light the fire and keep it going. On Shabbos, the fire would die out and everyone would be left in the ice cold...





Just push the button and your house is warm and toasty! You have it running automatically 24/7 on a thermostat and on a timer! A mechaya!

Thank You, Hashem! We love You, Hashem!

IDF Soldiers Saved by Mincha



IDF soldier Malkiel Ben Yosef told 103FM interviewers how *davening Mincha* saved his life and his platoon in the central Gaza town of El-Bureij.

"I realized that sunset was approaching, and I hadn't prayed *Mincha* yet," he said.

"The force halted, and I told myself, 'This is my last opportunity to pray *Mincha;* otherwise, I'll probably miss it.' I stood to *daven,* facing Yerushalayim, and while I was *davening*, I saw movement in an open field nearby where engineering vehicles had already passed. About 15-10 yards away, I saw the movement of something metal from the ground.

"At first, I didn't understand what this movement was. I thought it might be an animal or something. After a second, I realized someone was coming out of the ground with an RPG. That second, I shouted for everyone to pay attention because the guys there weren't far from me, and I started shooting at him. I realized he was a terrorist

who was heading towards the rest of the force. From what I understand and realize, he didn't know that I was there on the side. As soon as I shouted, he turned towards me with the RPG, and I and the friends around me managed to take him down before he could fire the RPG," Ben Yosef said. {*Matzav.com Israel*}

An Incredible Story Related by Rabbi Shlomo Landau



There were two people who were off the derech but always kept Shabbos. They were invited to the festival near Gaza. The temptation was very strong so they decided that just for that week they would take a break from Shemiras Shabbos and go to the festival.

They were there when the terrorists came. The terrorists told them that they would not waste a bullet on them, they would use a knife.

One of the men then turned to the other and said, "This is happening to us because we didn't keep Shabbos!" The other Yid said, "You are right!!

One of the terrorists who knew Hebrew said, "What did you just say?" - They told him that they usually keep Shabbos but are getting punished because they didn't keep this Shabbos.

The terrorist said to them that he was told in Gaza that people who keep shabbos have a special Aura. "We are not looking to kill people like You - run!"

They both escaped and lived to tell the tale!!

Shiras HaYam By Harav Rabbi Don Channen



#1 Introduction

In order to understand *Az Yashir* (*Shiras HaYam*) we must first understand the significance of the annihilation of The Egyptian army at the Red Sea. The Torah states, **וַיּוֹשַׁע ה׳ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרָיִם וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם. וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירְאוּ הָעָם אֶת־ה׳ וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה׳ וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ**-"***On that day, HaShem saved Israel from the hand of Egypt, and they saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great hand that HaShem inflicted on the Egyptians, and the people feared HaShem, and they had faith in HaShem, and in Moses, His servant.***" (14:30)

#2

HaShem commanded the Red Sea to spit out the Mitzrim onto its banks in order that Bnai "Yisrael would not say, "Just as we went up on this side, they went up on another side further from here and will pursue us later."(Rashi)

We see that Bnei Yisrael did not believe they were worthy of HaShem's promise to be redeemed. When they saw their enemy destroyed, they no longer looked at themselves as fleeing slaves. At this point they believed that HaShem's promise of redemption had come true and that Moshe was sent as the Redeemer.

#3 Shmos 15:1

אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר אָשִׁירָה לַה' כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם –'***Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang this song to HaShem, and spoke, saying: I will sing to HaShem, for he is highly exalted; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.***'

Commentary: Shiras HaYam was sung by Moshe, and Bnai Yisrael followed responsively (Sotah 30b). At the outset HaShem reveals that He is waging this battle.

When man fights against man one throws the other off his horse. At the "Yam Suf" (Red Sea) HaShem threw the horse and rider together into the waters. He lifted them up and plunged them to the depths and yet they did not become separated! This is why the word "Ga-ah" is used here; it refers to that which is impossible for a human being to do. (Rashi)

#4 Shmos 15:2

עָזִּי וְזִמְרָת יָ-הּ וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֵ-לִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי וַאֲרֹמְמֶנְהוּ – '***HaShem is my strength and song, He is my salvation, this is my G-d and I will glorify Him; the G-d of my father, and I will exalt Him.***'

Commentary: The strength and the praises of HaShem were our salvation.(Rashi) He is our G-d and we acknowledge that He is eternal. We willingly adorn His presence that resides among us, we pray to him and we serve him as is fitting.

We do all this to find favor in His eyes. (Sforno) There is a difference between doing a mitzvah without adornment and doing a mitzvah with adornment. For example: When one writes an especially beautiful Torah.

#5 Shmos 15:3 **ה' אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה ה' שְׁמוֹ** – '***HaShem is a man of war, HaShem is His name.***'

Commentary: HaShem is not a man! Rather, understand the meaning of "man" as master - HaShem is the master of war; He wages war without the use of any weapons, only using the power of His name. HaShem is His name; A mortal king, when waging a war, removes himself from all other matters in order to fully concentrate on victory. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, has no limitations. At the same time HaShem destroys His enemies He continues to bestow loving kindness to the rest of creation. (Rashi)

#6 Shmos 15:4

מַרְכְּבֹת פַּרְעֹה וְחֵילוֹ יָרָה בַיָּם וּמִבְחַר שָׁלִשָׁיו טֻבְּעוּ בְיַם־סוּף - *'Pharaoh's chariots and his host were thrown into the sea, and his chosen captains were drowned in the Red Sea.'*

Commentary: This is the majesty of HaShem's strength. He lifted Pharoah's entire army, the heavy chariots, the foot soldiers, and their captains, then tossed them as easily as one shoots an arrow. (Evan Ezra)

HaShem threw them into the mud; a punishment " measure-for-measure" for having enslaved Israel with clay and bricks. (Rashi)

#7 Shmos 15:5

תְּהֹמֹת יְכַסְיֻמוּ יָרְדוּ בִמְצוֹלֹת כְּמוֹ־אָבֶן - *'The depths cover them, they sank to the bottom like a stone.'*

Commentary: The Egyptians were stuck in the mud in order that the waters would return and cover them. As they were tossed about, the most wicked were treated like straw and were continually dashed around. The average Egyptian sank like a stone, suffering less agony. The best Egyptian (even the best Egyptian was still wicked) fell like lead, coming to rest quickly.(Rashi)

#8 Shmos 15:6

יְמִינְךָ ה' נֶאְדָּרִי בַּכֹּחַ יְמִינְךָ ה' תִּרְעַץ אוֹיֵב

'Your right hand, HaShem, is adorned with power, Your right hand, HaShem, smashes the enemy.'

Commentary: Your right hand is written two times. When Bnai Yisrael serves HaShem properly, then the left hand (which is intended for punishment) becomes a right hand (which bestows reward).

Through the good a person does he is able to avert punishment and bring good in its place. How great is HaShem!

It is impossible for a human being to do two actions at the same time with one hand. Only HaShem can do this. HaShem used His "right" hand to save Bnai Yisrael and at the same time, with the same "right hand", but with an entirely different action, destroyed the enemy. (Rashi)

#9 Shmos 15:7

וּבְרֹ֣ב גְּאוֹנְךָ֗ תַּהֲרֹס֙ קָמֶ֔יךָ תְּשַׁלַּ֥ח חֲרֹ֖נְךָ יְאכְלֵ֣מוֹ כַקַּ֑שׁ - *'And in the greatness of Your grandeur, You overthrow those who rise up against You; You send forth Your anger, it consumes them like straw.'*

Commentary: If the hand alone crushes the enemy, then when HaShem raises it aloft in the greatness of His grandeur, those who rebel will certainly be overthrown. And if in the greatness of HaShem's grandeur, His enemies are overthrown then how much more certain that their fate is sealed when HaShem sends forth His wrath and consumes them like straw. (Rashi)

#10 Shmos 15:8

וּבְר֣וּחַ אַפֶּ֔יךָ נֶ֥עֶרְמוּ מַ֖יִם נִצְּב֣וּ כְמוֹ־נֵ֑ד נָזְל֥וּ תְהֹמֹ֖ת בְּלֶב־יָֽם - *'And with a blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up, straight as a wall stood the running water, the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.'*

Commentary: HaShem unleashed the terrible force of His anger. Just as a man issues breath from both nostrils when he is overcome by anger, so too HaShem issued a breath from "both nostrils". This

burning heat was so powerful that it caused the waters to become like heaps and piles of grain stacks. (Rashi)

Bnai Yisrael traversed a straight and orderly path through the sea, in contrast to the Egyptians who were confused and travelled aimlessly into the heart of the sea. (Ba'al HaTurim)

#11 Shmos 15:9

אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֶרְדֹּף אַשִּׂיג אֲחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תִּמְלָאֵמוֹ נַפְשִׁי אָרִיק חַרְבִּי תּוֹרִישֵׁמוֹ יָדִי
'The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, I will satisfy my lust with them, I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.'

Commentary: When Pharoah saw the Red Sea open wide before him, exposing a dry path, he became very excited and rallied his forces. (Rashbam)

"Now is our chance to pursue our enemies! In Egypt I did not let you steal their property, now I allow you to take from them whatever you want!" (Mechilta)

#12 Shmos 15:10

נָשַׁפְתָּ בְרוּחֲךָ כִּסָּמוֹ יָם צָלֲלוּ כַּעוֹפֶרֶת בְּמַיִם אַדִּירִים ***'You blew with your wind, the sea covered them, they sank as lead in the mighty waters.'***

Commentary: A mere wind from HaShem frustrated Pharoah's plans! Behold, the same blast of wind which parted the sea was used to bring the waters back together covering Pharoah's entire army. They were destroyed with one breath. (Sforno)

They sank to the depths like a piece of lead. (Rashi)

#13 Shmos 15:11

מִי־כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם ה' מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא ***'Who is like you among the powers, HaShem! Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!'***

Commentary: Who is like you among the powers, HaShem - HaShem has the power to change the nature of that which never changes. Who is like You, glorious in holiness - HaShem's holiness never changes! fearful in praises - One who comes to know the greatness of the praises sung to HaShem will come to serve Him out of true fear, rather than from fear of punishment, HaShem does wonders - HaShem does wonders which are never found under natural conditions (for example, the pillar of clouds and the pillar of fire that led Bnai Yisrael through the desert) (Sforno)

#14 Shmos 15:12

נָטִ֣יתָ יְמִינְךָ֔ תִּבְלָעֵ֖מוֹ אָֽרֶץ - *'You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them.'*

Commentary: When HaShem stretches His hand, the wicked fall and cease to exist - because everything is held in His hand. This may be compared to a glass vase resting in a man's hand; should he tip his hand to the left or to the right, the vase will fall and shatter. (Rashi)

#15

Thus, the Egyptians were defeated. Bnai Yisrael saw their bodies wash up onto the shore. Then another miracle happened, the ground opened up as a reward for those Egyptians who had said "HaShem is Rightous" and buried them. (Ramban)

#16 Shmos 15:13

נָחִ֣יתָ בְחַסְדְּךָ֔ עַם־זוּ גָּאָ֑לְתָּ נֵהַלְתָּ֥ בְעָזְּךָ֖ אֶל־נְוֵ֥ה קָדְשֶֽׁךָ - *'You guided in your kindness the people that You redeemed, You led them with strength to Your holy abode.'*

Commentary: Even though these words were sung in the past tense, it is really a prophecy. HaShem will lead us with mercy, using a pillar of clouds to comfort us in the day, and a pillar of fire at night. (Evan Ezra) "You led Your people like a flock" (Tehillim 77) - Just like a shepherd grazes each sheep in his flock according to it's needs, so

too HaShem comforted and protected each person as they were led through the desert. (Baal HaTurim)

With HaShem's strength Bnai Yisrael was led to the land of Caanan in order to enter and inherit it. (Rashbam)

#17 Shmos 15:14

שָׁמְעוּ עַמִּים יִרְגָּזוּן חִיל אָחַז יֹשְׁבֵי פְלָשֶׁת - *'The peoples heard, they tremble, convulsive terror have taken hold on the dwellers of Peleshes.'*

Commentary: When the nations of the world heard that the Egyptian empire was destroyed and that their false gods were judged they trembled. The inhabitants of Paleshes (the Philistine countries) were overwhelmed with fear because they had slain Bnai Ephraim* and feared the Jews would now avenge the killing of their brothers. (Mechilta)

*Bnai Efraim had miscalculated the time of redemption and therefore, tried to escape years earlier. They were killed by the Palishtim.

#18 Shmos 15:15

אָז נִבְהֲלוּ אַלּוּפֵי אֱדוֹם אֵילֵי מוֹאָב יֹאחֲזֵמוֹ רָעַד נָמֹגוּ כֹּל יֹשְׁבֵי כְנָעַן - *'Then the chiefs of Edom were frightened; trembling gripped the mighty men of Moab; all the dwellers of Canaan melted away.'*

Commentary: What were Edom and Moab afraid of? Bnai Yisrael were not marching against them?!

Edom was worried that Bnai Yisrael would take revenge on them for Aisav's hatred of Yaakov. Moab was afraid they would be attacked because of the quarrel between the shepherds of their forefathers Lot and Avraham. The Canaanites were in the worst position. They melted in fear and said, "Edom and Moab are only worried about their money and property, but we fear for our very lives! Bnai Yisrael are marching to wipe us out and inherit our land!" (Mechilta)

#19 Shmos 15:16

תִּפֹּל עֲלֵיהֶם אֵימָתָה וָפַחַד בִּגְדֹל זְרוֹעֲךָ יִדְמּוּ כָּאָבֶן עַד־יַעֲבֹר עַמְּךָ ה׳ עַד־יַעֲבֹר עַם־
זּוּ קָנִיתָ **'May terror and dread fall upon them, by the greatness of Your arm may they be still as stone, until Your people pass through, HaShem, until this people that You have acquired passes through.'**

Commentary: Terror fell upon nations afar, dread overcame nations nearby. Amalek called all of them together in order to unite them and attack as one force while Bnai Yisrael were crossing the Red Sea.

At that moment Moshe prayed to the Almighty for Divine intervention. HaShem answered his prayers and caused the nations to become still as stone. (Mechilta)

Moshe continued to pray that HaShem would protect Bnai Yisrael until they were safely over the Arnon and Jorden rivers. He feared that at the time of crossing the rivers Bnai Yisrael would be especially vulnerable to attack and therefore needed a prayer for protection in case they lacked the merit for a miracle to protect them. (Sforno)

#20 Shmos 15:17

תְּבִאֵמוֹ וְתִטָּעֵמוֹ בְּהַר נַחֲלָתְךָ מָכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ פָּעַלְתָּ ה׳ מִקְדָּשׁ אֲ-דֹנָי כּוֹנְנוּ יָדֶיךָ
'You bring them in and implant them on the mountain of Your inheritance, the foundation of Your dwelling place, which You, HaShem, have made, the Sanctuary, HaShem, that your hands established.'

Commentary: Why did Moshe say, "You will bing them in..." and not, "You will bring us in..."? The answer is that Moshe prophesized (without knowing it) that he himself would not enter the Holy Land. Bnai Yisrael would be led to Mount Moria, the place of HaShem's Sanctuary, which is exactly opposite the Divine Throne above. (Rashi)

#21

HaShem used "both hands" to build the Bais Hamikdash; the right hand which created the heavens and the left hand which created the earth. In this way He was able to create an abode on earth for the heavenly Shechina. So too, a tzaddik's deeds are great because they combine the spiritual and physical. (Kli Yakar) For example: When we dwell in a succah and bless on the four species.

#22 Shmos 15:18

'ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד 'HaShem shall reign for all eternity. HaShem shall reign for all eternity. (HaShem, His kingdom is established forever and ever.)'

Commentary: HaShem shall reign for all eternity - It seems odd that after witnessing the crushing defeat of the Egyptian army, Bnai Yisrael does not proclaim, "HaShem is king for all eternity."

The reason is that only one nation had been judged. HaShem's kingdom will not be recognized until the days of the Moshiach when all nations will be judged and their false G-ds destroyed. (Or HaChaim)

#23

HaShem shall reign for all eternity: There are three opinions concerning the text at this point:

1) According to the Abudraham by repeating "HaShem shall reign..." we are signaling the end of the song "Az Yashir". According to this view, the following verse, Shmos 15:19, is not part of "Az Yashir" and therefore was not sung by Moshe and Bnai Yisrael at the Red Sea.

2) According to the Mechilta, the next verse was sung by Moshe and Bnai Yisrael at the crossing of the Red Sea and therefore is part of "Az Yashir". In his opinion the verses "HaShem shall reign for all eternity" and HaShem, His kingdom is established forever and ever, should not be recited.

3) The third opinion is a "combination" of both; "HaShem shall reign..." is an extra praise we add as is sometimes done in other places. HaShem, His kingdom is established forever and ever, is a commentary of that verse and is inserted to divide "Az Yashir" from the additional praises.

#24 Shmos 15:19

כִּי בָא סוּס פַּרְעֹה בְּרִכְבּוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו בַּיָּם וַיָּשֶׁב ה׳ עֲלֵהֶם אֶת־מֵי הַיָּם וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם - *'For the horse of Pharaoh came with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and HaShem brought back the waters of the sea upon them after Bnai Yisrael had crossed on dry land in the midst of the sea.'*

Commentary: Behold, this stanza is in praise of a miracle within a miracle! Though Pharoah pursued immediately and close behind, the waters closed in on him. Therefore, at the same time Bnai Yisrael were crossing over on dry land, the Egyptians were drowning!

In essence, seeing the Egyptian army drown while they themselves remained on dry land is why Bnai Yisrael started to sing. This is the concluding verse of "Az Yashir" and was also sung while Bnai Yisrael were crossing the Red Sea. (Ramban)

#25 Tehillim 22:29

כִּי לַה׳ הַמְּלוּכָה וּמוֹשֵׁל בַּגּוֹיִם - *'For the sovereignty is HaShem's and he rules over nations.'*

Commentary: Since we had just referred to HaShem's kingdom three times we now add three verses from the prophets. These verses were added to our prayers in order to extend the praise of HaShem's kingdom from the time we went out of Egypt to the time of the prophets. (Tikun Tephillah)

A king of flesh and blood rules only by consent, always vulnerable to a rebellion. HaShem rules by strength. He is never fearful of a rebellion!

#26 Ovadiah 1:21

וְעָלוּ מוֹשִׁעִים בְּהַר צִיּוֹן לִשְׁפֹּט אֶת־הַר עֵשָׂו וְהָיְתָה לַה' הַמְּלוּכָה - *'The saviors will ascend Mount Zion to judge Esav's mountain, and the kingdom will be HaShem's.'*

Commentary: There will come a time when the Moshiach and his officers will hold court in final judgement against the wrongdoings of the nations, towards Bnai Yisrael. At that time HaShem's kingdom will be established and HaShem will be accepted as the true G-d. (Metzudas David)

#27 Zechariah 14:9

וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה ה' אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד - *'Then HaShem will be King over all the world, on that day HaShem will be One and His Name will be One.'*

Commentary: The people of the world will throw their false beliefs away; no nation will worship a strange G-d. When that time arrives, HaShem's name will be praised by the entire world.

"We serve Hashem according to our nature. Hashem leads us according to the rules of nature. But when we go beyond our nature, Hashem reciprocates and performs miracles for us beyond the limitations of nature.

When the Jewish Nation was at the seashore, they served Hashem with mesiras nefesh – beyond their nature, making them worthy of Kryas Yam Suf." ~Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev.

"When we serve Hashem beyond our limitations, we merit miracles beyond the rules of nature." ~ The Ksav Sofer.

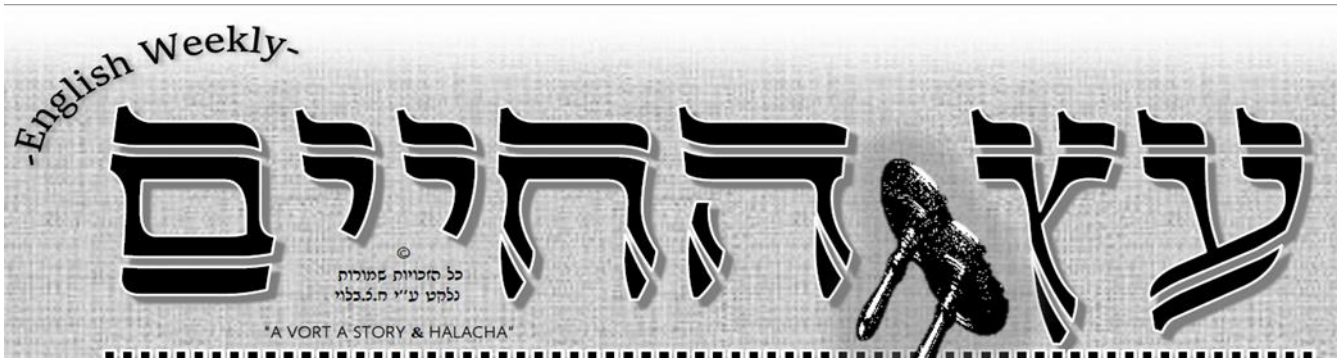
The Parasha Question

It is forbidden for a man to hear a woman sing. If so, how were the women allowed to sing when they crossed the Yam Suf if men were present?

The **Chida** (Mar'it Ha'ayin) writes that where the Shechina is present, there is no concern for improper thoughts. When Miriam and the women sang *shirah*, the Shechina was there, making it permissible.

The **Me'am Loez** answers that the women purposely played drums and cymbals as they sang to drown out their voices, and the men wouldn't hear them singing.

The **Ben Yehoyada** clarifies that there was an immense fear of numerous things: the Shechina, the water that stood over their heads like a wall, and their Rebbe, Moshe. Therefore, there was no concern of forbidden thoughts.



Koach Hapeh

● **Eis Tzarah Hi L'yaakov**… It breaks my heart when I hear sad news of yet another Yiddishe neshama that left the world in such tragic ways. Baruch Hashem, I am from those who don't follow the news, but I do hear what happens sometimes and it is so painful to hear what families are going through.

I am waiting for the day that we will all sing shira to Hashem and see the Beis Hamkdash come down from Shamayim!

● **Klal Yisrael Have A Tremendous koach b'peh!**

As we know, and have mentioned before, every tefilla these days is Min HaTorah according to all opinions! We need to be machshiv our Tefilos more and more! No tefillah is wasted, and Hashem takes your tefillah. You may never know in your lifetime what YOUR tefillah saved!

Daven also for the geula that it should come already, so that there will be gilui kvod Hashem in the world! V'haya Hashem Limelech Al kol Ha'aretz Bayom Ha'hu Hashem Echad Ushmoi Echad!

● **Ana Hashem Hoisheah Nah**.

Save us, Hashem, from all our enemies who wish to destroy us! Save us from those who want to destroy **our ruchnios** and save us from those who wish to destroy us physically!

● **I Heard From מו״ר Rav Kalmen Krohn זצוק״ל** that If a person only davens and talks to Hashem three times a day it shows he is missing the basics of being a Yid! He is lacking in his Yiras Shamayim!

A Yid is someone who is constantly, constantly turning to Hashem in every part of his day! In every part of his life!

Some people make a terrible mistake and they think that to daven to Hashem again and again is wrong. There are many errors that people make when it comes to the world of tefilla.

The *gemara* says that if a person sees that his tefilla was not answered, yachzor v'yispalel! [Brachos daf Lev1]

● **Someone Told Over a Story** that there was a woman who was miraculously saved from Kibutz B'erii on Simchas Torah. She said over that she was completely not religious and praying to G-D did not exist in her life.

She was asked if she prayed during the time the terrorists were there. She said "I thought to myself how can I pray and ask G-D for a salvation when everyone outside is being murdered?" (This

hashkafa is obviously incorrect.) She admitted that a relative of hers convinced her (on Simchas Torah) to recite the word "HASHEM HU HAELOIKIM" 7 times. She reminded herself that she said it, and even had a few of her relatives in mind when she said it, and she and each one of the relatives that she had in mind were miraculously saved.

● A Man Once Came His Rov and told him that he decided he was stopping to daven. He was married for a number of years without any children and he felt that he had enough of davening for children.

The next morning, he went to daven at his usual six thirty shacharis minyan and something quite unusual occurred. During his **שמנה עשרה** he davened for many personal requests, yet he refused to daven for children. Suddenly, in the middle of his shmonah esrai, he heard a baby crying. A little baby crying in shul before 7 in the morning!?!?!

He could not believe his ears. At that moment he could not hold himself back and he burst into tears. He said to Hashem, "I see You really don't want me to stop davening." - He cried, and he continued to daven for a child. One year later he had a child.

What really happened? A father had a very colicky baby, who was up the entire night. His wife had finally fallen asleep, and he didn't want the baby to wake her, so he took him to shul with him!

Hashem arranges everything in this world and loves when we pour our hearts out to him.

"Yichus is something that must always start with you and not finish with you. – It's not something that you take from your predecessors, rather it's something that you bequeath to your generations." ~ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer Zt'l.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE
A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation
WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

A Miraculous Moment - Angels in Orange – Uplifting Stories of Courage, Faith and Miracles from the United Hatzalah Heroes of October 7th by Rabbi Nachman Seltzer



I heard the following story from the protagonist himself, a young man named Ro'i, who had attended the music festival on October 7th with his wife. This is how he tells it:

During the party, I remember standing there, filming everything going on. Suddenly, I noticed that there were rockets flying in our direction. I didn't waste any time. Grabbing my wife's hand, I said, "We're running to the car this second. We need to leave right now!"

We started running and all I could think of was how the music was still playing. Rockets flying in our direction and the music is still playing. Crazy. "This could be our last moment together," I remember saying. My wife said, "Don't talk shtuyot. Hashem is watching over us!"

Suddenly, we passed a car, and I saw a man sleeping inside. I knew that if I didn't alert him, there was a good chance he was going to die. I knocked on the window and yelled, "Get up! Get up!" I kept knocking and yelling for half a minute — a very long half a minute —

until finally he woke up. (He called me five days later and left me a message: "I remember how you woke me up when I was sleeping. It is in your zechut that I am still alive. You saved my life, and I want you to know…I have three children…")

The moment I saw he was awake, we continued running to our car. We jumped inside, and I started driving away from the party. As we drove, my wife saw two pickup trucks, one black, the other white, and each had about eight terrorists standing on the truck bed. I looked at the terrorists just as they aimed their weapons at us and started shooting. I pushed my wife's head down below the window and, lowering my own head, I continued driving, all the while screaming, "Shema Yisrael…!" That scream was strong and loud — I don't even know where it came from.

Meanwhile, the terrorists were shooting at us, and I was driving. I remember looking up for a second and seeing the bullets coming from every direction, but none of them hit us. A few seconds later, I raised my head, and I looked in the rearview mirror, watching as two pickup trucks turned left in the direction of the party. I kept on driving.

I drove past Ofakim and didn't stop until we arrived in Beer Sheva. At that moment, a rocket landed, and a house nearby went up in flames.

I find myself asking Hashem, "Who am I? And what do You want from me?" Because of everything we went through and the miracles that happened to us, we have decided — me, my wife, and our children — to start keeping Shabbos.

And I feel that all of us need to work on our emunah, our tefillah, and our shemiras Shabbos. All of us need to pray to Hashem to redeem us from this galus. But most of all, we need to remember that Am Yisrael is strong when Am Yisrael is united.

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From our Sages

וַיְהִי הֶעָנָן וְהַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיָּאֶר אֶת־הַלָּיְלָה – *'There was the cloud and darkness, and it illuminated the night.' (14:20)*

The column, which travelled before the Israelite camp as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, moved to interpose between the two camps and to protect the Israelites from the Egyptians. It now was a "cloud and darkness" for the Egyptians while "illuminating the night" for the Israelites. (**Rashi**)

According to the natural order of the world, can a person who lights a candle say, "So-and-so, who is my friend, may use the light, while so-and-so, who is my enemy, may not"?

But G-d is not so confined. . . . His cloud produced light for Israel and darkness for Egypt. (**Midrash Tehillim**)

וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם – *'They could not drink of the waters of Marah, because they were bitter.' (15:23)*

Because **they**—the children of Israel—were bitter, everything they tasted was bitter to them.

כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפְאֶךָ – *'All the diseases which I have brought upon Egypt, I shall not bring upon you, for I am G-d your healer.' (15:26)*

I shall never afflict you with the intent to merely punish, as I did the Egyptians. Rather, "I am G-d your healer"—if I do cause you suffering, it is only to a positive end, like a doctor who may at times cause pain to his patient in order to heal him. (**Malbim**)



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

● Why did Pharaoh pursue Yisrael?

וְאָמַר פַּרְעֹה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְבֻכִים הֵם בָּאָרֶץ סָגַר עֲלֵיהֶם הַמִּדְבָּר. וְחִזַּקְתִּי אֶת־לֵב־ פַּרְעֹה וְרָדַף אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאִכָּבְדָה בְּפַרְעֹה וּבְכָל־חֵילוֹ וְיֵדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי ה׳ (14:3,4) "***And Pharaoh will say about the children of Yisrael: They are trapped in the land. The wilderness has closed in on them. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will be glorified through Pharaoh and through his entire army, and Egypt will know that I am Hashem***."

Hashem is showing Yisrael here how He has the ability to turn a person's heart to do anything that He desires. Because normally when one is considering pursuing his servant, only if he sees that his servant could be successful in his flight will he make every effort to pursue him in order to catch him. But if he understands that his servant cannot flee, and on the contrary, he must come back, what is the point of pursuing him? In any case, he has to come back and appease his master.

So too here. Granted if Pharaoh had heard that Yisrael were fleeing, and they had the ability to successfully flee, that he should pursue them in order to catch them. But since Pharaoh himself said that "they are trapped in the land, the wilderness has closed in on them", and it is impossible for them to escape, if so, why should he pursue them? Yet, nevertheless, Hashem hardened his heart to pursue them. From this is clearly seen that Hashem can turn a person's heart, as it says in Yeshayohu 44:25 "He turns the wise backwards, and makes their knowledge foolish".

This is what the posuk is saying: "And Pharaoh will say about the children of Yisrael: They are trapped in the land. The wilderness has

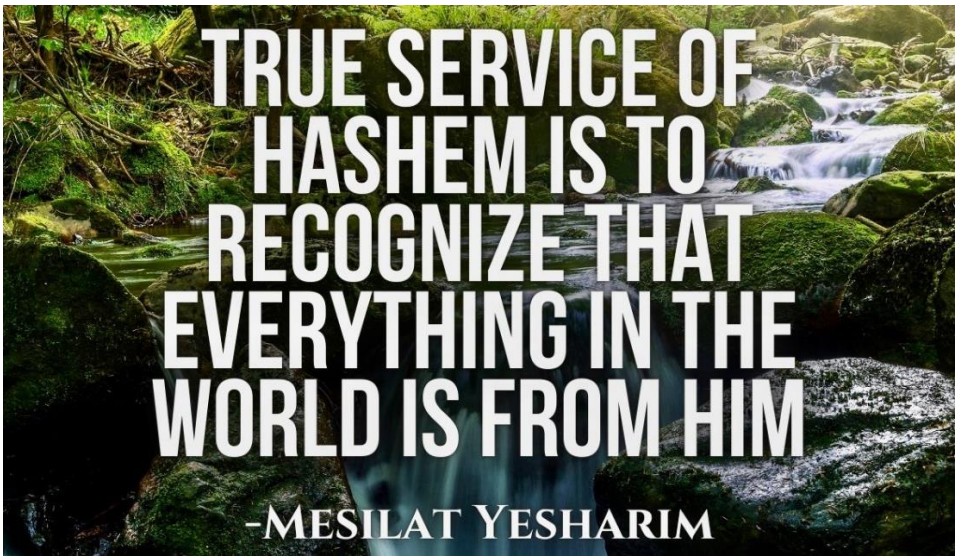
closed in on them". And nevertheless, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them", and therefore, "Egypt will know that I am Hashem", and can turn a person's heart as I wish.

● **Why did the Egyptians agree to go with Pharaoh?**



וַיֶּאְסֹ֥ר אֶת־רִכְבּ֖וֹ וְאֶת־עַמּ֥וֹ לָקַ֖ח עִמּֽוֹ (14,6) "***So he harnessed his chariot and took his people with him.***"

Because he was very zealous in the matter and harnessed his chariot himself, which is something that is not normal for a king to do, it caused all of his people to have pity on him. This what the posuk is saying, "he harnessed his chariot, and took his people with him" - by his action of harnessing his own chariot he took the hearts of his people to be with him and listen to his counsel, and to do whatever he desired.





◣ Emulating The Leader - Toras Hamoreh V'hatalmid

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ - "***And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt. Moshe took Yosef's bones with him.***" (13:18- 19)

The Hebrew term **עַצְמוֹת** (remains; lit., "bones") is related to atzmius, the Hebrew for "essence" or "(good) character traits." - Hence, the pasuk can be interpreted to mean that Moshe took "with him" the good qualities of Yosef, learning from Yosef's example how to lead a people and satisfy them in times of hunger.

◣ Protected By the Righteous - Chasam Sofer

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ - "***And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt. Moshe took Yosef's bones with him.***" (13:18- 19)

The Jews went armed. - What were their weapons?

Yosef's remains, which they took with them, for a righteous man's merit serves as a shield for his people and "the righteous are even greater in death than they were in life."

"Every word that we speak in prayer is a priceless seed entrusted in the hands of Hashem for safekeeping. The day will come when it brings forth the most generous harvest." ~ R' Shimshon Pincus.

◣ Know Your Strength - Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz

וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם נֹסֵעַ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּירְאוּ מְאֹד - "***Behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened***..." (14:10)

The same principle applies to each person in his battle against the evil inclination. If a person views himself as inferior and feels excessive guilt, he will not even try to fight against his negative impulses. Since he does not believe in himself and his abilities, he feels utterly discouraged.

Our task is to internalize that you have great potential. Be aware of your strengths and know that when you are resolved to be victorious over your impulses, you will succeed.

◣ Daily Miracles - Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל ה' - "...***and the children of Israel cried out to G-d***." (14:10)

There are different types of miracles that Hashem performs for the Jews. One type occurs when the Jews cry out in prayer and supplication, as at the Yam Suf. Then there are miracles that are performed without the Jews' knowledge. They are not aware of the problem and do not plead or cry out. It is not until after the catastrophe that the realization comes that Hashem has performed a miracle. - These miracles are daily occurrences!

◣ Moment Of Silence - Reb Dovid of Chernobyl

"***G-d will fight for you, and you shall remain silent***." (14:14)

This is a reference to our decorum in Shul. G-d will do battle with Satan for you on the condition that, at the time for prayer, in Shul, you will conduct yourselves properly and not speak unnecessarily.

◣ Hashem Is Ready To Help - Kozhnitzer Rebbe

מַה־תִּצְעַק אֵלָי - "*Why do you cry out to Me?*" (14:15)

The first letters of the Hebrew words spell out the word emes, "truth." - Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me?" - you know the truth that I am ready to help. "Speak unto the Children of Israel" - ask them if they are ready to help themselves, and salvation will automatically come to them.

◣ Recognizing Miracles - Reb Elimelech Lizhensk

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה - "*And Bnei Yisrael came within the sea on dry land*..." (14:22)



People are impressed only when they see clearly miraculous events. They fail to realize that nature itself is an astonishing miracle in which they can daily witness the greatness of the Guide and Creator of the universe. - Only when we are confronted with an obviously supernatural event do we realize that the providence and the miracles of G-d are present in everyday nature that we are so inclined to take for granted.

This is the interpretation of the above-cited pasuk: As for "the Children of Israel," when they experienced the miracle that they could walk through the sea as on dry land they became aware that they "walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea," - that even if they had been walking on dry land it would have been no less a miracle than if they had been walking through the sea.

◣ Believe In Yourself - Reb Tzadok Hakohen

וַיַּ֤רְא יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶת־הַיָּ֣ד הַגְּדֹלָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר עָשָׂ֖ה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַ֑יִם וַיִּירְא֤וּ הָעָם֙ אֶת־ה׳ וַיַּֽאֲמִינ֣וּ בַּה׳ וּבְמֹשֶׁ֖ה עַבְדּֽוֹ - "*Israel saw... and they believed in G-d and Moshe His servant*." (14:31)

Just as a person is obligated to believe in Hashem, so must he believe in himself.

◣ Believing Is Greater Than Seeing - Chiddushei Harim

וַיַּ֤רְא יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ אֶת־הַיָּ֣ד הַגְּדֹלָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר עָשָׂ֖ה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַ֑יִם וַיִּירְא֤וּ הָעָם֙ אֶת־ה׳ וַיַּֽאֲמִינ֣וּ בַּה׳ וּבְמֹשֶׁ֖ה עַבְדּֽוֹ - "*Israel saw... and they believed in G-d and Moshe His servant*." (14:31)

Even though Bnei Yisrael saw all the miracles that G-d performed, they still needed faith. - True faith is greater than an actual observation of miracles, for with the power of faith one can see what the eyes do not!

◣ Becoming An Abode - Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch

זֶ֥ה אֵ-לִ֖י וְאַנְוֵ֑הוּ - "*This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him*..." (15:2)

An alternative rendering is "This is my G-d, and I will make Him an **abode**" (the Hebrew verb anvehu - "And I will glorify Him" - is related to the noun naveh - "abode").

This means: I will make an abode for Him within my own being; I will sanctify and purify myself so that my body may become a dwelling place for the Holy Presence.

"Life is full of challenges, but we must always remember that with Emunah and perseverance, we can overcome anything." ~ Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky.

◣ Humbly Abiding - Reb Yisrael Of Ruzhin

שְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחְתָּיו אַל־יֵצֵא אִישׁ מִמְּקֹמוֹ - "*...let every man abide in his place*..." (16:29) - An alternative rendering of this passage is: "...let every man abide below his place..." (tachtov - "in his place"; lit., "under him").

This means that it is important that one sit in a place lower than his true entitlement. And "let no man go out of his place"; under no circumstances may one sit in a place higher than the one that is rightfully due him.

◣ Strengthening The Leader - Sefas Emes

וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגָבַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַאֲשֶׁר יָנִיחַ יָדוֹ וְגָבַר עֲמָלֵק - "***And it came to pass when Moshe held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed***." (17:11)

But could Moshe's hand wage a battle or lose a battle?

This teaches us that whenever the Jews looked up and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed, but if not, they fell. (Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 29a)

If Moshe knew that the Jews would prevail only as long as he held up his hand, why did he ever put his hand down?

Moshe's hand was only as strong as his people were steadfast. Whenever the Jews turned their hearts to their Father in Heaven, Moshe's hand was strengthened (הָיוּ מִתְגַּבְּרִים-"they prevailed", referring not to the Jews but to Moshe's hands). Then Moshe would be able to continue holding up his hand. But whenever the Jews turned their hearts away from Hashem, Moshe's hand dropped.

This teaches us that the repentance and high resolve of a people give strength to their leader, enabling him to act and pray to bring them victory and salvation.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner



Alon Paz, is totally paralysed from the neck down. He has a small round silver sticker on his nose. On his computer there is a small camera which is able to focus on the sliver sticker and pick up the rays from that sticker which are reflected to the computer. Consequently, through moving his nose left and right, or up and down he is able to work his computer, write articles, read divrei Torah and answer the people that correspond with him. He is also able to talk on his cellular phone equipped with a special earphone and mouthpiece.

You may think that Alon is a bitter person and filled with self-pity. On the contrary, he is happy and considers his situation as just perfect for him. Here is a description of his life and feelings, in his own words.

"Shalom, my name is Alon Paz and I am 38 (this was written in 2015). Until 6 years ago, I lived in the city of Hod Hasharon (south of Kfar Saba). I was born with a disability in my legs, still I was able to function independently; I could walk a bit, drive (specially designed disability car), write and even eat well, Boruch Hashem. Six years ago, I was involved in a serious accident, which left me totally paralyzed in all parts of my body. My diaphragm was damaged as well, so I am connected to a respirator.

Today, I am in the Bais Rivka Geriatric Hospital in Petach Tikva. As a result of the accident my Emunah has become strengthened even more. Today, I pass my time through learning Torah with Rabbonim

and other good people that come to visit me; some come regularly. I lie in my private room and almost never leave it. I keep myself busy with tefillos and learning most of the time.

Now I will describe to you the way I am able to deal with my situation. The strength I draw is from Emunah which keeps me strong and gives me the will to live and to keep going. I hope that you, dear reader, will become strengthened from my words and that will strengthen others too.

An average person, when the smallest thing happens to him, he immediately says or screams, "Why Borei Olam? Why me? Why do I deserve this? What did I do?"

From the time of the accident until today I do not remember saying "Why." There is only one word that I say everyday, and that is, Thank You! Thank you Borei Olam! If this is what You, Borei Olam, has chosen for me, who am I to complain and cry and even get angry at You. Only You know what is best for me. Your ways are hidden, but Your actions are wondrous. Everything is for the good. You are the Creator and I have been created by You.

He is the Father and I am his son. He is the King and I am his servant. He is the Commander and I have been commanded. I accept His reign upon me each night and each day with all my body and soul. He is the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed be He. He created and formed everything. He is the only one and there is no one that is second to Him. He is the Echod Ya'chid U'Me'yuchad, Master of the worlds. He is the one that created and is responsible for everything. He is more powerful than anything and everything. He can do to me whatever He fancies and who am I to try and oppose Him. I rely on His decisions and all His actions absolutely.

A person must understand that Hashem is the Master of the world, and there is nothing that happens by chance. Things are heavenly designed, and one has to accept everything with trust, with love, with happiness.

Just like one knows to say thank you to Him when things are going well, one also has to say thank you when it seems that things are not so good, as well. Better to tolerate, to be in pain, to suffer, in order to become cleansed, to be repaired and become pure, and to have our transgressions wiped away in this world than in the next world. In this way we can reach our ultimate resting place right away when we come to the world above, after 120.

Today I live in a small room like I am in a box of matches, chained to my bed and attached to a respirator. I can't see the ground or the sky, its just me and the four walls. But I know I am not missing a thing from the outside world. The big city, the big country, the big world, because I know that outside, it's all-material stuff, desires, vanity and worthlessness. I lie in this bed alone with the Creator of the world; I speak to Him, I daven to him, for myself, for my family and for all the children of Israel. I know that the day will come after 120 years, I will get 1000 times more, even a million times more than what I got here in this world. I am not missing out on a thing, to the contrary, the fact that I am in this situation is not unfortunate but is a privilege. To atone for the sins of Klal Yisroel, what can be better than that?

Today, I understand something that is hard for a healthy person to understand. The body is secondary. As long as the heart is beating, the head is working, the eyes are seeing, the ears are hearing, the mouth eats and can speak, the neshomo becomes uplifted, what do I need more than that?

I don't need anything more because I know that this world is temporary. My Father in heaven, the Holy One blessed be He, watches, supervises and takes care of anything for me. Like it says in Tehillim – 'Hashem is my shepherd and I shall not lack.' - Boruch Hashem, I am happy with who I am, what I am and how I am. I have no complaints to the Creator but only thanks. I am very fortunate.

Have you ever appreciated your body? The small finger on your hand? When your nose itches, or your ear, or a different place. You pick up your hand and scratch right away. When my nose itches me or my ear or a different limb, I have to tolerate it for many long minutes under the best circumstances. When is the last time you appreciated the palm of your hand? When your thirsty you can take a cup, fill it with water and then you can place it to your mouth and take a drink. Have you ever thought about and appreciated your muscles and bones which through them you can move your hand? I can't move a finger. I have to ask for help from others so that they can give me a drink, give to eat or scratch my back. I can't do anything.

So, say to the Creator of the world, Borei Olam, Thank You for our hands, thank You that I can do what I want, how I want, when I want, the way I want, Thank You Borei Olam.

Have you ever appreciated your feet? The pair of feet that carries and supports tens of kilograms. You stand at the bottom of the stairs, and as you walk up a few flights, do you say to yourself, "Oy – I have to walk up so much." You get lazy.

Tell the Borei Olam, thank You for healthy feet, that you can walk upstairs. There are handicapped or elderly people that they go up one step and then another step, it takes a long time, but younger people can skip up without problem. When you reach the top, tell the Borei Olam, thank You for the healthy feet, and thank You that you are able to climb up to this floor. It is not to be taken for granted.

Thank You that You give me the ability to take showers, to be clean and to get dressed.

There are people that are not able to do so by themselves, and have to be showered in bed, like me. I lie on a bed attached to a respirator, in a small room and I almost never leave it. I do not see what is going on outside. You my friend, go stand next to the window,

look outside, breath in the air and tell the Borei Olam, thank You Borei Olam, thank You that I can breathe on my own, see the sky, see the sun, see the moon and the stars, see the clouds, see the birds, see the trees, the flowers and the grass, and I can experience the wonders of the creation. "

Good Shabbos

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



Torah and Work

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח צִנְצֶנֶת אַחַת וְתֶן־שָׁמָּה מְלֹא־הָעֹמֶר מָן וְהַנַּח אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי ה' לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם - *"Take one jar and put a full omer of manna into it …"* (16:33)

Moshe instructed Aharon to take one portion of manna and place it in the Aron (Ark) next to the Sefer Torah. This served as an eternal reminder of Hashem's love for His people and how He sustained them in the wilderness for forty years.

Rabbeinu Bachya (16:33) deduces an additional insight from this pasuk. The manna was placed right next to the Sefer Torah to symbolize that when a person chooses a profession with which to support himself and his family, it should preferably be one that will keep him close to Torah.

Hagaon Harav Avraham Pam zt"l said over an important lesson that can be learnt from here. A person's place of employment, office surroundings, and coworkers often put him in a situation that is

antithetical to Torah. He feels he has no choice if he wants to advance in his career and earn a comfortable salary.

Therefore, based on the words of Rabbeinu Bachya, Rav Pam explains that we can learn that it is worthwhile for a person to accept a lower-paying job with less opportunity for professional and financial advancement and remain in the wholesome, pristine atmosphere of Torah rather than a higher-paying one in the decadent atmosphere that often permeates the "outside" world's offices today.

On a side note, we are also influenced by our friends. It is crucial to keep a distance from someone who has a negative influence on you even if it means some personal loss.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

Learn Even Ha'ezer

A rosh kollel in Elad related the following episode: A young avreich by the name of Yosef attends our Friday-Shabbos kollel on a weekly basis. During the last zman, we learned perek "Be'mah ishah yotzeis" in Maseches Shabbos, in which the Gemara presents assorted remedies to various illnesses, many of which are not practical in this day and age.

I told my avreichim: "Many of these methods may seem unfeasible today, yet without a doubt, spiritual activities can have manifest effects on the physical body." I proceeded to relate an example that had transpired not a thousand years ago, or even a century ago, but in contemporary times to a member of our very own kollel.

Only several months ago, I was approached by an avreich who complained of terrible stomach pains. Diagnostic testing had revealed that he was suffering from a large kidney stone, but the exact position of the stone neutralized the possibility of treatment as it

would put other vital organs at risk, and the doctors strongly recommended that he endure the pain for several more weeks until the stone moved to a place where they could treat it safely.

The patient accepted the doctor's advice, yet as the hours and days progressed, the pain grew intolerable; there were days when he could hardly function. One day, I noticed the avreich writhing in pain in his seat, and I approached in concern and asked if he needed help.

Grunting in attempt to swallow the excruciating pain, he explained his diagnosis and the doctor's recommendation that he wait days or weeks until the stone shifted.

"Did you ask Rav Chaim?" The man shook his head, and I advised him to write a detailed letter to Rav Chaim Kanievsky containing a clear explanation of the medical response he'd received and fax it to the gadol hador without delay.

Shortly after sending the letter, a three-word reply arrived by fax.

"Learn Even Ha'ezer."

This exchange occurred on a Thursday, and the following morning, Friday, the avreich showed me the fax with Rav Chaim's succinct reponse.

"Learn Even Ha'ezer?" the avreich wondered sceptically. "How will that help?"

"Baruch Hashem! If this is what Rav Chaim ruled, then this is what you should do," I said firmly, encouraging him with the belief that surely his refuah would not be long in coming.

Little did I realize just how soon it would be.

After an agonizing Shabbos, the avreich sat down to learn. Instead of reaching naturally for his regular Gemara, he chose a volume of Shulchan Aruch that he seldom used in his house and proceeded to open the sefer to the first page of Even Ha'ezer.

A half-hour later, as he was getting into the flow of the learning, he felt a sharp spasm of pain shoot through his stomach, and he doubled over in pain. Within the hour, the stone exited his system naturally.

Two weeks later, he returned to the doctor for a series of tests and scans. Studying the scans and comparing them with previous ones, the doctor shook his head in disbelief.

"It's a miracle!" he announced. "The area is completely clean!"

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



● Bread from the Heavens

Now that's a new idea to most people – to talk about the mann?! Yes! We're expected to be aware constantly of the mann that our fathers ate in the wilderness. Actually, one of the most important reasons the mann fell was so that we should talk about it!

הוֹדוּ לַה' קִרְאוּ בִשְׁמוֹ הוֹדִיעוּ בָעַמִּים עֲלִילוֹתָיו; Praise Hashem, proclaim in His name, and make His deeds known among the people. – Every day we say it. It means that Hashem's miracles are given to us primarily for the purpose so that we should constantly reiterate them in our minds. And not only to think about them, but we should speak about them as well. We're expected to speak about the wonders that

Hakadosh Baruch Hu did. קִרְאוּ בִּשְׁמוֹ means "Call out in His name." To whom should you call out? Anybody who will listen!

Did you ever stop and speak to your neighbor about how Hashem sent us food every day for forty years? Almost fifteen thousand days of Mann! You're embarrassed to talk to your neighbor about it?! So speak about it with your wife! At least to your children you should speak about it! It's so important to speak about how Hakadosh Baruch Hu fed our forefathers for forty years with food from the sky, that you should search out people who are willing to listen.

The truth is, every time you see a piece of bread, you should have a picture of the mann in your head. Why not? Bread is no less a miracle than the mann, absolutely! How does bread come out of the earth? It's a neis. I'll tell you what I think – I think it's more of a neis than the mann that fell in the midbar! At least the mann came down from the sky! Why shouldn't it fall from the sky?! But that wheat should come out of the earth?! Nobody can really explain it. That large stalks of wheat should grow out of dirt?! It's a neis!

Nissei nissim! From some earth and some air and a little bit of sunshine, bread is created. How does air become bread? It's a neis. Carbon dioxide in the air combines with the sunshine. Sunshine?! Yes, we're eating sunshine when we eat bread. That's what it is. Sunshine mixes with the carbon dioxide, and with some water and chlorophyll – the green part of the plant — and it combines to make starch. That starch is the wheat — that's the bread. It comes out of thin air! That's what your bread is.

● Learning from Others

Hashem is saying, "You remember the plagues that you saw in Mitzrayim, all the sicknesses and trouble I brought on the Egyptians? If you keep My Torah you won't have to suffer from dam and tzfardeia and kinnim. Wild animals and boils and hail and everything else you saw, lo asim alecha – I won't bring it upon you." But the question is why should He bring it upon us? We're not

afflicting any of our slaves. We're not making them work b'chomer u'vilvainim. We're not throwing the children into the river. It was the Mitzrim who were the persecutors, and they deserved everything they got, but what's that got to do with us?

So we'll explain as follows:

We're learning now that the troubles that came on Mitzrayim were not for Mitzrayim! Of course that they were; the Mitzrim had to be punished, no question about it. But it's not the Egyptians that concerns Hashem most. The Am Yisroel, that's who Hashem is thinking about always; we're the ones who still look in the Chumash; we're the ones after thousands of years are still studying the makkos, and that means that they were brought primarily for us! And what we're learning now is that one of the most important functions of the makkos was to impress a fear upon the Am Yisroel, a fear of the strong Hand of Hashem that the nation would study and remember forever.

● Emulating Him

Now, when our forefathers stood at the other side of the Yam Suf and witnessed this unequalled spectacle, a tremendous excitement seized them. They were electrified by what took place, they were exhilarated by the tremendous experience of being snatched from the jaws of death by the Hand of Hashem. And in their gratitude they stood up together and sang shirah to Hashem.

At that time they took upon themselves an oath, and they swore to Hashem as follows: **זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ** -This is my Hashem and I am going to beautify Him." Naveh means beautiful and v'anveihu, means 'I will make Him beautiful.'

Now, the plain meaning of course is that "We're going to spend the rest of our history talking about the greatness of Hakadosh Baruch Hu". And so you know now one of our most important jobs in this world — we have to praise Hashem. We should always think and

always talk about Hakodosh Boruch Hu to ourselves and to everybody else. That's what the promise was: זֶה אֵלִי וְאַנְוֵהוּ!

But we're going to see now a different explanation of the oath that we took to glorify the Name of Hashem, אַנְוֵהוּ can be read like this: **אני והוא** - "I and He." It means, "I am going to be like Him." It's a fact of human nature that when you look up to somebody, when you admire somebody, you tend to imitate that person. And so, you want to fulfill your promise of v'anveihu, of making Him beautiful and great? The best way is ani v'Hu! I and Him! I'm going to be like Him.

Perfecting our character means we're fulfilling the oath that the Am Yisroel made to Hashem on that day He saved us from destruction. And that's why the subject of transformation of character among Jews is one of the major forms of avodas Hashem. It's because you're becoming something, a me'ein of the middos of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

● Gifts of Shabbos

The fact that the Jew is forced to be together on Shabbos with his family, is a blessing that is immeasurable – only that we're so accustomed to it, that we forget to appreciate it. We become oblivious to the blessings of family that Shabbos brings. Shabbos makes the family an organization. Everyone comes together; the father sits at the head of the table and near him sits the queen and all the children, the princes and princesses, sit around the table. You see your children. You can talk to them. They have a certain responsibility towards you. It's a real family.

Now, that family unit is of most precious importance to us because happiness in our lives is usually measured in terms of family nachas. It's so important to preserve the family, to be together at all times, and build that family unit of kindness and warmth and camaraderie. And that's what the Shabbos gives among its many blessings. But it's not merely the blessing of the immediate family; Shabbos is a day when the Am Yisroel becomes a family again. Shabbos is for the

community too because it's a day when you can associate with your friends in the beis haknesses or in the yeshivah. Shabbos causes Jews to be identified with their community. Look at the irreligious Jews lehavdil. They're not identified. They're lost. Each one is an orphan. They don't have friends. They make friends casually; they'll see each other here and there by accident. But Shabbos means that you have a community. Whether you're this community or that community, you belong to a group of people. It's your address.

These people, many times, help out in a time of need. Many times they supply friendship to you. People ask where you were last week and they hear that something happened and people sympathize. Many people have been rescued from business disasters by their friends in the synagogue. People come together and to a certain extent they are all one family. When there's some problem for the Jewish nation or for the local people, they make it their business to solve it on Shabbos.

Rabbi Jeremy Golker - Shabbos Shira and Techiyas Hameisim

Shabbos Shirah. This sedra contains the Shirah. The pasuk says 15:1 **אָז יָשִׁיר מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר**

אָז יָשִׁיר is in the future tense. Why is Moshe Rabbeinu describing this song in the future tense – They're singing it now?

So, Rashi tells us - **אָז כְּשֶׁרָאָה הַנֵּס עָלָה בְלִבּוֹ שֶׁיְּשִׁיר שִׁירָה** – '*Then, when Moshe saw the miracle, it occurred to him to recite a song.*' Says Rashi, **זֶהוּ לְיַשֵּׁב פְּשׁוּטוֹ** – '*This is to explain its simple meaning.*' **אֲבָל מִדְרָשׁוֹ אָמְרוּ מִכָּאן רֶמֶז לִתְחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים מִן הַתּוֹרָה** – '*From here is an allusion from the Torah to the resurrection of the dead.*' – This means that any souls that have already departed, will also sing.

This Rashi is very powerful. It was said over by the 4th Belzer Rebbe – **R' Aharon Rokeach** in 1944 (1880 – 1957). He suffered immensely

during the war years, although he managed to escape Europe to Eretz Yisrael, his wife and children were killed. The first Shabbos after he arrived in Haifa, in 1944, it was Shabbos Parshas Beshalach.



Belz chassidus in those days was not what it is now. The Holocaust had almost entirely wiped this thriving chassidus off the map. - The Rebbe was giving chizuk to a handful of Belzer survivors at his Friday night *tish*. The Rebbe sensed that the people around him were not in the right frame of mind to have a joyous tish of singing and sharing stories and divrei Torah.

So R' Aharon Rokeach mentioned this Rashi, and he said something fascinating: Earlier in the parsha, the pasuk says **וחמשים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים - אחד מחמשה יצאו, חֲמֻשִׁים - וארבעה חלקים מתו בשלשת ימי אפילה (רש"י) (יג,יח)** means "divided by five," [meaning] that one out of five of them went out, and four fifths died during the three days of darkness.

If you do the maths, [600,000 men between the ages of 20-60, and an equivalent number of women, children under the age of 20, and people over the age of 60 – you are easily talking about a nation of 2-3 million people! So if 3 million people came out of Egypt, this means that approx. 12 million didn't!

Everyone that came out, ultimately knew people that didn't make it. So when they arrived at the other side of the Yam Suf, they were also not in the spirit and mood to start singing Shirah. So, Moshe Rabbeinu tells them now, "Don't worry, the Jewish story is defined not just by the past, but the future too, with all the souls that have already departed. And all those souls who have not survived, will

merit to re-live again at **תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים**. - **אָז יָשִׁיר** was a remez to **תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים**. It was an effort of Moshe Rabbeinu to inspire and rejuvenate the spirit of Klal Yisrael who had emerged from Egypt.

The sound of silence



The Shirah is written in the Torah, namely, **אָרִיחַ עַל גַּבֵּי לְבֵנָה**, "***brick on top of brick.***" **מגילה טז:** - This is a reference to the way in which the text is written in the Sefer Torah. Rather than in straight long columns, it is written, "A half brick above a whole brick."

A half brick refers to the written part of the song, and the whole brick refers to the blank space which is twice the size of the written part. This format is followed throughout the Shirah. Thus, the Shabbos is given a special name, due to its uniqueness as evinced in the way it is written out in the Torah. If it is not written like this, the Sefer Torah is pasul.

What do these gaps represent?

Dayan Ehrentreu said the following magnificent idea: The Shirah is a song of praise to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. But sometimes a person feels so overwhelmed, that sometimes there are no words found to articulate the way a person really feels. - The gaps represent those feelings that simply cannot be put into words. (Sometimes, silence is golden).

In the book 'Tales from Jerusalem' by **Rabbi Emanuel Feldman**, he describes how he was once in Yerushalyim for Yom Kippur. The chazan who was davening Neilah committed a crime... – No, he didn't finish late,- he finished five minutes early! So what did they do for these five minutes? Have a drosho? Say Tehillim? – No, they all remained standing where they were, in complete silence! Not a pin

drop was heard! They remained rooted in their other worldly quietness.

He said that the silence was much louder and more powerful than all the tefillos that had come previously that day. - Sometimes silence can be very powerful. And that's what the gaps in the Shirah represent. Feelings that words simply cannot express.

Rav Moshe Shapiro once gave a chaburah to a group of elite talmidei chachomim. One person used to record the shiur. This time he came along with a new contraption – A voice activated tape-recorder. He put it in front of Reb Moshe who noticed that it was a new device. So, he asked the fellow, "What is this?"

So, the fellow said, "It's a new state of the art tape recorder that is voice activated. It only records when you speak – it stops recording when you pause or stop talking."

Reb Moshe said to him, "Then you will be missing the main part of the shiur – the pauses/silences!"

And this is what it says in Pirkei Avos - **(פרקי אבות פרק א משנה יז)**

שִׁמְעוֹן בְּנוֹ אוֹמֵר, כָּל יָמַי גָּדַלְתִּי בֵּין הַחֲכָמִים, וְלֹא מָצָאתִי לַגּוּף טוֹב אֶלָּא שְׁתִיקָה – *'Shimon, his son, used to say: all my days I grew up among the sages, and I have found nothing better for a person than silence.'*

"In times of worry and uncertainty, seek the warmth of others. Together, we can light a fire of hope and strengthen one another's hearts. ~ Piaseczner Rebbe, Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira (1889-1943).

"Do not fear the climb; the steeper the mountain, the more beautiful the view." ~ The Ishbitzer, Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner (1801-1854)

The Test of The לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמָיִם

The pasuk says **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמָיִם וְיָצָא הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ דְּבַר יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנַסֶּנּוּ הֲיֵלֵךְ בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם לֹא** – '***So Hashem said to Moshe, Behold! I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven, and the people shall go out and gather what is needed for the day, <u>so that I can test them</u>, whether or not they will follow My teaching***.' 16:4

What exactly was the test of the Mann?

Rashi says **אִם יִשְׁמְרוּ מִצְוֹת הַתְּלוּיוֹת בּוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא יוֹתִירוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא יֵצְאוּ בַּשַּׁבָּת לְלְקֹט** – '*Whether they will keep the commandments contingent upon it, [i.e.,] that they will not leave any of it over, and that they will not go out on the Shabbos to gather [the manna].*'

The **רמב"ן** does not agree. He says it is a much broader and general test: **נסיון הוא להם שלא היה בידם מזון, ולא יראו להם עצה במדבר רק המן, שלא ידעו מתחלה, ולא שמעו מאבותם, ויורד להם דבר יום ביומו וירעיבו אליו, ועם כל זה שמעו ללכת אחרי השם לא מקום לחם** - '*The Yidden didn't have any real food in the midbar aside from the Mann. They had never seen this material before, and they would depend on it exclusively for food. So they had to rely on and have bitachon in Hashem.*'

The **אור החיים** gives an unbelievable answer: What was the test of the Mann - **כי לחם מן השמים לא יצטרך שום תיקון ובזה לְמַעַן אֲנַסֶּנּוּ ??** - **יהיו פנוים מכל ואראה הילך וגו'** – This was custom made food ready to eat. There was no shopping, preparation or cooking required. It was ready to go. And therefore, the Yidden had lots of free time. They didn't even have to do laundry etc. Everything was supplied 'on a plate'!

The test was – 'How are you going to use that free time?!

And of course, it has resonance today. 'How do you use your leisure time?

A Question of Perspective



As the Yidden emerge on the other side of the Yam Suf, the pasuk says **וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה, כִּי מָרִים הֵם** – ***'They came to Marah, but they could not drink water from Marah because it was bitter; therefore, it was named Marah.'*** 15:23

The Kotztker Rebbe says something fascinating: **'כִּי מָרִים הֵם *because it was bitter'*** – doesn't refer to the waters, but to the people themselves who complained – they were bitter people! When one looks at life through a bitter prism, then everything appears bitter. - It's all a question of perspective.

This Shabbos is of course called Shabbos Shirah. There is a minhag to feed the birds. See **ערוך השולחן** for further discussion on this matter. (**אורח חיים סימן שכד סעיף ג**)

What happened? Dasan and Aviram – '*our perennial troublemakers*' wanted to get Moshe Rabbeinu into trouble by showing him up. Moshe said that no mann is going to fall on Shabbos. Therefore, there would be a double portion on erev Shabbos instead. Dasan and Aviram decided to disprove this by saving some of the Friday mann and early on Shabbos morning they sprinkled it around the camp to be found the next morning. - The birds ate this mann which thwarted their plan in their attempt to discredit Moshe Rabbeinu.

As a reward to the birds for all generations, we feed them bread on Shabbos Shirah.

I just want to make one observation… - When the birds ate the mann, they ate it because birds like eating – they didn't know that they

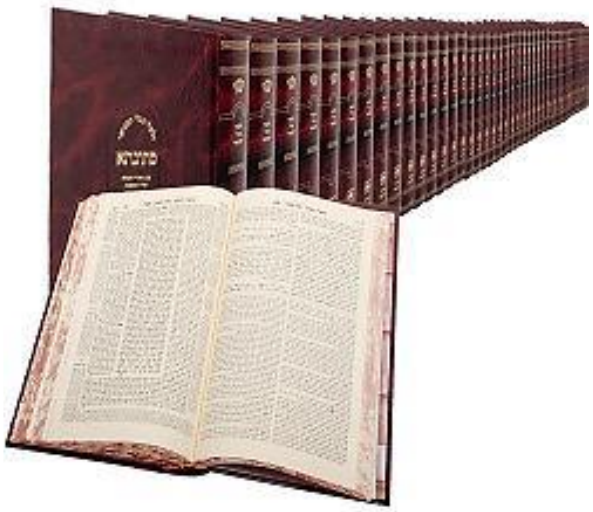
were doing anything special – So why do we reward them if this is something they do naturally?

The answer is - It's all a question of perspective. We must be grateful – regardless of the motives of the benefactor. The recipient must be grateful for what he has benefitted. This is what Hakaros Hatov is – Appreciating the good.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Holocaust Memorial and Gargantuan Gemara





Peter Eisenman, a secular Jewish architect, was the architect behind the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin which opened in 2005. The €25 million ($29.25 million) project includes a grid of 2,711 concrete slabs.

What is so significant about 2,711? This is the number of pages in all of gemara, Shas Bavli. This was Divinely orchestrated as the number 2,711 was not Eisenman's intention as is shown in the following conversation between R' Josh Spinner and Peter Eisenman which took place in 2005.

R' Spinner: "Does the number of columns have any significance for you?" He replied that the number was not only incidental, but

accidental. He had planned and hoped for much higher a number, but it was reduced to approximately 2,700 due to various considerations. And 2,711 (concrete slabs) happened to be the final number. "Mr. Eisenman, do you know that the Talmud has exactly 2,711 pages?" He stepped back in shock. "Are you sure?" "Yes, sir, I am." "What a story," said the Jewish architect. The Nazis tried to destroy the Torah but that is what keeps us alive.

Reb Yoel R. On The Parsha

רבי אלעזר מנחם מן שך

וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם - "***And it was when Paro let the people go***." 13:17

The Midrash Yalkut says that Pharoah didn't send Bnei Yisrael away, rather he accompanied them. So when it says in the pasuk that Pharoah sent them out, it means that he accompanied them as well.

What reward was given to Pharoah for this?

The reward given is twofold, the Jews' mitzvah not to cause pain to an Egyptian and the ruling that a third generation Egyptian can marry into the Jewish people.

Question: 1. Pharoah sent them out against his will and only after ten plagues. Did he really deserve a reward?

2. Also, the midrash asks why Bilam said that Hashem took Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim when the pasuk clearly says that Pharoah sent them out of Mitzrayim?

Answer: The midrash answers that Pharoah accompanied the Jews just as Avraham accompanied his guests, and Avraham was rewarded for doing so. **Rav Shach** explains that even though Pharoah was forced to let the Bnei Yisrael out, he also accompanied them.

We cannot forget Pharoah's positive act of accompanying us just because he did bad as well.

From here we see how exacting Hashem is when He judges a person. As the gemara (Shabbos 32a) says, even if a person has ninety nine accusing malachim against him and one defending malach on his side, Hashem counts the merit of the good malach.

Although Pharoah hardened his heart, he still did a good act, and we cannot leave out praise for this. Therefore, sending Bnei Yisrael out of Mitzrayim is accredited to him. - Every good deed a person does, no matter how small, is worthy of praise.

From here we learn that when we judge a person according to his deeds, we should take into consideration all the details of his personality. If we ignore the person's positive points, we will eventually have to give an accounting ourselves.



The Weekly Vort

וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יָצְאוּ מִן־הָעָם לִלְקֹט וְלֹא מָצָאוּ – *'It happened on the seventh day that some of the people did go out to collect [mann], but they did not find any.'* (16:27)

Why is the expression "but they did not find any" used, implying that there was *mann* but they could not find it? - The *mann* did not fall on Shabbos at all, so the *pasuk* should have read, "but there was not any."

The wording of the *pasuk* can be explained with what is taught in the **Yalkut Shimoni**: When Moshe told Bnei Yisroel to gather a double portion on Friday as the *mann* would not fall on Shabbos, Dasan and Aviram thought of a scheme that would make it appear that Moshe does not speak the truth. They told the people that Moshe was mistaken, and that when they woke up on Shabbos morning, they would see the *mann*.

Dasan and Aviram quietly left their tents early on Shabbos morning and scattered some of their *mann* around the tents of the people.

Hashem, however, sent birds to eat all the *mann* that had been placed around the tents. When the Jews awoke and saw that the *mann* had not descended that day, they immediately declared, "Moshe is truth!" - This is why the *pasuk* states, "but they did not find any," as the people did not find any of the *mann* that Dasan and Aviram said they would find. [**R' Meir Premishlaner**] (**A Shabbos Vort**)



Harav Chaim Kaufman – Targum Yonoson 14:3

Did you know that Dasan and Aviram did not leave Mitzrayim with everybody else?

They heard that they were only going out for three days to serve Hashem. So they said, "Why should we go with them?" – "We'll wait here until they come back.

However, all the Yidden knew that they weren't really going to return after three days. It was only to Pharoah that Moshe said, 'We are going for three days.' But since Dasan and Aviram had big mouths, no Yid wanted to tell them the truth, in case they would go and tell Pharoah.

However, now that they realised that the Yidden weren't coming back, the fled together with Pharoah and caught up with the Yidden!

"The very first step in serving Hashem is knowing how valuable and cherished you truly are. Recognize your greatness and importance in the eyes of the Creator. ~ Rabbeinu Yonah (1180-1263).

Bitter – Sweet

וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם – '***They came to Marah, but they could not drink water from Marah because it was bitter***.' 15:23

וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־ה' וַיּוֹרֵהוּ ה' עֵץ וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶל־הַמַּיִם וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמָּיִם – '***So he cried out to Hashem, and He instructed him concerning a piece of wood, which he cast into the water, and the water became sweet***.' 15:25

Rabbi Yehezkel Abramsky, also affectionately referred to as Reb Chatzkel, explains a beautiful idea in these pesukim: Water actually stands for Torah, as it is said (Yeshayahu 55:1 - **הוֹי כָּל־צָמֵא לְכוּ לַמָּיִם**, '***Ho, all who are thirsty, come for water*** [***Rashi says* תורה**].' The analogy drives home the point that Torah to Jews is as vital as water to humans. They are both indispensable sources of life.

The pesukim can therefore be understood as follows:

וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם – This means that the Yidden learnt Torah, but it felt bitter to them – there was no 'geshmack' in their learning.

So Moshe cried out to Hashem for advice. **וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־ה' וַיּוֹרֵהוּ ה' עֵץ** The advice given to them by Hashem was **וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶל־הַמַּיִם** – Throw yourself into the Torah with as much strength as you can.- And then you will see **וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמָּיִם** – The Torah will be sweet!

Rabbi Moshe Krieger - Yeshivas Bircas Hatorah

וַיֵּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל־הַיָּם... וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם – '***And Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea… and the waters split***.' 14:21

This week's Parsha describes the fantastic miracles which Hashem performed for us at the Reed Sea. There is a famous **Ohr Hachaim** on the Parsha which points out that there is a Midrash which says that when Moshe raised his staff to split the sea, the sea did not

respond to his request at all. The sea reasoned to Moshe that it did not have to listen to him because it was created on the third day of creation, and therefore did not have to take orders from a mere man who was only created on the sixth day of creation. Hashem then descended Himself, so to speak, and stood by Moshe's side. When the sea saw this, it immediately split.

When one peruses through the history of our people, one finds that there were numerous occasions in which nature was changed at the behest of one Tzadik or another. For example, we find that Yehoshua split the Jordan river upon the entrance into Israel. R' Pinchas Ben Yair decreed upon the river of Genoa to part for him and it did. So if it were true that the parting of the Reed sea was an integral condition in its creation, and even with that, it gave Moshe so much trouble before it finally agreed to split, why would it then go and agree to gingerly split for these other holy men?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that the terms that the sea agreed to before it was created, and the rest of nature, were not necessarily to bend their rules for Moshe Rabenu, but rather to bend their rules for the Torah, which was created before the world, and was in fact the blueprint for the world and its natural components, and to be subservient to anyone who had mastered the Torah.

Since the Jews reached the shores of the Reed Sea before the Torah had been given, the sea didn't feel that it was obligated by its agreement to split at that time because Moshe didn't possess the Torah. It therefore held out until it saw that Hashem Himself appeared at Moshe's right hand side, symbolizing that Moshe was going to be given the Torah (which is on the right), at which point the sea realized that it needed to be subservient to Moshe in order to fulfill its original agreement, and immediately split.

We see from this Ohr Hachaim a fascinating principle – that those who master the Torah are empowered with a complete mastery of the natural forces! [When the Ohr Hachaim said that one needs to

have a mastery of the Torah, he wasn't talking about a mere intellectual understanding of the Torah, he was referring to a person who imbues the Torah in his very being!]

The Ohr Sameach was the Rabbi of Dvinsk or Daugavpils which is located approximately 230 km south-east of the Latvian capital, on the banks of the Daugava River which is over 1000 km in length and which flows from its source in Russia.

It happened one time that this mighty river which surrounded the city was behaving ferociously and threatened to flood the entire city and kill all of its inhabitants. The mayor of the city approached the Jews and told them that since it was known that the Jews are the holy people which G-d listens to, they were responsible to pray to avoid this disaster and if they were not successful, they would all be expelled from the city forever.

The Jews immediately instated a day of fasting and praying, but to no avail. The situation with the furious river only worsened. In desperation, the Jews attempted to declare another day of fasting and prayer, but again with no success.

When the Ohr Sameach realized that he had no choice, he calmly donned his hat and jacket and went out to the banks of the river with his personal sextant at his side. He raised his voice and said, "I, Meir Simcha, the representative and master of the Holy Torah on this earth, hereby decree on the waters of this river to calm yourselves". Shortly afterward, complete tranquility returned to the Daugava River and all the inhabitants of Dvinsk were spared.

Parenthetically, the grave of the Ohr Sameach is one of the most revered sites in all of Dvinsk, even by the non-Jews there because of the wide-spread knowledge of this story.

May we all merit to master the Torah with all of our strength and all of our hearts!



Bitachon by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

This week's Parsha describes in detail the final stage of the Jews' exodus from Egypt and the miraculous way in which Hashem split the sea for them. After the Jews had witnessed this awesome display, the verse testifies about them, "And they believed in Hashem, and in Moshe His servant". At this point, the Jews had reached such a high level of trust in their Master, that they all prophetically sang a song of praise to Hashem which we repeat every morning during Pesukei D'zimrah.

The Torah teaches us that the Manna fell every day for forty years, and this miraculous bread sustained the Jewish people for their entire sojourn in the desert. We find that if a person collected a larger amount of Manna then was necessary for his family's daily needs, the excess would rot and become wormy. And perhaps even more wondrous, if a person collected too little, he found that there was nothing lacking. The goal of this fantastic display was to hammer in this idea to the Jewish psyche – that regardless of how hard or how little we try, Hashem has the ability to take care of us always, and nothing we do can change that. We can only imagine, that if it took the Jewish people forty years to learn this lesson, how incumbent it is for us to begin instilling this feeling of trust in our hearts in order to make sure that we feel it at all times.

I would just like to conclude with the moving words of **R' Aryeh Leib Shteinmen**. We find that Hashem was doing unbelievable wonders for the Jewish people, and yet they were constantly complaining.

Imagine the look on the Jews' faces when right after they complained about their predicament at the sea, it split before their eyes. Or right after they complained about having no food, the next day the Manna fell and sustained them for forty years.

We need to learn from these events that very often our salvation is right around the corner, and Hashem is only putting us in "seemingly" difficult situations so that we can put our trust in Him completely. If we have this knowledge, it will be a lot easier to put our faith in Him. If we know that He is planning on pulling the curtain back in just a few minutes, and removing us from all our difficulties, we will certainly not take any of our challenges as seriously, and we will just smile serendipitously and say to our friends, just watch how Hashem is going to get me out of this one!

May we all merit to trust in Hashem blindly, with all our hearts!

R' Pam, the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah V'edaas was known worldwide for his tremendous piety and holiness. He would spend a great deal of time each day helping the Jewish people grow, and simply talking with the ones who had nobody else to converse with.

One day, when R' Pam was 85 years old, one of his students noticed him taking a small piece of paper out of his pocket. The student inquisitively asked the Rosh Yeshiva what was written on that note.

R' Pam showed him that it had the instructions of the **Vilna Gaon**, to work on one's character traits at all times, as this is the primary job of a Jew. R' Pam explained, "Every time I take this memo out of my pocket, and I look at it, it gives me tremendous encouragement and helps remind me what I am doing in this world, and I try to live up to its instruction."

We see that even at a ripe old age, this giant never forgot how important it was to improve his character traits.

May we all merit to always realize to forever be working to develop our Midos!

Shira - Song

In this week's parsha the Yam Suf splits. The Jews cross over on dry land to safety and the Egyptians drown. The Jews are officially out of slavery. To celebrate this, they sing to Hashem something we call "*shira*." We sing this "*shira*" everyday near the end of *p'sukei d'zimra*.

The Midrash Rabba 24:4 tells us how dear this song was to Hashem.

Rav Fine says that he finds it strange that in the siddur we refer to "*Shiras HaYam*" as a "*Shira Hadasha*," meaning a new song. Why do we call it new? 3,300 years later, there's nothing so new about it.

Rav Fine answers that our siddur is revealing a brilliant truth. Part of the real beauty of *Shiras HaYam* is that even today a person can connect to this song's unique wellspring of inspiration, even to the point that he can reach the same high as those who sang it the first time.

The Mishna Brura 51:17 says that anyone who sings *Shiras HaYam* with the same joy as if the miracle happened to him is forgiven for all of his sins. The Mishna Brura is explicitly telling us that we can reach such a level of *shira* that we can even turn into new people, having our sins forgiven. Therefore, we should try our best to understand the beauty of this tefilla and relive it.

It's important to add that a Jew shouldn't only sing *shira* during *p'sukei d'zimra*. Really, the ecstasy that comes from looking at the wonderful world around us and all the incredible things that Hashem does in our lives should be a new cause for *shira*. Every bracha we make and every time we daven is really a new opportunity to sing to G-d in thanks for all the good He does for us.

It has been said that people who stood close enough to the **Vilna Gaon** when he davened could hear a small but beautiful melody accompanying his Shmoneh Esrei. The power of *shira* is so great that the Gemara in Sanhedrin 91 says that anyone who sings *shira* in this

world merits to sing *shira* in the world to come. We see from here that if we truly connect through *shira*, the Gemara is promising us the world to come!!!

Something interesting to know is that Torah is also called "*shira*". In parshas Haazinu the verse says "**כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת**". Learning Torah is so dear to Hashem that even when everything else seems to be going wrong, when Hashem hears us learning He renews His love for us as if He heard us singing *shira* to Him. In Hashem's eyes, a Jew's Torah is *shira*. - This is what Hashem wants and this is really what is so beautiful about *shira* and Torah.

May we all be zoche to sing *shira* in this world and the next!!!

Bitachon

During the petrifying moments immediately prior to Kriyas Yam Suf – with the Egyptian army rapidly closing in upon them, with wild animals roaring on both sides of their encampment (midrash), and with the frothing sea raging before them – B'nei Yisroel raised their eyes in desperate prayer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. However, almost without acknowledging their tefillos, Hashem asked Moshe Rabbeinu, "*Mah titzak eilai, daber el B'nei Yisroel v'yisa'u* – For what reason should you cry out to me, speak to the Jews and let them journey [onward through the Yam Suf]."

So directly does this exchange barrel into the face of perceived Jewish hashkafa that one cannot resist questioning the incident bluntly. From a frum Jew's earliest childhood, he is taught that prayer is always desired by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Hakadosh Baruch Hu pines for the tefillos of Klal Yisroel.

When we are beset with a difficult situation, Hashem longs for us to pour out our hearts before Him in prayer. Why would Hashem suddenly wish for B'nei Yisroel to cease their davening?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that Klal Yisroel were on such a low spiritual level before Kriyas Yam Suf that they had indeed rendered tefilla an insufficient method of meriting Hakadosh Baruch Hu's intervention.

In a vehement protest against Hashem's plan to split the sea, the prosecuting angels rightly objected that, "*Mah eilu ovdei avodah zarah, af eilu ovdei avodah zarah* – Just as they [the Egyptians] are idol-worshippers, so too are they [the Jews] idol worshippers." Hence, the angels maintained that there existed insufficient justification for Hashem to rescue the Jewish people while leaving the Egyptians to drown in the depths of the Yam Suf.

Considering the angels' sadly valid argument, B'nei Yisroel could only be saved through something even greater than tefilla; they could only be saved by an active display of bitachon (trust) that Hashem would save them. - Bitachon never loses its power to affect Hashem's judgement. Hakadosh Baruch Hu therefore told Moshe to instruct B'nei Yisroel to continue forward into the dangerous, unsplit waters with the faith that G-d would rescue them, thereby earning the zechuyos (merits) necessary for Kriyas Yam Suf.

Hashem constantly desires us to work on our bitachon.

Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Zt'l, writes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu at times places a person in a difficult situation for the sole purpose of enabling him to strengthen his faith.

Based on this concept, we can suggest that Hashem's entire purpose in arranging for B'nei Yisroel's route to include passage through the Yam Suf was to provide B'nei Yisroel with a chance to take the extra stride in bitachon.

When plagued by the often-difficult circumstances life can throw in one's path, one has the opportunity to go the extra mile in his faith by realizing that there truly exists no-one else upon whom to rely but Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, zt"l, reached absolute greatness in his level of emunah through his constant attempts at strengthening his faith. **The Chazon Ish** declared that Rav Yechezkel felt his emunah so strongly that he literally held it in his hands. Rav Yechezkel's emunah was so strong that he had the ability to effect tremendous and long-lasting influence upon people with whom he was not even acquainted. Indeed, there are infinite levels of bitachon available to one who truly attempts to increase his bitachon.

Let us make every effort to grow in our bitachon and thereby be zoche to reach higher levels of faith in Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Bitachon — How to Build It

In Parshas B'shalach, the Bnei Yisrael found themselves trapped in the desert. The Egyptian army was pursuing them, before them was the sea, and on either side were snakes and scorpions. Many began calling out to Hashem, as did Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem told Moshe: "What are you crying out to Me for? Speak to the Bnei Yisrael that they should advance [i.e., into the sea]" (Shemos 14:15).

Many *meforshim* ask: What was wrong with praying to Hashem at this time? There is a mitzvah to pray to Hashem in times of trouble.

Rather, the **Nefesh Hachaim** (1:9) answers that the nation was in need of a miracle that would change the entire course of nature. To merit such a miracle, they needed more than just prayer. They needed some special act of *emuna* and *bitachon* that would elevate them to a much higher spiritual level. Their moving ahead into the sea was the act of trust in Hashem needed to raise their level and merit the miracle of the Splitting of the Red Sea.

Only, we see that the nation did not remain at this higher spiritual level. A short time later, they began complaining to Moshe in harsh terms that they did not have water (ibid. 15:24). Where was the level of *bitachon* they had reached at the sea?

Rav Shlomo Wolbe answers that to truly acquire *bitachon*, a one-time action is not enough, even an action as great as jumping into the Red Sea. *Bitachon* can only become part of a person by making small acts of bitachon on a daily basis over time. Therefore, just afterwards, Hashem gave the nation the manna. For the next 40 years, they subsisted on a diet that left them uncertain what they would eat the following day. Moreover, no one could amass more manna than he needed. To make sure that *bitachon* would become an integral part of their lives, Hashem inculcated this lesson of trust in Him through the manna on a daily basis for 40 years.

That was then, but in our times, what can we do on a daily basis to build up our *bitachon* in Hashem?

Rav Wolbe directs us to Rabbeinu Yonah's (Brachos 2b in Rif pages) explanation of the Sages, who state that one who connects Redemption to his *Amida* prayer is a *ben olam haba*. Rabbeinu Yonah, in the name of his Rebbe, explains that preceding the *Amida* prayer, we mention the miracles of the Exodus and the Splitting of the Red Sea. Not only do we mention these events, but we should also make sure to picture them before our eyes, as if we are actually witnessing them. When we behold Hashem's mighty hand and His limitless power, we now enter the *Amida* prayer full of *bitachon* that Hashem can surely provide us with all that we need as well. When we ask Hashem for forgiveness, health, livelihood, the ingathering of the exiles, etc., we are asking this with full and utter faith that He is capable of providing them. We feel that we can turn to Him and speak out all of our needs. Such *tefillos*, said day after day, will build our *bitachon* in Hashem.

One who strengthens his *bitachon* gets an added benefit—peace of mind. **The Chovos Halevavos** (introduction to *Shaar Habitachon*) states that when a person lacks *bitachon*, he lives in a constant state of tension, always worrying: "What will be?" It's hard for such a person to focus on his *avodas Hashem*. On the other hand, a person

who works daily to acquire *bitachon* in Hashem begins to see how Hashem is with him and enabling him to serve Him. This gives him peace of mind. He appreciates Hashem's blessings and channels all of his energy into Torah and mitzvos, undeterred. Even when difficulties arise and things seem not to be going his way, he knows that this too is coming from Hashem, accepts his lot and remains tranquil.

Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel lived with this peace of mind. Even after he began suffering from Parkinson's disease, he remained undeterred in his role as rosh yeshiva and a prime builder of Torah. Constructing the vast campus of the Mir Yeshiva demanded dealing with contractors and covering vast expenses, in addition to the ongoing expenses involved in running one of the largest yeshivos in the world. Despite the untold vicissitudes of Parkinson's disease and financial responsibilities that would have been a challenge for a team of fundraisers, Rav Nosson Tzvi's *bitachon* never wavered. Despite everything, he was always calm and happy and often gave *chizuk* to others.

Once, a man who was suffering from many difficulties in life came to Rav Nosson Tzvi. He felt that his pain was too much to bear and was on the brink of depression.

"But don't you see that Hashem is with you all the time?" Rav Nosson Tzvi asked. He then advised him to begin writing down examples of Hashem's hashgacha in his life, and to review what he writes on a regular basis.

"By recognizing how much Hashem watches over you and takes care of you, you'll be able to feel happy again," Rav Nosson Tzvi concluded.

The man followed his advice and said that it helped him enormously.

May we grow daily in *bitachon*!

The Giant Leap of Faith at the Yam Suf

In Parashas Beshalach, Hashem split the Yam Suf. The Midrash says that when the Yam Suf split, all other bodies of water in the world parted as well. The nations of the world trembled as they witnessed one of the greatest revelations of Hashem's control of the world.

We may wonder, though, why was it necessary to split the sea? The ten plagues had already displayed Hashem's might for all to see. Yet, the Chumash only writes that the Jewish people "feared Hashem and believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant" after the splitting of the sea. What new revelation took place at kri'as Yam Suf?

The Beis HaLevi explains that until now, the Jews were only familiar with Hashem as a G-d of punishment. The retribution visited upon the Egyptians motivated the Jews to fear Hashem's wrath. They had learned that Hashem has the power to terminate the existence of whatever He wished to. However, they did not clearly grasp that the world only continues to exist because Hashem wills it until the splitting of the sea. While surrounded by water, yet treading on dry land, they felt completely dependent on Hashem. They watched the waters being held erect, while knowing that it would be natural for them to come crashing down upon them, and they realized that every additional moment of life was a new miracle that Hashem was doing for them.

This was a new revelation of Hashem's intimate involvement in the world. Every Jew was infused with an awe of Hashem. This was much more than fear of Hashem's punishment—they were filled with wonderment over Hashem's total control and careful orchestration of every split second of existence. More than ever before, they understood how utterly dependent on Him they were.

This episode did not end with feelings of dependence and awe. Standing at the seashore, the Jews were overwhelmed by the great nissim that Hashem had done for them. Beyond kri'as Yam Suf and the drowning of the Egyptians, a host of other miracles took place

at this time, as listed in the Midrash. Sweet waters streamed out of the walls of the sea, enabling people to quench their thirst. The sea split in such a way that each tribe could travel along its own private path. Each person made the journey in the company of his family and friends. After receiving so much kindness from Hashem, who could not help but feel an intense love for Him? This feeling was expressed in the song Az Yashir, the great result of the splitting of the sea.

Today, some three thousand years later, what can we do to tap into this lofty spiritual level? Perhaps an answer can be inferred from the **Mechilta**, which quotes the above verse and asks: why does the Torah seem to grant equal importance to belief in Hashem and belief in Moshe?

The Mechilta answers that when we believe in a Torah leader, it is as if we believe in Hashem Himself! Faith in chachamim and faith in Hashem are inextricably linked. This is because our sages are the messengers for transmitting Hashem's will to us. Therefore, it wasn't enough for the Jews to believe in Hashem—they had to believe in Moshe as well. The Gemara (Kesubos 111b) teaches us that if we cling to Torah scholars, it is as if we are clinging to Hashem.

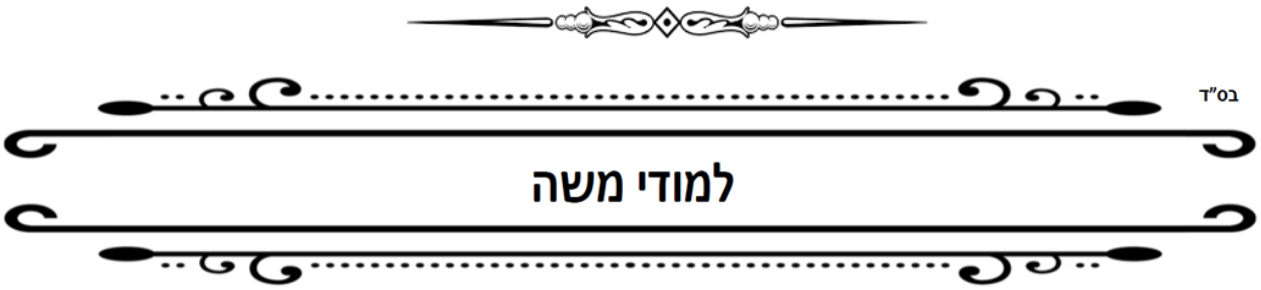
Talmidei chachamim have such a powerful association with Hashem that the Gemara (Pesachim 22b) actually states that the mitzvah to fear them is learned out of the mitzvah to fear Hashem! Fearing talmidei chachamim leads to true fear of Hashem.

The Rebbe of Shomrei Emunim elaborated on this principle. He would say that one who really wants to feel emunah should spend time in the presence of big tzaddikim and chachamim. One can't help but be affected when he sees the awe, dedication, and love of Hashem that a tzaddik has while learning or fulfilling a mitzvah. Clinging to our Torah leaders and talmidei chachamim can help us acquire higher levels of fear and love of Hashem.

Visiting the **Steipler** was a frightening experience. When you entered his room, he would look at you, and you could feel that he

knew everything about you. There was nothing you could hide from him. He would tell you what he thought of your issues, and he could be very forceful if he felt it would help you change. Sometimes, when people came asking the Steipler to daven for them, he would scream back, "When are you going to start davening for yourself?"

May we be *zocheh* to truly fear and love Hashem!



Why Hashem Drowned the Egyptians Whilst Keeping Them Connected to Their Horses

אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לד' ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לד' כי גאה גאה סוס רכבו רמה בים - *"Then Moshe and Bnei Yisroel sang this song to Hashem saying, 'Great and Mighty is Hashem, for he threw the horses together with their riders into the sea'".* (*Shemos* 15:1)

After witnessing the drowning of their Egyptian pursuers in the Yam Suf, the Jewish people were inspired to express their gratitude to Hashem through song. In the first *pasuk* in this song, they invoked the fact that Hashem threw the Egyptian horses into the sea together with their riders. Rashi explains that if a horse and its rider fall into a body of water, the rider will ordinarily fall off the horse, but in this case, Hashem kept them connected as the water lifted them up and pulled them down. Since Hashem does not perform miracles needlessly, what was His intention in doing so?

In this world, a person can sin in private, but when he comes to the next world, his misdeeds will be bound to him for all to see. As a symbolic depiction of this teaching, **Rav Yisroel Reisman** suggests that the Egyptians, who had the gall to chase the fleeing Jews into the Yam Suf even after everything they had witnessed throughout

the previous year, were joined to their horses even as the water tossed them up and down.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman was known for his stern demeanour, and he rarely smiled or laughed. One of the rare episodes that elicited a smile from him was a *mashal* he heard to illustrate this idea.

A simple farmer had to travel to a big city for a medical procedure. He was told that the fastest way to get there was by train, a mode of transportation completely unfamiliar to him. The farmer scraped together the money to buy a third-class ticket and set off on his journey.

He found his accommodations hot and uncomfortable, but he had little recourse. At one point along the way, the train entered a long tunnel. Assuming that the rest of the trip would pass in darkness, the farmer decided to cool off by removing his clothes. Much to his chagrin, just as he was starting to get comfortable and enjoying the ride, the train emerged from the other end of the tunnel.

This *mashal* is an analogy for our time in this world, where many people think they can get away with discreetly removing their "spiritual clothing" and disregarding any laws they find inconvenient or challenging, relying on the fact that nobody will be any the wiser. *Chazal* describe this world (*Avos* 4:16) as a tunnel-like antechamber leading to the World to Come. When the time inevitably comes to exit this tunnel into the pure brightness of the World of Truth, they will be pierced to the core by intense shame.

Awareness of this concept can be a powerful tool in our lifelong battle against the *yetzer horah*. We may occasionally feel tempted to give in to its allures in private, confident that nobody will ever know what we have done. At these times, we should ask ourselves whether this is an act to which we want to be eternally linked in Olam Haba for all to see. (**R' Ozer Alport**)

By Spirituality, the More You Put In, the More You Take Out



Rav Dovid Zucker of Chicago in his *sefer Ateres Dudaim* cites a Medrash which I don't recall ever seeing before. He quotes the Medrash from a *sefer* called *Sefer Le'Hagid*.

The *pasuk* says that the *mon* came down, each person gathered every morning what they needed for their daily consumption, and then the heat of the sun melted the (remaining) *mon*. (*Shemos* 16:21)

The *Mechilta* explains that the remaining *mon* turned into liquid, which flowed into the rivers. The deer would drink the water from those rivers. The gentile nations would hunt these deer, eat them, and thereby taste the *mon*. It was the best venison they ever tasted, and they thereby appreciated the elevated status of the Jews. That is what the *Mechilta* says.

The *Sefer Le'Hagid* brings down the following incredible Medrash: There was a young fellow who was bored being cooped up in the Jewish encampment in the Wilderness and left the encampment. He hiked over to the area where children of Amon lived. He was very hungry, and they fed him deer that had drunk the water from the rivers containing melted *mon*. He tasted the deer and was overwhelmed by its outstanding taste. He returned to the Jewish camp and told his friends, "There is no need to stay here the whole time. I left, I visited Amon, and I tasted deer like I never tasted in my entire life."

Moshe Rabbeinu noticed that this young fellow had a crowd around him and investigated what was going on. Moshe asked him to explain

what was so special about the taste of the deer's meat. The young fellow answered that he could not explain it, but it was the best taste he ever experienced in his life. Moshe told him, "I will tell you what was so special about that deer's meat."

Moshe explained that the deer tasted so special because it drank water that contained the melted *mon*. Moshe told the young man that he was a fool. "Why do you seek merely a facsimile of *mon* when you can have the real thing?" [That is the end of this Medrash.]

There are two questions that can be asked about this Medrashic story: First, why was this fellow so impressed with the taste of the deer? Why did he not have that same out-of-this world sensation when he tasted the *mon* itself? Second, what is the point of this Medrash? What is it trying to teach us?

Rav Zucker answers these questions by quoting a famous *vort* that Rav Shimon Schwab said over from the *Chofetz Chaim*. Rav Schwab spent a single Shabbos in Radin with the *Chofetz Chaim*, from which he came away with a career's worth of *drashos* (homiletic insights).

It was *Parshas Beshalach*. Rav Schwab asked the *Chofetz Chaim* about the Medrash which says that the *mon* tasted like whatever the person who consumed it wanted it to taste like. Rav Schwab asked the *Chofetz Chaim*, "What if a person is not thinking anything?" The *Chofetz Chaim* responded: "*Az mi tracht nisht; hut kin taam nisht*." (When you don't think, it has no flavor.)

The *mon* was a spiritual type of food. By spirituality, the more you put in, the more you get out. If a person puts nothing in, he gets nothing out. *Az mi tracht nisht* – if someone does not want to grow from the experience of eating the *mon*, *hut kin taam nisht* – you get nothing out of it.

This is the way it is with all spiritual matters. A person can learn a blatt Gemara by mumbling or racing through it and not get such a *geshmak* [pleasurable experience] from it. But when someone sweats

over a piece of Gemara and puts all of his effort into understanding it, his experience will be totally different. Since it is a spiritual matter, the more a person puts in, the more he takes out.

This fellow was not thinking about anything when he ate the *mon*. Therefore, he got nothing out of it. A person who is involved in a *davar ruchni* [spiritual endeavor] needs to invest. Shabbos is great. *Oneg* Shabbos is a taste of the World to Come. But what a person gets out of Shabbos depends on what a person puts into a Shabbos. If a person puts nothing into a Shabbos, he gets nothing out of a Shabbos. The more a person puts into Shabbos, the more he takes out. That is the way it is with every *davar ruchni*.

When this fellow went to Amon and ate the deer, it was a *davar gashmi* [physical experience]. It had a special flavor, but it was a *gashmi* flavor. By *gashmiyus* matters, it is easy come, easy go. It is instant gratification. Is it 'fun' to watch a football game? Is it 'fun' to play video games? Yes, it's 'fun'. You enjoy it, but how long does it last? It is ephemeral. A person can sit there for hours and watch the game, but what does he gain from the experience? However, in spiritual matters, there is no instant gratification. If we want to accomplish a *davar ruchni*, we must invest – thought and effort. *Az mi tracht nisht; hut min gornisht*! (**R' Frand**)

R' Chaim Vital writes in his book, The Gates of Holiness, that good character traits are not commanded anywhere in the Torah, but they are so elementary in the life of a Jew, that it is self-evident that without them, no Torah can be studied or observed.

"This is the entirety of man: Not for himself was man created, but instead to help others to the extent of his ability to do so." ~ Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1720-1797)

Rabbi Jeremy Golker - 600 Chariots



Pharoah is told that the Jewish People have escaped- **וַיֻּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, כִּי בָרַח הָעָם ... וַיֹּאמְרוּ מַה זֹּאת עָשִׂינוּ ... וַיִּקַּח, שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת רֶכֶב בָּחוּר, וְכֹל, רֶכֶב מִצְרָיִם** - *It was reported to Pharaoh that the people had fled; And they said, What is this that we have done? So he [Pharaoh] harnessed his chariot, and took his people with him. He took six hundred select chariots and all the chariots of Egypt*. 14:5-7

The Mayono shel Torah quotes **Rav Chaim Rappaport**: Why does Pharoah take specifically 600 chariots?

'*When the enemy overpowers Klal Yisrael, two gentiles will be able to overcome 10,000 of Klal Yisrael.*'

Now since we know that the number of people that came out of Mitzrayim was 600,000, so using that ratio, Pharoah would have only required 120 chariots – So, why did he take 600 chariots, 5 times as many?

We know that really there were 3 million Yidden, however unfortunately 4/5ths of them perished during the plague of darkness. - **וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם** - *and the children of Israel were armed when they went up out of Egypt*. 13:18

Rashi says - **חֲמֻשִׁים אֶחָד מֵחֲמִשָּׁה יָצְאוּ וְאַרְבָּעָה חֲלָקִים מֵתוּ בִּשְׁלֹשֶׁת יְמֵי אֲפֵלָה** - that one out of five (חֲמֻשָׁה) went out, and four fifths died during the three days of darkness.

But Pharoah was unaware of their demise, so his calculation was that there were 3 million Jews so he was required to take with 600 Chariots to overcome them!

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה – '***And the Bnei Yisroel came into the sea in the dry land***…' 14:22

The Gemara tells us in Masechet Sotah Rabbi Meir would say: *When the Jewish people stood at the Red Sea, the tribes were arguing with one other. This one was saying: I am going into the sea first, and that one was saying: I am going into the sea first. Then, in jumped the tribe of Benjamin and descended into the sea first.*

Rabbi Yehuda said to Rabbi Meir: That is not how the incident took place. Rather, this tribe said: I am not going into the sea first, and that tribe said: I am not going into the sea first. Then, in jumped the prince of Yehudah, Nachshon ben Amminadab, and descended into the sea first.

How are both opinions possible? We also need to understand: Why were they arguing about this? Why didn't they just get into the sea? Why did they need to have a discussion about it first?

The Sefer Vehigadeta explains that this was the argument between the Tanna'im. Rabbi Meir said that the tribe of Binyamin was arguing about going in first. But the tribe of Yehuda did not care to argue – they just dived in on their own, without any argument or opinions.

When it is time to get something done, just do it! Stop talking, just do it! This is a common occurrence, this person talks about how much he will do and the other will outbid him in his speech, but actions are noticeable in their absence.

Many years ago, before running water was available, each courtyard had a pit in which rainwater and spring water would be collected. People would go each morning to fill their buckets and barrels from this cistern, and that was the water used by people for cooking, washing, drinking and laundry.

Once, late at night in the dead of the winter, with the rain slashing at the sealed shutters and the wind shaking the hatches. The thunder was deafening and everyone covered themselves

comfortably with their blankets. Suddenly, a voice was heard, "I am thirsty! Children, which of you will bring me a cup of water?"

A father needs a drink! This is the Mitzvah of the ten commandments; honoring a father with a drink. Chazal tell us that honoring a parent is akin to honoring Hashem Himself. Who would like to miss such a wonderful opportunity?

The oldest son calls from his bed in the dark, "Brothers! Tatty is thirsty, we have a great Mitzvah opportunity in front of us, let us auction off the rights to perform this Mitzvah and bring our father a drink. I bid ten dollars for the zechut of bringing a drink to our father!" "I bid twelve dollars!" came the voice of another child. "Fourteen! Twenty!" the voices came from all sides of the house. - "What's up with you brothers? How are you not embarrassed to face yourselves? Such an important Mitzvah and only twenty dollars? I bid fifty dollars!"

"Children please?! I am thirsty, can anyone bring me a drink?" the father's weakened voice.

"So where were we up to? Fifty dollars? Going once, going twice, and three times!"

The youngest brother had won the zechut to bring the father a drink in the inclement weather. What a zechut?! But nobody keeps a zechut like this for themselves. "I would like to give the great honor of bringing a drink from the wet cold outside to the one who deserves the most honor – our father!"

The lesson is simple – don't talk so much, just act.

"The Jewish people are a symphony of many instruments, each with its own distinct sound; yet when played together, they create a magnificent harmony." ~ Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Trees of Torah



We are compared to a tree as it states **כי האדם עץ השדה**, man is a tree of the field. (Bamidbar 24:7).

In middle of winter, the trees look empty and dead. It is now that new life starts to pump through the trees as they begin to rejuvenate.

The same applies to us. My Avodas Hashem may have been going through a difficult "winter" lately, but this period has potential for rejuvenation.

Rosh Hashana for trees, Tu B'shevat, brings renewal to the tree. This also refers to the **עץ חיים** - tree of life, Torah.

The Avnei Nazer explains that man's fruit are his Chidushei Torah, his original Torah ideas and teachings. Just as on Tu B'shevat the sap rises up inside the tree, enabling a new crop of fruit, so too there is a renewal in the Chidushei Torah, in the fruit of each Jew.

In fact, The Avnei Nazer was able to tell a difference in his Torah before and after Tu B'shevat. He felt that his Chidushei Torah were enhanced due to Tu B'shevat. They were on a higher level than they were during the remainder of the year.

The Eretz Tzvi adds that since "tree" is a reference to a person, as in **כי האדם עץ השדה**, the main Rosh Hashana — the main renewal — on Tu B'shevat is in fact for Chidushei Torah not for the fruit of the actual trees.



The Gaon Changed The Text of Hamavdil

At the conclusion of the Sabbath, we recite a song (z'meyra), which according to the popularly accepted text reads: "may our children and our money (zareinu v'kaspeinu) be multiplied like the sand". **The Vilna Gaon** changes the text of the song to read "may our children and our merits (zareinu u'zechyoseinu) be multiplied like the sand". The Gaon rejected the popular version because he said it was wrong for a Jew to ask for an abundance of money. "This is not a Jewish prayer," the Gaon said. "We may ask for a livelihood, but not for wealth."

Now, one may ask, why didn't the Vilna Gaon object to the text of Birchas HaChodesh [the prayer recited on the Sabbath prior to Rosh Chodesh] where we ask for a "Life of wealth and honor?" Doesn't that prayer contradict the Gaon's axiom that asking for wealth is not a Jewish prayer?

I once heard what I believe is the true interpretation of the text in Birchas HaChodesh. Many years ago, there was a Jew who visited a small apartment in Jerusalem, which was home to two parents and eleven children. He saw that the parents and the eleven children lived in a one-room house. But he saw the exceptional respect with which the children treated their parents and the exceptional respect with which they treated each other. The house was neat and clean and full of dignity. The style of life was one of "wealth and honor," as if they lived in a mansion.

That family lived "a life of wealth and honor". A person can have millions of dollars without having a life of wealth and honor. Perhaps his wife drives him crazy, his kids drive him crazy and everyone is

fighting. Is that a life of wealth and honor? What difference does it make that he has a million dollars if everyone is constantly bickering and nothing is ever good enough? On the other hand, one can have 11 kids in a one-room apartment and live "a life of wealth and honor". It is possible to have the _life_ of a rich man without being rich, the _life_ of a King without being a King.

Thus, the text of the Rosh Chodesh prayer is no contradiction to the Vilna Gaon's principle: The Jew does not ask for wealth, and the trials that come with wealth. The Jew asks only for an adequate livelihood and for a _life_ of wealth, rather than for wealth itself.

I related the Vilna Gaon's axiom to a nephew of mine. This young man is also a nephew of Rav Aharon Soloveitchik from the other side of his family. My nephew told me that he heard from Rav Aharon the following frightening — but true — story.

A Jew came to the Vilna Gaon and asked for a way to ensure that his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren should all remain Torah observant and learned Jews. Is there anything that a person can do to ensure pious offspring? He asked the Gaon, "Is there a 'Segulah'? Which chapter of Tehillim should I recite daily to guarantee it? Which folio of Talmud should I memorize? Just give me the trick!"

The Gaon told him that the best way of helping to ensure that he will have righteous children is to recite the following petition every day in Shma Koleinu (the 16th blessing of the daily Shmoneh Esrei where we can insert personal requests):

"May it be Thy Will before Thee, G-d and G-d of my fathers, that my children should not be rich." (Not to pray they should be poor; not to pray that they should not have means of earning a living; just to pray that they not be rich.)

This, according to the Vilna Gaon, was the 'Segulah' to see pious and upstanding Jewish children. This is not because, Heaven Forbid,

anyone who is rich is by definition not a pious Jew. But wealth is a tremendous temptation. If one wishes to have pious children, the Gaon said, he should pray for the removal of that temptation from before his children.

The Gaon, thus follows his own opinion that the correct reading of the Motzai Shabbos song should not be "our children and our money should be as numerous as the sand" but rather "our children and our merit should be as numerous as the sand."

Don't Squander It

Rav Zevulen Groz was a student of the Alter of Slabodka in the Slabodka Yeshiva in Europe. He subsequently made Aliyah and became a Rav in Rechovot. Rav Groz writes that when he first went to Yeshiva, his father sat him down and read him the following Medrash from our parsha:

"Vayehi B'Shalach Pharaoh es ha'am" [And it was when Pharaoh sent out the nation]. [Shemos 13:17]. The Talmud states that a pasuk introduced by the word "Vayehi" always connotes pain and suffering. The word "vayehi" is etymologically related to the word "vay" meaning "woe."

The Medrash compares Pharaoh's plight to a fellow who found a satchel of precious stones, but who didn't know what was inside it. He asked a stranger, "Would you like to take this packet I have in my hand? Take it. It's yours!" The stranger took it, opened it up and found diamonds inside. He began separating the diamonds into small, medium, and large size stones. He set up shop and started selling them at various prices depending on their size. The person who originally gave him the satchel came by the shop and saw that the small diamonds were being sold for $10,000, the middle size diamonds for $50,000, and the larger diamonds were selling for $100,000! When he saw what was happening and understood what he

gave up, he tore his clothes in mourning. "I had all this wealth in my hands and I let it slip through, without gaining anything in return! Woe is me!"

The Medrash compares Pharaoh to the man who gave away the diamonds. The diamonds are the nation of Israel that was in his hands. When Pharaoh saw the great numbers of Jews that Moshe was taking out, he called out "Woe (vay)!" It is with these words our Parsha begins: When Pharaoh sent out the people he cried out, "Woe is me. Look what I did!"

The father of Rav Reuven Groz asked his son a question on this Medrash. How does the story of Pharaoh compare to the story in the parable? There is no analogy whatsoever. Pharaoh did not give anything away. He was forced by the Ten Plagues to let the Jews go! His arm was twisted until he said "Go!"

The father of Rav Reuven Groz explained to his son that the Medrash does not mean that Pharaoh was saying "woe" that he had to let the people go. That was not up to him. Pharaoh was saying that when he realized what Klal Yisrael was, he said, "I had such a people among me and look what I made them do!"

Consider a person who hires a worker and doesn't know that this worker is a genius, a Nobel laureate, or a virtuoso violinist, and makes him the janitor. He has him cleaning floors for years and years. Suddenly, he discovers that he could have booked this worker in great concert halls throughout the world. He could have made a fortune off of him! "For such a person, I paid minimum wage to sweep floors?"

Pharaoh felt the same way. He said, "I was an idiot! I had a Klal Yisrael and I made them build pyramids! I enslaved them. How fooli sh of me. What a waste of talent all those years!" Concerning this he moaned "Woe unto me. I did not appreciate what I had when I had it." - This ends the Medrash.

What does it have to do with Zevulen Groz going off to Yeshiva? Going to Yeshiva is an opportunity that is like a treasure. As I constantly say — and I have a folder full of letters from former students who will attest to this — everyone says after they leave the Beis HaMedrash that they did not appreciate what they had while they had it. Young boys fail to realize that their years in Yeshiva are numbered. It is an idyllic situation. Their physical needs are taken care of. Their parents pay the bills. They do not need to worry about holding down a job. The only thing they need to do is to learn and to grow as a Jew.

When one has that opportunity and does not take advantage of it to its fullest advantage, he may one day have the same reaction as the fellow in the Medrash who gave away the packet of diamonds or like Pharaoh at the beginning of the parsha: "Look what I had in my possession and I gave it away! I squandered it."

This is perhaps the most important thing that a father can tell his son when he goes off to Yeshiva. I always say this to my current students, based on generations of students who have come and gone: "Don't squander the opportunity while you have it. Your days are numbered."

The Connection Between Tu B'Shvat and Parshas B'Shalach

Parshas B'Shalach / Shabbos Shirah always comes out near the holiday of Tu B'Shvat. What is the relationship between the 15th day of Shvat — the "New Year of Trees," and this week's parsha?

The book Ziv HaMinhagim gives a beautiful explanation of this linkage. Tu B'Shvat is the Rosh HaShanah of trees. Look outside today and gaze at the trees. They appear deader than door nails! Is this the time to celebrate "The New Year for Trees?" There is not a leaf to be seen. It would seem more appropriate to celebrate "Tu

B'Shvat" in the springtime when the trees are in full bloom — April or May.

The answer is that the trees LOOK dead. They LOOK like they will never see another green leaf in their existence. But right now the sap is beginning to run within them. If one travels up to Vermont — the Maple syrup capital of the world — he will find Vermonters dressed up in earmuffs boring holes in trees to extract the sap from the maple trees. This is the time of the year when the sap is flowing within the trees. The leaves and the beauty of the fruits that the trees will produce in the spring and summer are all being prepared right now, in the dead of winter.

The trees represent the idea that even when something looks terribly bleak and looks like it has no future, one should not give up on it. One should not give up on the trees when they look like that, and one should not give up on oneself when things look like that for him.

There are periods in a person's life when the future looks bleak and things look miserable all around. "What will be?" But the salvation of the L-rd comes in the blink of an eye! The Almighty is already "running the sap" so to speak so that salvation may come. For this reason Tu B'Shvat is celebrated in the dead of winter.

It states in Parshas B'Shalach "They came to Marah and they could not drink the water, for it was bitter." [Shemos 15:23] Hashem then showed Moshe a tree and told him to throw it into the water. Why a tree? Why not a rock or a piece of dirt?

The symbolism is as we said before. The people felt hopeless. They were a couple of million people in the desert with no food or water. The natural reaction was: "What is going to be? How are we going to live? What will be our future?"

At that point, Hashem showed them a tree. The tree is the symbol that when all looks futile and bleak, desolate and destroyed, we see

that the situation can turn around. Rebirth happens! There can be renaissance and renewal. Throwing the tree into the water was meant as a message to the people: "Don't give up. Don't worry about the desert. Things look bleak now but the salvation of the L-rd comes in the blink of an eye."

Empathy for Others — A Great Quality in Both the Wicked and the Righteous

Pharaoh had a change of heart right after he let the Jewish people go. "He said to the Children of Israel: They are lost in the land." [Shemos 14:3] Rashi raises the obvious difficulty with this pasuk. Why does the pasuk say that Pharaoh spoke TO the children of Israel (l'Bnei Yisrael)? They had left Egypt already. How could he be talking to them? Rashi responds that we must interpret the pasuk to mean that Pharaoh spoke ABOUT the Children of Israel ("al bnei Yisrael") rather than TO them.

The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel has a unique interpretation. The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel interprets that Pharaoh was addressing Dassan and Aviram, who remained in Egypt. **The Maharal Diskin** asks a strong question. We know that large numbers of the undeserving members of Klal Yisrael died during the plague of Choshech [Darkness]. According to one interpretation in Rashi (on the pasuk "The Children of Israel went up from Egypt 'Chamushim'"), 80% of the Jewish community perished during those 3 days of Darkness. The Maharal Diskin asks – We are talking about Dassan and Aviram — who are known to us — from several statements of Chazal — as being wicked people. How can it be that they survived the plague of Choshech?

The Targum Yonasan ben Uziel gives a fascinating answer. The Egyptian slave state had a hierarchy. Pharaoh assigned the job of enslaving the Jews to Egyptian taskmasters. The taskmasters

identified Jewish policemen and forced these policemen to make the Jewish slaves produce their quota of work. The taskmasters beat the policemen, and the policemen beat the Jewish slaves. Chazal praise the Jewish policemen for often absorbing the beatings of the Egyptian taskmasters and thereby sparing greater suffering on the part of the Jewish slaves.

The Maharal Diskin says that even though Dassan was a wicked person and an extreme troublemaker, but nevertheless he was one of the policemen and he had the merit of absorbing the blows of Egyptian taskmasters to save the Jewish slaves from being whipped themselves. This merit caused his life to be spared during the days of Darkness. A person who accepts suffering on himself to save the suffering of a fellow Jew has tremendous merit — neither the Red Sea nor the Angel of Death can touch him.

Rav Shmuel Auerbach, when eulogizing his father **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach**, quoted one of his father's favorite stories: **The Baruch Taam** once arranged for the marriage of his son to the daughter of a very wealthy individual. The families got together before the wedding to talk about the details of the marriage. The future mother-in-law (of the Baruch Tam's son) saw that the Baruch Tam was distressed. She went to him privately and asked him what he was so distressed about. "Is there anything wrong with the shidduch?" she wanted to know. The Baruch Taam told her that he was upset because the "water carrier" in the city was very sick.

[In those days before people had running water, one of the more menial jobs in European villages was that of the water carrier. The water carrier went down to the river, filled up two buckets and carried them back to town on his shoulders. He did this all day, going back and forth between the river and the town. All one needed to do this job was to have a good back and a lot of stamina. One did not need to be very bright and this was literally among the most menial of professions.] The Baruch Taam felt great empathy for the water

carrier, who was sick and could not enjoy the engagement party of his own son.

The future mother-in-law of his son told the Baruch Taam, "Get over it! What does that have to do with you? Don't let his sickness spoil what should be a happy day for you!"

The Baruch Taam announced that the engagement was off. "Anyone who could not empathize with the suffering of another Jew is not the type of family I want my son to marry into, regardless of how much money they have." If one is not seriously bothered by the fact that someone else is hurting, one lacks the sensitivity required of a caring member of the Jewish people.

Empathy for others is a great quality to have, whether one is as wicked as Dassan and Aviram or as righteous as Rav Shlomo Zalman.

Illogical Treatment May Yield Bonanza For The Nation That is

The Parsha begins וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם וְלֹא־נָחָם אֱלֹקִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא - "And it was when Pharaoh sent out the nation and the L-rd did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines for it was close. For the L-rd said 'lest the people fear when they see warfare and return to Egypt'" [Shemos 13:17]. The most logical route for traveling from Egypt to the Land of Canaan is by way of the land of the Philistines. However G-d did not want them to take that route precisely "because it was close".

Rashi interprets the words "ki karov hu" [because it was close] at a "simple" level to mean that the proximity between Egypt and Canaan via the land of the Philistines would be a drawback in the sense that any slight setback could send the Jews scurrying back to Egypt. Rashi alludes to the fact that there are also many Medrashic interpretations to this expression.

The Daas Zekeinim m'baalei haTosfos offers a novel interpretation: "Ki karov hu" should be translated for He is their relative, as it states עַם קְרֹבוֹ [Tehillim 148:14]. Accordingly, "ki karov hu" has nothing to do with geography and nothing to do with the route. It relates to the closeness (literally the relationship) between the Jews and the Almighty. Since Klal Yisrael is the relative of G-d, they should not travel the normal route.

Rav Simcha Zissel Brody, elaborates on the Daas Zekeinim m'baalei haTosfos. A great lesson for life lies in these few words of the Daas Zekeinim. We Jews believe that we have a special closeness to the Almighty. As such, we are subject to personal Divine Providence. What is normal and logical for the rest of the world is not necessarily what the Master of the World wants for His special people. For His special people, the Almighty – as it were – takes them by their hand and leads them through life. Were we to logically think out what is the best way to accomplish something, we would come to a different conclusion. But we have to have faith in the Almighty that He is treating us differently. He is treating us differently as a nation and He treats us differently as individuals.

The lesson is – and this is a lesson that is so much easier said than done – that when things happen in life and we ask ourselves "This does not make any sense; why is this happening to me?"; we have to remember that "He is close to us". He is taking us by the hand and is giving us a different type of treatment. Things do not always work logically or the way we would want them to.

Maybe there is a splitting of the Yam Suf that the Almighty wants you to experience. The bonanza may be yet to come. Ki Karov Hu. Hashem takes us by the hand. He leads us down a path and we sometimes cannot understand why He is doing this to us. Only later do we understand why "The L-rd did not lead them by way of the Land of the Philistines."

Manna Gathering Separates The "Men" From the "Boys"

There is an interesting Medrash which says that when the Manna originally came down, it came down with precious stones and diamonds. The greatest people (Gedolim she'bahem) of the nation went ahead and took these precious stones and diamonds. However, the simple people, the masses, only collected the Manna.

This is very strange. Everyone appreciates a bargain – especially free diamonds! How was it that only the leaders of the people took advantage of free riches?

I once heard a very interesting observation from **Rav Michel Twerski of Milwaukee**. He pointed out the unique economic conditions that existed in the Wilderness. For perhaps the only time in the history of civilization, there existed a society where all of a person's physical needs were met. Food was effortlessly available from Heaven. Water was effortlessly available from the Well. Clothing did not wear out, so it was not necessary to buy new clothing. Shelter was available from the Clouds of Glory. We can probably assume that G-d threw in Health Insurance as a guaranteed benefit as well. This was a society that did not have any needs whatsoever.

If one does not have any needs, then of what use are precious stones? What would one do with them? There was nothing to buy and no need to buy anything. Therefore, people looked at these precious stones, determined that they had no purpose for them, and considered them worthless.

However, the great people among them knew that there would come an occasion when there would be a Mishkan [Tabernacle] and Bigday Kehunah [Holy Vestments (of the High Priest)] which required the contribution of precious stones.

This Medrash teaches us that what differentiates the masses from the leadership, is perspective. A person who only sees in front of his

nose, who only considers his requirements for the day, is in the category of a non-leader. The leader recognizes that although certain things might be unnecessary in the current situation, in the future there may come a time when these things will have value.

It is well known that trees do not grow in deserts. The Jews needed a significant amount of lumber to build the Mishkan. Where did they obtain the lumber?

Our Rabbis credit the existence of the trees to the foresight of Yaakov. Our Sages tell us that Yaakov planted cedar trees when he first came down to Egypt so that his descendants would be able to cut them down and take them out with them for the purpose of building the Mishkan. This is the perspective of a great individual. He is not merely caught up in 'today'; he plans for and considers what will be in the future.

The "Straightness" Of Parshas B'Shalach Justifies the Name "Shabbos Shira"

The Shemen HaTov suggests that the grammatical root of the word Shirah [Song] is YaSHaR, meaning straight. I am not a grammarian to state that this is correct, but in a homiletic sense it can certainly be suggested.

There are high points and low points in a person's life. There are peaks and there are valleys. When a person can look back and see the straightness (Yashrus) of life — that somehow, after a while, things tend to work themselves out and become straight — that is the time when a person can utter Shirah [Song]. In retrospect, the person can see that what happened was 'straight'.

The Shemen HaTov comments on the fact that this Shabbos is called "Shabbos Shirah" [the Shabbos of Song]. The reason for the name "Shabbos Shirah" could not be merely because the parsha contains the 'Shirah', for if that were the case,

then Parshas Yisro should be called Shabbos Torah, since it contains the story of the giving of the Ten Commandments. Why then do the Jewish people call Parshas B'Shalach by the name "Shabbos Shirah?"

The Shemen HaTov answers that the entire parsha contains this idea of "Straightness," of ups and downs which eventually balance out. No other parsha has such oscillation between peaks and valleys. The Jewish people came out of Egypt mightily, with a powerful Hand. Then the balloon was deflated when their backs were against the sea and the Egyptians were bearing down on them. The whole Exodus from Egypt seemed to be in jeopardy. It seemed to dissipate and go up in a cloud.

Then the sea split. That was a tremendous high. They were miraculously saved. Then what happened? They found themselves without water, and the 'lows' began again. Then the bitter water miraculously turned sweet, and they again were on a 'high'. Then they had no food. They complain again — another 'low'. Then they were miraculously given Manna and they were happy again. Then Amalek attacked and the cycle continued…

Parshas B'Shalach is the parsha of life. Life is all about the highs and lows, the peaks and valleys. That is why this parsha, which teaches us this lesson, is called Shabbos Shirah (the Shabbos of Straightness, or equilibrium).

When a Jew can look back on his life and recognize that while there have been defeats and low moments as well as the high points, he sees the Yashrus (straightness; fairness) of it all in retrospect, then he can indeed utter that which is the essence of this Shabbos — Shirah, songs of praise to G-d.

"Always choose love; it's one of the few things that multiplies when shared." ~ Rabbi Avraham Twerski (1930-2021)

From Here We Learn the Idea of Resurrection

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

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

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

Bnei Yisroel experienced the Exodus from *Mitzrayim* and then the Splitting of the *Yam Suf*. Chazal say that the simple handmaiden by the *Yam Suf* had greater understanding and a greater appreciation of spiritual matters that the prophet Yechezkel. However, when *Klal Yisrael* saw great truths with such clarity, paradoxically, that removed their ability to have *Emunah*.

Contrary to the popular saying that 'Seeing is Believing', theologically, that is not the case because what someone <u>sees</u> in front of his face is not something to which we can apply the term '*Emunah*.' *Emunah* is Faith – something I <u>believe</u> in despite the fact that I cannot see it and I cannot prove it. If you see me holding up

five fingers, you do not need to <u>believe</u> that I am holding up five fingers, you <u>know</u> it! If Divine Truth was clear as day to everyone at the Sea, how is it possible to have any *Emunah* there?

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

The Message of Shiras HaYam in Pesukei D'Zimra

I saw the following observation in the sefer <u>*Chikrei Lev*</u> by Rabbi Laibel Hyman, shlit"a.

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

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

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

Rabbi Hyman suggests that what happened at the Yam Suf was not really about **Mitzrayim**. It was a battle, so to speak, between the*Hashem*and Pharaoh. This was – if we can say such a thing – "personal," between the Almighty and Pharaoh. Why? It is because Pharaoh at this point still was of the belief that he was a god. He felt that he was more than just king. He felt, and he wanted everyone else to feel, that he was a Deity. "To me is the Nile and I am the Creator."]Yechezkel 29:3]. That is why Pharaoh had this problem about going to the bathroom, because gods do not go to the bathroom. Therefore, he had this charade of everyone believing that he did not need to relieve himself, which ostensibly proved that he was a god.

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

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

Now we understand, he says, why the *Shira* is located in *Pesukei D'Zimra*. This is really not part of *Pesukei D'Zimra* in the classic sense. Rather, this is a prelude to *Krias Shema* and to the Blessings of *Krias Shema*. In *Krias Shema* (Listen O' Israel, the L-rd our G-

d, the L-rd is One), we accept upon ourselves the exclusivity and the unity of G-d. The prelude to that is "See what happened in *Mitzrayim; see* what happened at the *Yam Suf*." By *Krias Yam Suf*, the *Ribono shel Olam* said, "I am going to show the world that there is no such thing as another god. There is only one *Ribono shel Olam*."

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

Horse and Rider Were Thrown Into the Sea – Why Punish the Horses?

After the *Shirah*, the *pasuk* says, "Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aharon, took the drum in her hand, and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dances. Miriam spoke up to them (*va'Taan lahem Miriam*), 'Sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea.'" [Shemos 15:20-21] The way most of us understand this parsha is that the men did their thing and then the women wanted to do their thing as well – so Miriam led them in an abridged version of the men's *Az Yashir* song.

The Tolner Rebbe asks four good questions on these last two *pesukim*:

(1) Why does the Torah need to tell us here that Miriam is a prophetess?

(2) What does "*Va'Taan lahem Miriam*" mean? Literally *Va'Taan* means she answered them (rather than she led them [in song]). When leading in singing the appropriate verb is, as it says in this week's Haftorah, *VaTashar Devorah* (and Devorah sang) not *Va'Taan*!

(3) The word '*Lahem*' means 'them' in masculine. In the context of this narrative, where she is speaking to the women, we would expect to find the feminine pronoun *Lahen*.

(4) Out of all the *pesukim* in the *Shirah,* why does Miriam choose to repeat the expression "*Sus v'Rochvo Rama b'Yam*" (having hurled horse with its rider into the sea) to synopsize the entire *Shira* in this very abbreviated version?

Those are the Tolner Rebbe's four questions.

The Tolner Rebbe answers his questions by redirecting our entire understanding of this incident. It is not that Miriam took the drum and then all the women followed her and they did the dances that women do at *chassunahs*. This is not what happened over here.

The explanation is that this was a protest (*Hafganah*!). How does the Tolner Rebbe see this? The word "the prophetess" gives us a clue. Miriam saw what was happening over here with Divine Vision. The normal human eye would not be able to discern this. But she saw what was happening. It was a demonstration.

What was the demonstration about? "What about us! Are we chopped liver?" Here, our rabbis tell us that in the merit of the righteous women, our ancestors left Egypt [Sotah 11b-12a]. It was the men who had given up hope, and it was the women who kept them going and encouraged them. Now, during the final celebration of our exodus, is it just the men who are going to sing praises to G-d? What about us? What are we?

Miriam saw what was happening. She was not happy with the fact that all the women were following after her with drums and dancing

because this was not an innocuous celebration. This was a protest! She heard the women complaining, "It is not fair that the men will have all the glory and be the ones who are the celebrants! What about us?"

The *pasuk* therefore uses the verb "*Va'Taan Lahem Miriam*" – Miriam **responded** to them! There was a question here which needed to be answered. The question was "What about us?" And Miriam answered "*Lahem*" – "Oh! You want to be like the men? Okay, I will answer you like men." She is answering a question that we hear until this very day. "Why can't women do this? Why can't women do that? It is not fair!"

Therefore, her answer was very specifically "Horse and rider were thrown into the sea." The cavalry, the guys who were riding the horses had to drown in the sea as punishment for their cruelty to us. That we can understand. But what was the crime of the horses? Why did they also need to perish?

The explanation is that the Almighty gives as much credit or as much blame to the person who facilitates, as He does to the person who actually does whatever was facilitated. G-d considers facilitators just as important as those who act.

This was the essence of the Tolner Rebbe's lesson: If "all a Kolel wife does is bake and cook and clean and diaper and take care of the children, but as a result, she facilitates her husband to be able to sit and learn, she receives the same reward from Heaven as her husband receives. If someone learns Daf Yomi, and during that time his wife takes care of the children so that he can learn, she receives the same reward.

We see this principle from "the horse and its rider were thrown into the sea." The *Ribono shel Olam* punishes the horse because it facilitated the rider. If this is the way it works by punishment, by reward it certainly works like that!

Miriam responded to them: "I know where you ladies are coming from, but that is the way the *Ribono shel Olam* built *Klal Yisrael*. Judaism is a role-oriented religion. Men do some things and women do other things. The system will not work unless everybody pulls their weight and does what they are supposed to do. These are the words of Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in the beginning of his Mesilas Yesharim (Path of the Just). "A person must know what his responsibility is in this world." (*Mah chovoso b'Olamo*).

This is not a popular idea because everybody wants to be the same. Today in "their infinite wisdom" the United States Armed Forces said that women can fight in combat roles just as well as men. I just don't get it! But "it's fair!" Fair is fair! This is not the way Yiddiskeit works. Yiddishkeit works with the principle "I have my role and you have your role!" That is why Miriam told the women "the horse and the rider were thrown into the sea."

The Tolner Rebbe uses this insight to suggest an awesome insight into a *pasuk* in Shir HaShirim [1:9] "With My mighty steeds who battled Pharaoh's riders I revealed that you are My beloved." Did you ever think about the meaning of this *pasuk*? It might sound like the Lover is telling his Beloved that she is like a horse! If you go home tonight and tell your wife "I love you like a horse," see where that will get you! The simple interpretation is that the Lover is saying "You are not just an average horse, you are like the best of Pharaoh's steeds, as it were. You are the best of women!" This is the simple interpretation.

The Tolner Rebbe explains differently: "I love you because that is the lesson of the horses of Pharaoh's stables who were thrown into *the sea with their riders." You are my facilitator and I owe everything I have accomplished to you!*

The Rebbe related an incident of a woman in her nineties who came to him and told him a story involving a conversation she had with Rav Moshe Feinstein several years earlier. This woman was a

cleaning lady in a big Yeshiva for forty years. Someone introduced her to Rav Moshe and told him "This woman cleaned the Yeshiva for forty years." Rav Moshe told her: You have the same reward as all the students who learned in that Yeshiva for those forty years. The woman started crying as she related this story to the Tolner Rebbe about what Rav Moshe Feinstein had told her some thirty years earlier!

This is the power of a facilitator. The Almighty grants the same reward (or punishment) to a facilitator as the person being facilitated. Therefore, Miriam told the women (*Va'Taan Lahem Miriam*) they do not have anything to complain about! You are going to get the same *Olam HaBah* as the men!



Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Dating

1) The Gemara tells us, **קשין לזווגן כקריעת ים סוף**...to match two people together is as difficult as splitting the Yam Suf. What is the connection between splitting of the sea and making a match?

2) Why is an engagement party is commonly referred to as a vort?

3) In the Parsha of Yitzchak and Rivka's shidduch (Chayei Sara), it doesn't mention Eliezer's name once. Why would that be if he is the one who arranged the match?

4) Why does the Chosson under the Chupa put the ring specifically on the Kallah's index finger?

Dating- the inevitable reality. We have to go through it as well as having to watch others such as our friends and siblings go through it. What mindsets can we adopt to help us not just go through it but grow through it? For some it is only a short period while for others it is longer. At times it may seem that all options are exhausted, and we are stuck. The question is always there- where will my partner come from?

The Pasuk says **מאין יבוא עזרי**- where will my spouse come from as **עזרי** can refer to one's wife as in **אעשה לו עזר כנגדו**.The answer is the question itself. That **עזר** - spouse comes from **אין**; nowhere- when there seems to be no options left. And that is **מעם ה'**- from Hashem, as the next Pasuk continues. Always persist as it says **אחזתיו ולא ארפנו** - to hold on and not weaken your grasp. We must believe **מושיב יחידים ביתה** - Hashem settles the solitary into a family.

The Jewish people were standing at the sea and behind them were the Egyptians. What is Moshe's command to them? **התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה'**- stand and see the salvation of Hashem. When we are forced to date for longer than we intended and have despaired, we need to somehow find the strength to heed Moshe's command. We might feel that the possibility of our lives working out is about as hopeless as being saved when surrounded by terrifying waves and warriors. Just as at the sea, we need to stop worrying and allow ourselves to see Hashem's salvation unfold. We can leave it to the Master Planner. If we add the sum of **חתן** (458) to **כלה** (55) we get 513, the numerical value of **התיצבו**. You do your part: **התיצבו**. Let Hashem do His.

The Jewish people knew that they would be saved even though there seemed to be no options left. They understood the Creator is a lot more creative than us and doesn't run out of ideas like we do. They were confident that Hashem would come through for them but didn't know where it would come from. They might have guessed that

perhaps the Egyptians would be killed out by plague or disease. They surely didn't imagine that their salvation would be the sea splitting.



One who is single may imagine different ways for the salvation to come about. We know when we want to get married, exactly what kind of background or city we want our spouse to come from…The list can be endless. Many times, Hashem has an entirely different plan.

When the sea split, there were twelve paths, one for each **שבט** - tribe. Some **שבטים** had shorter paths while others had longer. The same is with dating as some have shorter paths and marry the first person they date whereas others date for longer.

In Yiddish, a Vort means a word. Regarding the Shidduch of Yitzchak and Rivka it is written **מה' יצא הדבר** - the matter was from Hashem. **דבר** can also mean word. After five hopeful dates, a girl was told "it just won't work. No discussion." She quickly poured herself a cup of water and her logic forced the words out: **שהכל נהיה בדברו** . Six months later, she found herself at her Vort engaged to The No-Discussion Man. Hashem always has the last word.

We often tend to rely on the Shadchan to get singles paired. We must bear in mind **טוב לחסות בה' מבטח באדם** -it is better to trust in Hashem than in a person. Although it may appear like the Shadchan is the one in charge, in reality, the Shadchan is just a puppet.

There was a Rebbe that would encourage older single boys telling them not to despair, continue davening as they would still get

married. When an older boy once asked him when will I finally become engaged, as then I can accept Hashem's decree with happiness, the Rebbe told him the following:

Many miracles took place to help Yitzchak get married. When Eliezer set out on his way the earth contracted for him and he arrived to Charan in one day. As he was still davening, Rivka arrived. Besuel, who wanted to sabotage the Shidduch, died. Hashem's hand was very obvious in this Shidduch. However, when Yaakov sought to get married, miracles didn't occur for him. While traveling to Charan for his Shidduch, Yaakov met up with Elifaz, who took all his money. Yaakov who worked seven years for his Shidduch, was deceived, and had to work another seven years. Eventually he married and established his family, the Shevatim.

Why did Yitzchak's Shidduch come about so easily, while Yaakov's was wrought with many hardships? When Avraham sent Eliezer to find a Shidduch for Yitzchak, he didn't know who to choose. He therefore davened and put his trust in Hashem. Yaakov, however, knew whom he would marry. He went to Lavan's house with the intention to marry Rachel and as everyone said that the older one- Esav- to the older one- Leah- while the younger one, Yaakov, to the younger one- Rachel. Yaakov didn't feel need as much to daven for his Shidduch because he thought it was obvious whom he would marry. Consequently, this is the reason why he endured so many hardships. On the other hand, Eliezer davened and placed his trust in Hashem. As a result, he found the Shidduch easily. The boy got the message as it was better for him not to know when he would get married because the less he knows the more he will daven and trust in Hashem.

Many times, we may view the process of a Shidduch as a natural occurrence. We may think this person set me up, I met the girl through a mutual friend… There is always **השגחה פרטית** - Divine Providence involved. This begins before they even meet each other

as in the people who gave them Chizuk along the way, the parents they grew up with and all the experiences that they had that lead up until that moment where they stand under the Chupa.

From the Chazal that states **ארבעים יום קודם יצירת הולד** - 40 days prior to the formation of the **ולד** a heavenly voice proclaims the daughter of **פוני** (so and so) to , **פלוני** we see that the **השגחה** starts before they are even born. Even when we do notice the **השגחה** and we start to list all the great things that took place, we can never do it justice. This is what is meant in **לעושה נפלאות גדלות לבדו** - to Him who performs wonders that are great by Himself- Hashem is alone in so many of His great wonders because we remain completely oblivious to them.

The Shidduch of Yitzchak and Rivka took place at a well as did Moshe and Tziporah's. Until today, we see many people get engaged near water. But there is apparently more depth to beach proposals than writing sweet messages in the sand! A well is a **באר** . This is an acronym for **בְּיָדְךָ אַפְקִיד רוּחִי** In Your Hands- Hashem, I place my spirit. It is all Hashem.

In listing the names of the five fingers, the Gemara tells us the index finger is called **אצבע** . During the plague of lice, the Egyptians couldn't duplicate it as they had done with blood and frogs. They were forced to admit **אצבע אלקים היא** it is the finger of Hashem.

The Chosson places the ring on the Kalla's index finger symbolizing that here too, it is all Hashem. The word for ring- **טבעת** - is rooted in **טבע** ; nature. When the Chosson puts the **טבעת** on the **אצבע** , what he is saying is that all nature that took place in this Shidduch is actually all from Hashem. Furthermore, the ring resembles a **ס** with its round shape. What does **ס** represent? The **סומך נופלים** as **ס** spelled out is **סמך** . The Kidushin is done with a ring making a clear statement that this Kidushin is proof that **סומך נופלים** the supporter of the fallen, it is all Hashem.

Is it any wonder that Eliezer's name is not found in the Parsha of Shidduchim? It's simple. He was a messenger, as was every "Eliezer" since then. It is all Hashem. The mirage is "Eliezer" or "Mrs. Klein." But **אליעזר** is actually a contraction of **א- לי עזר** . If we can find the strength to rise above our dating - **יאוש 317**,we can experience **א-לי עזר 318** ,.Truthfully, we all know intellectually that it's always all Hashem. But dating and the challenges it presents for each individual as they make their way down Hashem's tailor-made path towards the splitting of their personal sea, is a specifically appropriate time to internalize this knowledge.

To those who are still single, may the **סומך נופלים** split your sea very soon and have someone special place that **טבעת** on your **אצבע** or may you place that **טבעת** on the **אצבע** of someone very special!

Livelihood with Emuna

מן represents Parnassa and as the Yerushalmi states one who says the **פרשה** of **מן** every day is assured that his food won't be lacking.



The Levush says it teaches us that Hashem provides each day's sustenance just as He did with the **מן** each day in the Midbar. Indeed, Parshas Beshalach we say **פרשת המן** as a Segula for Parnassa. We are told in regard to the **מן** that everyone gathered according to how much he eats whether they took more or less. The portion for everyone was the same- an Omer. The same applies with Parnassa as it is fixed from Rosh Hashanah whether we put in more effort or not. This is

alluded to in the custom of dipping our Challah in honey - our Parnassa is set from Rosh Hashana and the **מן** represents reliance on Hashem. In regard to the **מן** (symbolizing Challah) it says **כצפיחת בדבש** - like a cake fried in honey. Dipping the Challah in honey represents that we rely on Hashem for Parnassa. Is it any surprise that **מן** is from the term **אמונה**?! Indeed, **מן הוא** makes up the word **אמונה**. We are taught it is called **מן** because **מן הוא** - meaning it is beyond intellect; complete Emuna.

With acquiring this Emuna one attains the proper outlook. In the town of Brisk a fire broke out and it seemed a neighbouring store would be burnt down. The investor told the storeowner I'll buy half of your goods for a cheaper price and if your store burns down, I'll lose out. However, if it doesn't then I gain. He declined the offer. In the end the store didn't burn down making the owner feel smart and arrogant.

R' Chaim Brisker said really what he did wasn't smart since according to the laws of nature it should have burnt down and therefore he should have sold it. He said we see that if there is a decree from Hashem not to lose your money, you won't lose it even if you're foolish.

In another story with R' Chaim Brisker someone complained to him about a competitor in a similar type of store near him who was successful whereas he wasn't. R' Chaim replied sharply this is because you are running two stores- yours and his and this consumes up your energy. **The Bnei Yissoschar** would do a calculation with Yungerleit and show them how their income was less than their expenses, yet their expenses were all paid.

Parshas Beshalach- which speaks about the **מן** - is saturated with Emuna. The end of Parshas Beshalach deals with Amalek who is the opposite of Emuna as it says **אז נבהלו אלופי אדום** and soon after they started up with us. The Jews asked **היש ה' בקרבנו אם אין** - is Hashem in our midst or not. This was a problem in Emuna. Hence, the next

words are **ויבא עמלק** , the antithesis of Emuna (**עמלק** is the same equivalent as **ספק**). This originates from the Nachash by whom it says **השיאני**.

Examining this word we notice it is composed of **היש** and **אין**. How does Parshas Beshalach end? - With **ויהי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש** Moshe put Emuna into us until Moshiach arrives.

Pesach- 3,4,5



Rashi informs us that when the Malachim came to visit Avraham it was Pesach. There were 3 Malachim. Avraham requested 3 **סאה** 's of flour. He had 3 bulls in order to feed them 3 tongues in mustard. This is the number 3 in relation to Pesach. We know the number 4 is also associated with Pesach as we have the 4 cups of wine, the 4 sons, the 4 expressions of Geula and the 4 **אמהות** . How about the number 5? Well, there is a 5th expression of Geula- **והבאתי**. We also know of a 5th cup.

These 3 numbers are hinted to in the word **פסח**. The word **פסח** contains 3 letters. If we spell out the letters of **פסח** it can be spelled **פה סמך חית** or **חת** . Hence, there can be either 4 or 5 hidden letters in the word **פסח** . Thus, we have the numbers 3, 4 and 5. This is also alluded to in the term **הגדה** as **ה,ד,ג** is 3, 4 and 5. As for the first **ה**, it refers to **ניסן** which is when Pesach is, as **ניסן** corresponds to the letter **ה**.

טו בשבט

We are compared to a tree as it states **כי האדם עץ השדה** - man is a tree of the field. In middle of winter, the trees look empty and dead. We all know that it is now that new life starts to pump through the trees as they begin to rejuvenate.



The same applies to us. My Avodas Hashem may have been going through a difficult "winter" lately, but this period has potential for rejuvenation. **טו בשבט-ראש השנה לאילנות -** brings renewal to the tree. This also refers to the **עץ חיים** - tree of life- Torah. In fact, **The Avnei Nazer** was able to tell a difference in his Torah before and after **טו בשבט**.

We connect to a Yom Tov 30 days before it as the Sages instruct us that 30 days before a Yom Tov, we should learn the Halachos of that Yom Tov. A month before Purim is **טו בשבט**. Purim is a form of Kabbalas Hatorah as the Gemara says that is when we received the Torah again. In this way we should prepare ourselves as **טו בשבט** is a time of rejuvenation in Torah. It is specifically in **שבט** that we hope to merit **שמרם ברכם טהרם** - guard them, bless them, purify them.

Rashi comments on **ועץ השדה יתן פריו** - the tree of the field will give its fruit, that it refers to the **אילני סרק** - trees that do not bear fruit which in the future will produce fruit. This is also a hint to humans who are compared to a tree, that those Jews who are **אילני סרק** will bear fruit- Chidushai Torah- in the future.

R' Moshe Wolfson points out that **ועץ השדה יתן פריו** has a numerical value of 1,236, the same equivalent as **חמשה עשר בשבט** - Astounding!

The Divrei Chaim would make a big Seuda on **טו בשבט** . He explained that from Rosh Chodesh Shevat until Shavuos there is a Yom Tov at least every 15 days. They are Rosh Chodesh Shevat, **טו בשבט**, Rosh Chodesh Adar, Purim, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Pesach, Rosh Chodesh Iyar, Pesach Sheini, Rosh Chodesh Sivan and Shavuos.

The letters of **שבט** form the phrase **שנתבשר בשורות טובות** - be informed of good news?! The month of **שבט** should be one of **שלום, טובה, ברכה** ; peace, goodness and blessing.

Appreciation



A twelve-year-old boy was rushing to school and as he picked up his breakfast before catching the bus, he left a note on the table for his mother. It said the following: mowing the lawn: $5. Making my bed: $1. Playing with my little brother: $.75. Taking out the garbage: $1. Good report card $5. Raking the leaves: $2. Total: $14.75.

After reading this, his mother was aghast. What an ingrate! She thought and then turned the paper over and wrote the following note to her son: carrying you inside me for nine months: no charge. Staying up with you for hours on many nights: no charge. Caring for you when you were ill: no charge. Praying for you: no charge. The time and tears you caused through the years: no charge. The nights filled

with dread and the worries ahead: no charge. Sum total of all the love I showed you: no charge.

The boy came home from school and read his mother's note. With tears he turned over the page and wrote under his original note: "paid in full."

People daven with a Minyan, learn Torah and so on and feel Hashem therefore owes them. We must realize all that Hashem has given us- healthy organs, delicious food and so on. He owes us nothing.



There are many benefits to being thankful. Expressing appreciation and being thankful can reduce depression, lower blood pressure, increase energy and happiness, and even prolong your life!

Gratitude also increases the feel-good neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin and helps you deflect those negative thoughts. Grateful people experience few aches and pains. Gratitude also improves our relationships and career.

Writing a letter of thanks can boost our sense of well-being. That was the conclusion of Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania after he asked a group of 411 people to write and personally deliver a letter of gratitude to someone who had helped them and whom they had never properly thanked before.

Letter writers reported huge increases in happiness, with the effects lasting for about a month!

Rabbi Frand on Beshalach

The Message of Shiras HaYam in Pesukei D'Zimra



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

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

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

Maybe we can suggest that what happened at the Yam Suf was not really about Mitzrayim. It was a battle, so to speak, between the Hashem and Pharaoh. This was – if we can say such a thing – "personal," between the Almighty and Pharaoh. Why? It is because Pharaoh at this point still was of the belief that he was a god. He

felt that he was more than just king. He felt, and he wanted everyone else to feel, that he was a Deity. "***To me is the Nile and I am the Creator.***"] Yechezkel 29:3]. That is why Pharaoh had this problem about going to the bathroom, because gods do not go to the bathroom. Therefore, he had this charade of everyone believing that he did not need to relieve himself, which ostensibly proved that he was a god.

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

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

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

Therefore, the words "Hashem Yimloch L'Olam Va'ed" contain the final message of the Shira. The reason the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah decided to put Shiras HaYam into Pesukei D'Zimra is not because this is just another way of praising the Almighty. We did that already with all the chapters of Tehillim that we read prior to Shiras HaYam. This is a different message – preparing us for Birkas

Krias Shema and Krias Shema, by reinforcing the idea of ***Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad.***

Keeping Your Eye on The Goal



At Krias Yam Suf, how did the Yidden have the courage to walk through the sea as there was a towering wall of water on each side which threatened to come crushing down on them at any moment? Indeed, that is what happened to the Egyptians!



The answer is they didn't look at either side, rather as they walked through the sea they looked only forward, toward their goal of reaching the opposite shore. The same applies when aiming for a target- a specific goal. When we wish to accomplish something we must look straight ahead only and not about past failures or people that didn't succeed in accomplishing this although they tried.

We are like a trapeze artist walking across the high wire in the circus. The secret to his success: to always look forward, keeping his eye on his goal. The moment he looks back or to either side, he is sure to fall.

Yield Right of Way - Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

In this week's portion, the Egyptians did not walk they ran right into trouble. Despite ten plagues which proved that Hashem had absolute control over the forces of nature, and the flawless exodus from Egypt of 2 million Jewish men, women, and children, the Egyptians irrationally thought they had a chance to save face.

In a Divine stratagem Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: ***"Speak to the Children of Israel and let them turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-Zephon; you shall encamp opposite it, by the sea***." (Exodus 14:2)

Understanding Pharaoh's arrogance, Hashem knew that there would be no chance that Pharaoh would see this as a ploy, rather he would immediately say of the Children of Israel, ***'They are locked in the land, the Wilderness has locked them in."*** (Exodus 14:3)

So once again, pride and emotion overrode common sense, and denying Hashem's unmistakable hand in the fugitive nation's meandering, Pharaoh pursues them and runs into disaster.

But that is not the only time that Pharaoh runs into collapse. The Torah tells us that after the Sea of Reeds split and the Jews passed through walls of water in miraculous triumph, the Egyptians followed in pursuit. They must have felt for some reason, that the same miraculous treatment would be meted to them.

But the walls of water began to cave in trapping the helpless Egyptian army.

Any rational person's first reaction would be to flee away from the falling waters, but the Torah tells us that, the water went back to its power as the Egyptians were fleeing toward it" (Exodus 14:27)

Why would they flee toward the waters? Wouldn't logic dictate that they run away from the waters?

Frank had a frustrating day at the office. His work was not up to par and his boss came down hard on him for a variety of misdemeanors. Making up for incomplete work, Frank left the office at 7:00 PM. Late as he was, he figured a trip to the corner pub wouldn't hurt his spirits.

From his cell phone he called his wife to tell her he just left the office and would be home within the hour.



After a few drinks he got into his car and headed for the parkway. His judgement impaired by a mean combination of frustration and alcohol, he headed home in the southbound lane. Unfortunately, his car was pointed north! In his rush to get home he began dodging the oncoming cars.

Suddenly his cell phone rang. "Frank," his wife shouted to him in a panic. "Please be careful! The radio just reported that there is a madman on the parkway driving a car in the wrong direction!"

"One madman with a car going in the wrong direction?" asked Frank incredulously. "There are hundreds of them!"

When one establishes arrogant infallibility, he sees no failure in his actions and will not allow himself to turn back and rethink his corrupt tracks. Instead, he forges ahead, plowing himself into more pain and misery, all the while denying his blunder. He feels that he is travelling in the right path. Everyone else is headed in the wrong direction.

The Egyptians felt it was the Jews who were lost in the dessert. They could not fathom that it was their direction and their judgement that was skewed.

Their arrogance in chasing the Jews into the Red Sea was compounded when the walls of water began to fall before them in a tumultuous torrent of tragedy. But instead of fleeing and back-peddling on the malady of their ways they ran toward the water. And their arrogance together with their idolatrous aplomb was simply washed away.

When travelling on the high-speed lane of life. It is important to view oncoming traffic with retrospect. If the waters are too deep; if traffic is heading in the opposite direction, perhaps it is time to make sure that you are in the right lane?



In Parshas Beshalach, we find the first of a number of episodes in which the Jewish people - having just recently been released from captivity, saved from certain drowning at the sea and supplied with food, water and even meat, all in miraculous fashion - now find life in the wilderness too difficult and a series of complaints against Hashem breaks out.

In each situation, however, Hashem responds to His chosen people's often brazen outbursts with patience and fatherly love and accedes to their requests in a manner which will teach them to appreciate what they have. Thus, although the water was bitter in Marah, Hashem sweetened the water for His people. The Jews cried out for bread; Hashem responded by raining down Mann from heaven - enough for each person, for one day at a time, with a double portion on Friday to cover the Shabbos as well.

These were done to instil a feeling of appreciation for the Heavenly delights that were provided to sustain Bnei Yisroel in the desert. In

Yerushalayim, one can find learning discussions, shiurim and even Mussar groups to one's heart's content. Boruch Hashem, Kein Yirbu!

R' Leibel Benjaminson Shlit"a, described a mussar group in which he participated. The members were given an assignment to improve their sense of gratitude. The leader suggested they consider something they usually do or have and think for ten minutes about its ramifications.



R' Leibel would customarily drink one cup of coffee every morning, and he decided to choose this cup of coffee as his subject. He felt it would be easier to work on the assignment if he wrote his thoughts on paper. To his surprise, the ten minutes quickly turned into thirty-five. He wrote about how the coffee beans grew in Brazil. Someone planted the trees and took care of them until the coffee beans reached maturity. Then workers picked the beans from the trees. The beans were roasted and ground, and packed for shipping. He described all the work involved in the shipping industry which allowed the coffee to reach the United States. This alone required hundreds of people. Finally the coffee arrived at the port in Haifa from where it was taken to a plant and eventually to his grocery store in Yerushalayim. He wrote about the gas range that boiled the water, and the match he used. How much easier it is to use a match rather than have to rub two sticks together. He wrote about how the gas reached his home and what was necessary to build his stove. He wrote about the water kettle that whistled to let him know that the water had boiled. The milk he added required the work of many people from the time it left the cow until it reached his coffee cup. At the end of thirty-

five minutes, he saw he had not even begun to write about the cup and saucer he used, the teaspoon, the table he placed it on, or the chair he sat on.

For the first time, R' Leibel became aware of the thousands of people whose work was necessary for him to have that drink of coffee. This awareness led him to a most intense spiritual experience. His prayers for the next few weeks were permeated with a deep feeling of gratitude to the Almighty.

Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt"l (Toras HaChida) would say: "The Gemara **תענית כד:** teaches that one should not benefit from an item that is the product of a miracle. The word **מן** is an acronym for **מַעשה נִיסים** - the product of a miracle. **כי לא ידעו מה הוא** - they did not know what it was, i.e., Bnei Yisroel did not know if they were permitted to benefit from it. Moshe told them, **הוא הלחם אשר נתן ה' לכם** - this is the bread Hashem has given you. It is a reward for the bread that Avraham Avinu fed to his guests. One can benefit from a miracle if it is a matter of life or death. This is why the Torah emphasizes (**דברים ח:ג**), ***'He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the Mann that you did not know.'*** Because you were starving, you were permitted to eat the Mann."

The letters of שבט form the phrase שנתבשר בשורות טובות - be informed of good news?! The month of שבט should be one of שלום, ברכה, טובה - peace, blessing and goodness.

With faith, there are no questions; without faith there are no answers. - The Chofetz Chaim

15:1 אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה׳

The words "**אָז יָשִׁיר**" that Moshe and Klal Yisroel sang at the Yam Suf, seem to be questionable and Chazal wonder about it. The word "Yashir" (will sing) is future tense, while the Torah is narrating for us an event that took place in the past. This prompted the Gemara (Sanhedrin 91b) to cite this posuk as one of the Biblical sources for the concept of Techiyas Hameisim (Resurrection of the Dead). The Gemara says that in fact, the words "Az Yashir" allude to a future event, after the time of Techiyas Hameisim, when Moshe and the Children of Israel will sing a beautiful song of thanks.

The Shlah HaKadosh writes that every Jew should thank Hashem even before he or she sees a salvation. If one is undergoing a difficult period in his or her life, thank Hashem - say "Hodu L'Hashem Ki Tov" or sing a song of Shirah - and this will encourage the yeshuah to come. It takes a great deal of emunah to praise and thank Hashem while still in the throes of danger and suffering, but those great people in Klal Yisroel who managed to accomplish this, did indeed see the Yad Hashem in its full glory. During the second World War, Hungarian Jews comprised just over eight percent of the population, but the government imposed forced labour brigades, performed by labour battalions conscripted by the German-allied Hungarian regime primarily consisting of Hungarian Jewish men. The commanders of these labour battalions often treated the Jewish units with extreme cruelty, abuse, and brutality. Men who worked in mine quarries were frequently pushed to their deaths off the man-made cliffs. The gendarmes who guarded these brigades were mostly members of the anti-Semitic, fascist Arrow Cross Party.

R' Moshe Shmuel Kornitzer zt"l, an einikel of the Chasam Sofer and a member of the Orthodox kehilla in Hungary after the war, was enlisted in one of these backbreaking labour brigades, stationed on the Pest side of the Danube River which runs north to south through the city of Budapest. It didn't always run through a single city,

though. The western side of the river was once the city of Buda and the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary. Across the river to the east was the ancient city of Pest. Beginning in 1849, the two cities were connected by a number of bridges.

One day, R' Moshe Shmuel's brigade was ordered to march and although at first, the Jews did not know to where they were being led, it soon became clear that this march was really a death march - across the bridge from Pest into Buda, and from there on towards the border with Austria. Over 60,000 Jews were deported in this manner and the conditions were atrocious. Lack of food or drink, walking in terrible conditions, in pouring rain and howling winds. Whoever could not keep up was forced to step aside and summarily shot. People were dropping like flies, but escape was impossible as the guards were everywhere. The Jews in these death marches understood that the moment they walked over the bridge into Buda, their chances of survival were next to nothing. At all costs, they needed to remain on the Pest side - but what could they do? They were powerless at this point.



R' Moshe Shmuel decided to employ the only option he still had. He recalled that just as Bnei Yisroel stood by the Yam Suf and recited a song of Shirah, thanking Hashem for their salvation, he too, would sing this very same song as he stood on the bridge overlooking the banks of the Danube River, and maintain a firm belief that Hashem will come to his aid. With the same tune that Yidden all over the world read the Shiras HaYam in shul, R' Moshe Shmuel began singing his very own shirah and his passion while he sang became

apparent. He truly believed, with an emunah shleima, that the yeshuah was going to come.

As R' Moshe Shmuel and his brigade were walking across the middle of the bridge, an automobile suddenly sped past them and quickly stopped at the head of the march. A man got out of the car and began speaking to the Arrow Cross leader who was heading the march.



They spoke for a few moments, with much hand gesticulation and angry words. Then, the man got back into his car and drove away. A moment later, the order was given to halt and turn back. The entire column of men was ordered to turn around and walk back to their barracks in Pest. Later, it was learned that the man in the car was none other than the renowned Swedish diplomat, **Raoul Wallenberg**, who is credited with saving so many Jewish lives.

R' Moshe Shmuel later recalled, "By saying my own Shira I was able to express my feelings of trust in Hashem's salvation."

Hashem made man superior to animals by endowing him with the faculty of speech. One who misuses this ability becomes inferior to animals, since they at least cannot cause any damage with words.- The Chofetz Chaim, zt''l

No Coasting: Both Marriage and Business Require Constant Effort - by Rav Yissochor Frand



There are two phenomena in the teachings of Chazal that are equated with Krias Yam Suf [the splitting of the Reed Sea].

Rav Shizbi teaches in the name of Rav Elazar Ben Azaria that one's livelihood (mezonosav) is as difficult to achieve as the splitting of the Reed Sea [Pesachim 118a]. Rabbah bar bar Channah teaches in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that appropriate marital match-making (zivugim) is as difficult to achieve as the splitting of the Reed Sea [Sotah 2a; Sanhedrin 22a].

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky taught that the term 'zivugim' doesn't only mean making marital matches (shidduch), it refers to marriage in general.

Everyone knows that just because a person made a living yesterday, there is no guarantee that he will make a living today. Making a living is something that a person must engage in constantly. He always needs to come up with new creative ways to keep and earn his livelihood — new avenues of business, new markets, etc., etc. Even if a person has a salaried position, he always needs to maintain his status and remain current with new trends and developments in his field or profession. There can be no stagnation or "coasting along" when it comes to making a living. It has to be worked on, on a constant basis, day in and day out.

This, says Rav Yaakov, is the connection between a livelihood (mezonosav) and a marriage (zivugim). There can be no coasting in a marriage, just as there can be no coasting in a business. A business can go bankrupt after 30 years, and so can a marriage. A business must be constantly nurtured and expanded and taken care of and maintained. The same is true of a marriage. Marriages and livelihood are both as difficult as Krias Yam Suf. They both require perpetual maintenance.

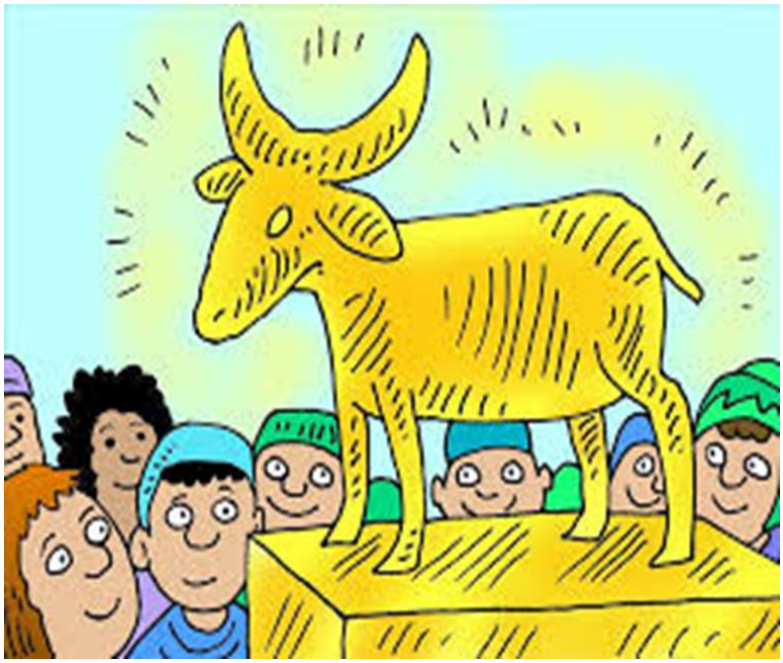
Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

ויסע משה את ישראל מים סוף ויצאו אל מדבר שור וילכו שלשת ימים במדבר ולא מצאו מים (15:22)



Although the Jewish people took the expensive gold and silver vessels of their Egyptian neighbours prior to their departure from Egypt (Shemos 12:35), Rashi writes that the spoils they got at the Yam Suf from the precious jewels and stones that bedecked the Egyptians' horses were even greater than those they received when leaving Egypt the week before.

The Chasam Sofer points out that there was also a critical difference in the Jews' attitude toward these two sources of wealth. While they were still enslaved in Egypt, their sole objective was becoming free. At that point, they were in too much pain to be concerned about their financial status, so Hashem had to ask Moshe



(11:2) to please do Him a favour and prevail upon them to request the Egyptians' valuable possessions.

Later, after the Jewish people had traversed the Red Sea and witnessed the downfall of their oppressors, their approach was quite different. Now that they were finally free, Rashi writes that they were so fixated on collecting the booty at the Yam Suf that Moshe had to pry them away and force them to continue their journey.

The Jews initially got rich while they were still in Egypt and did not feel any need for the bounty. However, once they had tasted the pleasure of prosperity, they hungered for more and had to be wrested away from adding to their affluence at the Yam Suf. The Chasam Sofer writes that the items they took from their Egyptian neighbors in fulfillment of Hashem's request were subsequently used to build the Mishkan, a place where the Shechinah (Divine Presence) resided in their midst. In contrast, the treasures they gathered at the Red Sea were later donated and used to make the golden calf.

The culture that surrounds us today values financial success above all else and pressures us to constantly acquire more money, even at the expense of spiritual pursuits and time with our families. When we find ourselves confronting such temptations, we should strive to adopt the attitude of the Jews in Egypt, a reluctance to seek wealth that eventually yielded the Mishkan, and not the unabashed desire to maximize our bank accounts exhibited at the Yam Suf, which ultimately led to the Chet HaEgel.

Parsha Points to Ponder



How were the Jews able to fulfil the mitzvah of giving tzedakah in the wilderness when there were no poor and needy Jews, as all of them received food and drink on a daily basis? *(Rabbeinu Bechaye 16:21, Chiddushei HaRim, Ayeles HaShachar)*

Rabbeinu Bechaye answers that those who collected their Manna properly were able to share it with those who neglected to collect their Manna before the sun melted it 4 hours into the day (Shemos 16:21). The **Chiddushei HaRim** suggests that the wealthier Jews were able to describe luxurious foods to the simple Jews so that they could select those tastes for their Manna.

Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman explains that they were still able to do other acts of kindness with their bodies to assist fellow Jews in need.

"Avraham called it Yireh (See) as it says "And Avraham called the name of that place Yireh Hashem". Shem called it Shalem (Complete) as it says "And Malki Tzedek, King of Shalem." The Holy One, Blessed be He said "I will call it Yerushalayim like both of them called it – Yireh, Shalem – Yerushalayim. " ~~ Midrash, Bereshis Rabbah 56

A Different Unity



Rashi notes that when the Jewish people arrived at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:2), they encamped **כאיש אחד בלב אחד**- like one person with one heart in a beautiful demonstration of national unity. **The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh** explains that this was a necessary prerequisite for receiving the Torah. However, it is difficult to understand what makes this so unique, as Rashi himself writes in our parsha (Exodus 14:10) that the Egyptians pursued the Jews to the Red Sea with a similar display of harmony.

Rabbi Yitzhak Hutner explains that there is a fundamental difference between the unity of the Jews and that of other nations, which is subtly hinted to by Rashi. The Jewish people are intrinsically connected as part of one large entity, whereas the members of other nations are fundamentally disassociated and out for their own personal interests. Only when their individual desires coincide do they team up in pursuit of a common goal, but not because of any deep bond. As soon as their goals inevitably diverge, they will go their separate ways.

A close reading of Rashi reveals that while he used the same expression to describe the Jews at Mount Sinai and the Egyptians at the Red Sea, he carefully reversed the order to make this very point. The Egyptians didn't have any true unity. For a brief moment, they were united with one heart (**בלב אחד**) in a common desire to

recapture their fleeing slaves, and they therefore pursued them as one (**כאיש אחד**).

The Jewish people, on the other hand, are intrinsically bound together as one person (**כאיש אחד**), and one person automatically has only one heart (**בלב אחד**).

Life Is Better For Those Who Are Not Bitter

We learn in the parsha "They came to Marah, but they could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter (ki marim hem); therefore they named it Marah." [Shmos15:23]

In a classic Chassidic insight as well as Kotzker interpretation, **Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk [1797-1859]** translates the words 'ki marim hem' (because they were bitter) as referring not to the water, but to the people. Bitter people will find complaints about everything. No matter how good the water tasted, a negative and bitter person will always find some reason why he can't drink it.



Attitude is a great determinant in life. To bitter people, everything is bitter and to people who aren't bitter everything is possible. One of the great truths of life is that there are only two types of people in this world: Those who see the glass as half full and those who see the glass as half empty.

The proof of this axiom is the mon [manna]. There was nothing better to eat in the history of mankind than mon. There was no

waste. It never caused stomach problems. It was tasty. According to the Medrash, it tasted however the person who ate it wanted it to taste. If he wanted dairy it was dairy; if he wanted meat it was meat. It was spiritually elevating. How could anyone complain about mon? And yet the people said, "We can't take it any longer – mon for breakfast, mon for lunch, mon for supper – it is too much! We have mon coming out of our ears already!"

The complaints are fully spelled out in Parshas Behaloscha: "The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and the Children of Israel also turned, and they wept, and said, 'Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, and the melons, the leek, the onions, and the garlic. But now, our life is parched, there is nothing; we have nothing before our eyes but the mon!'" [Bamidbar 11:4-6]. The Torah then continues in the next pasuk: "Now the mon was like coriander seed and its colour was like the colour of the b'dolach."

Rashi there [Bamidbar 11:7] says "He who said this did not say that. Israel said 'We have nothing before our eyes but the mon' and the Holy One Blessed is He had it written in the Torah, 'Now the mon was like coriander seed, etc.' as if to say, 'See, you who come into the world, what My children complain about. Yet the mon is so valued.'"

G-d, as it were, says: "Let the record state the facts. Let the record show what My children are complaining about. Let mankind know for all time, that people who can complain about the mon — the greatest substance ever given to man — will complain about anything!"

What is the reason for the complaints? Because THEY were bitter. It was not the problem of the water or the problem of the mon. It was the problem of the people. For bitter people, everything is no good. For positive people, everything is wonderful.

Project Mesorah - Rabbi Paysach Krohn's inspiring Erev Shabbos Bracha

14:29 וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם



Klal Yisroel went on the dry land, in the middle of the ocean. Obviously, it means that Hashem split the sea and therefore there was dry land, and Klal Yisroel went and walked through the dry land in the middle of the split sea.

Reb Elimelech from Lezhensk explains it in a ***drush*** way. **וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה** – When the Yidden go on dry land – on a regular street, whether it is on the main street or any other street, wherever you may be, **בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם** – It was as though they were walking in the midst of the sea. In other words, they considered ***everything*** a miracle. No matter what street you are walking on, no matter what plane you are flying, no matter what train you are travelling on, we have to realize that everything is a miracle that Hashem saves and protects us.

That is the idea, that Klal Yisroel were such *maaminim* over the years, that The B'nei Yisroel, even when **הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה** – even when we are going on dry land, we understood that everything is miraculous and have to be grateful for everything, as if they were walking **בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם**.

This is what *Moidim* and *Shemoina Esrei* is all about. Not taking anything for granted. Do I have to tell you how a person could pick up a disease some place? And, nebech, the quarantine and illness that people are going through? Let us be grateful for every little thing.

Concepts in Avodas Halev From The Family of R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֹּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֶאןָ כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתֻפִּים וּבִמְחֹלֹת



Why is Miriam referred to as the "sister of Aharon" and not Moshe, and why does it mention the musical instrument – **הַתֹּף** - that she took in her hands? Indeed, why did Miriam lead the women in their own song; what was wrong with Moshe's song? Chazal tell us that Amram, Miriam's father, divorced his wife to avoid having children that would be taken away and killed by Pharaoh in Egypt. Since Amram was a leader of the people, everyone followed suit and divorced their wives. It was then, that six-year-old Miriam had a nevuah in which she saw that her mother will give birth to the saviour of Klal Yisroel, and she convinced her parents to remarry. Amram listened to his young daughter and the Gemara (Sotah 12) describes the wedding that took place between Amram and Yocheved where everyone danced, including three-year-old Aharon and Miriam. Miriam took a **תף** - a tambourine, and played it at the wedding, as a symbol of hope.

When Moshe was born from this union, Amram kissed her on her forehead and said, "My dear Miriam, your prophecy has been fulfilled." Three months later, however, when Moshe was placed in a basket and put into the Nile River in order to save him from the Egyptian soldiers, Amram had a change of heart and rebuked her strongly, saying, "Look what has become of your prophecy."

Miriam, though, never gave up. When Moshe led the Nation out of Egypt, through the desert and the Yam Suf, and she saw the Egyptians **מת על שפת הים** - at that moment, it was crystal clear that her prophecy when she was a little girl was fulfilled in its entirety. Thus, now the Torah states that Miriam, the prophetess and sister of Aharon, had her own personal Shira to sing as one who had faith in the Ribono shel Olam, when all others had lost hope. The **תף** that she played now was the tambourine, that she had played at her parents' second wedding, and was carried by her throughout her life in the belief and anticipation of the geulah!



Torah Tavlin

R' Simcha Zissel Broide zt"l (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Knesses Yisroel, Chevron) would say: **וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵילִמָה וְשָׁם שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה עֵינֹת מַיִם וְשִׁבְעִים תְּמָרִים וַיַּחֲנוּ־שָׁם עַל־הַמָּיִם** 15:27-

What is the significance of this - 70 palm trees is not such a large number - why is it necessary for the Torah to tell it to us?

The answer is that there is a strong connection between the 12 wells of water as well as the 70 palm trees here, and the 12 Shevatim and the 70 Zekainim. The significance is crucial. The dependence we have as a nation on the preservation of the ideals of the Shevatim and the respect due to the Zekainim is what keeps us strong. Already as the fledgling nation was growing, we were reminded to remain strong contributors from our position of strength and be rooted in a Torah life that is led by the fruit of the labors of the Zekainim."



Rabbeinu Bechaya zt"l (Hakdama to Beshalach) writes: "The Yam Suf (Red Sea) did not split all at once; rather little by little. As the Jewish people continued to walk through the dry bed, the sea continued to split in front of them. This was just like the miracle of the Mann, which also didn't come down for a month or two at a time, but rather each and every day another portion fell. In this way, Hashem accustomed their nature to trust in Him. Through trusting in Hashem it made the Nation fitting to receive the Torah."

No Good Act Goes For Naught.

Yosef HaTzaddik foresaw that the Nation's preoccupation with collecting the valuables of Egypt was a reason they might leave his bones behind. This, writes the **Ohr HaChayim**, is why he made them swear years earlier, that they would not forget his bones at the time of the Redemption. Moshe kept this oath and instead of searching for wealth, he went in search of Yosef's remains and eventually "took Yosef's bones with him." As a reward for this worthy act, Hashem made Moshe rich by allowing him to keep the splinters of the precious stones from which he carved the second Luchos.

The following story happened not long ago. A middle-aged couple was driving down the road in New Jersey. It was a few days before Rosh Hashanah and they were passing a well-known cemetery where the woman's parents were buried. The man said to his wife, "Why don't we stop, and we can visit your parents' grave now. This way, it will save us the trip to come back on erev Rosh Hashanah." She agreed.

They stopped and were in the middle of saying Tehillim when they noticed a group of odd-looking men standing off to the distance - two elderly fellows and seven younger men. "Perhaps they need a minyan to complete the kevurah," said the man to his wife and he walked over to see if the men needed help. The men did not appear to be religious in any way. He asked them if they were waiting for a minyan for the burial?

In response, the men looked at him and said, "We don't know how to do a Jewish burial. Our father was Jewish and lived on the West Coast. He requested a Jewish burial but we don't really have a clue. Are you by any chance a rabbi?" Well, it just so happened that he was. He explained to the nine men that the normal procedure at a Jewish funeral was for the mourners to say a eulogy, followed by the recital of Kaddish. Then, the family members and mourners would lower the coffin into the grave by rope and one by one each man would take some of the dirt piled on the side and shovel it into the grave.



The men responded, "Oh no, we're going to let the man with the tractor put all the dirt back in." But the rabbi explained that it was incumbent upon the mourners to show proper respect for the deceased and filling up the grave manually is part of the ceremony. He even offered to start and after they all lowered the deceased into the ground, the rabbi picked up a shovel and started shovelling dirt into the grave.

It was arduous work, but he did it for about a minute or two and then he turned around to hand the shovel to one of the other men.

It was then that he realized they had all left. There was nobody at the gravesite. They saw that he was shovelling and they figured he'll do the job for them. With no choice the rabbi continued shovelling until he had placed all the dirt on the side of the plot into the grave, covering over the body of the deceased man.

That Shabbos, the rabbi came to shul and noticed an elderly gentleman whom he recognized from his youth. He walked over to say hello and was pleasantly surprised when the elderly man said to him, "I recognize you from when you were a young boy growing up in Seattle." They exchanged warm greetings and caught up on some of their hometown news.

During the conversation, the rabbi told the elderly man about the unusual experience he had a few days earlier when he was forced to complete the burial for a man that he did not know. "Well, did you at least get his name?" asked the older man curiously. When the rabbi told him the name that he had seen written on the little placard that the cemetery caretaker handed him, the older man gasped in disbelief. "Do you know who that man was? Did you know that he, too, was from Seattle?" The rabbi said he hadn't known, and the older man shook his head in wonder.

"Let me tell you. When you were growing up in Seattle, we would send our high school boys out of town to yeshivos around the country because we didn't have enough boys to sustain a yeshivah back home. Not every parent could afford tuition, airfare, room-and-board, so we made an appeal in the shul once a year. It was the custom that various wealthy men in the community would sponsor a boy. Even if they didn't know the boy." The elderly Seattle man took the rabbi's hand and said, "***The man you single-handedly buried was your sponsor!"***

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

16:31 וַיִּקְרְאוּ בֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־שְׁמוֹ מָן

The Torah tells us that the food which fell from Heaven in the desert was named MANN because it came "Min HaShamayim." This was clearly no natural phenomenon; it was from Hashem and they named it as such. The mann and its unique name continuously reminded the people that everything comes from Hashem, and everyone gets exactly his portion in this world. No one gets more than he needs, and no one gets less. Yes, some people may seem more fortunate than others because parnassa comes easier to them, but really parnassa is from Hashem and everyone receives exactly what is right for him.

For this reason, there is a minhag to say Parshas HaMann on Tuesday of Parshas Beshalach. It is not just to ask Hashem for a bountiful livelihood; it is to infuse us with the awareness that our parnassa is like the mann. It comes directly from Hashem and does not depend on how much hishtadlus we make, and also to remind us that every person gets exactly what he needs.



Saying Parshas HaMann is a segula for parnassa because being satisfied with Hashem's bounty is the best beracha in the world! The posuk states: "And the House of Israel **בית ישראל** called it Mann."

R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l says that the words "Beis Yisroel" refer to the women. The women are the Bayis, They instil the values, the atmosphere and the middos into the Jewish home. It was the women who recognized the essence of the mann and they infused their homes with the lessons

of being satisfied with what you have and believing that everything comes from Hashem.

Men and women must use their individual strengths and work together to build strong Torah homes. A man is tasked with teaching Torah to his children and passing on the mesorah. But if the women do not infuse the home with a love of Yiddishkeit, good middos and solid emunah in Hashem there is no one to teach. Let us work together to infuse our children with all they need to be strong in these turbulent times.

R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer zt"l (Ksav Sofer) would say: וַיִּצְעַק אֶל־ה' וַיּוֹרֵהוּ ה' עֵץ וַיַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶל־הַמַּיִם וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמָּיִם 15:25- The Medrash explains that Hashem uses bitter items to sweeten bitter.



The wood of the tree that sweetened the bitter waters was also bitter, but the end result was sweet, and the water was made drinkable. So it is with human nature. Sometimes, when a person in a depressed and bitter mood sees someone even worse off than him, he comes to the realization that his life is really not as bad as he thought."

"Friendship is man's greatest gift." ~~ Moshe Ibn Ezra

R' Shalom Rokeach zt"l of Belz (Sar Shalom) says: וַיָּשֻׂם אֶת־הַיָּם לֶחָרָבָה וַיִּבָּקְעוּ הַמָּיִם 14:21



Rashi quotes the Mechilta that when the Yam Suf split, *'all the waters of the world also split.'* Why was it necessary for all the waters of the world to split; isn't it true that Hashem does not perform miracles for nothing? What was the purpose of this miracle?

Water represents troubles, as Dovid HaMelech famously said: '*The waters have reached my soul.*' (Tehillim 69:2).

Water indicates problems, conflicts and water splitting indicates deliverance. Thus, when the Yam Suf split, all the waters of the world also split in order to demonstrate that as long as Bnei Yisroel are suffering, their deliverance is already prepared. It will come in the blink of an eye, at which point all the troubling waters will split."

The Chortkover Rebbe says: עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמָהּ מָרָה 15:23

Why does the Torah refer to the place as **מָרָה** (bitter)? Would it not have been more appropriate to call the place **מתוק** (sweet) because of the miracle that sweetened the waters? It was only called **מָרָה** in order to preserve the greatness of the miracle. In other words, the bitter waters were not transformed into different water that was sweet. Rather, it was the same bitter water that now became sweet. All this was done in order to teach future generations not to become discouraged, for bitterness itself can be transformed into sweetness."

One of the great miracles that took place during Krias Yam Suf was when the Pillar of Fire began to boil the earth beneath the sea, scalding the hooves of the Egyptian horses and throwing them into a state of complete pandemonium. Horses reared up and tumbled to the ground and the disoriented Egyptian riders were thrown into a churning tangle of human and animal parts. Miraculously, hot coals appeared on the floor of the sea and set fire to the chariot wheels which became unbalanced while the panic-crazed horses careened uncontrollably in all directions. Everywhere, chariots were collapsing, the wheels were literally falling off, and their riders were thrown free, crushing and breaking their bodies.



One of the greatest Mekubalim during the first half of the 20th century was **Chacham Rabbi Mordechai Sharabi zt"l**, the founder of Yeshivat Nahar Shalom, a yeshiva for the study of the Kabbalah of the Rashash, in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Machane Yehuda. He was revered by hundreds of thousands of people who would stand in line outside his home, sometimes for days on end, to seek his advice. He was known to have mystical powers and his eyes rarely lifted from the sefer he was learning. He devoted his days entirely to Kabbalah and Avodas Hakodesh. During the early years of the British Mandate, when the Ottoman Empire capitulated on October 30, 1918 and the allied powers took control, there was constant fighting from both Arabs and Jews against the stationed British soldiers.

On many occasions, martial law was imposed and whenever a state of emergency was issued by the governing authorities, it was absolutely forbidden for any civilian to be found outside, punishable by

imprisonment and sometimes even death. R' Mordechai Sharabi was oblivious to the politics and the fighting and focused solely on his holy books.

One Shabbos morning, another state of emergency was declared by the British Governor, and soldiers were out patrolling the streets, making sure they were clear of any civilians. The Chacham was unaware of the edict and set off for the Beit Midrash to daven the Shacharit prayers. He didn't get very far before he was spotted by a military patrol in a jeep. "Halt!" called out the soldier. R' Mordechai's mind was elsewhere and he didn't hear a thing. The soldier called out, "Halt! It is forbidden to be outdoors at this time," and swerved his jeep, with three other soldiers inside, to intercept the holy man. Still, R' Mordechai hadn't heard a thing and only when the jeep screeched to a halt in front of him and four soldiers jumped out and accosted him, did he stir from his lofty thoughts and focus on what was happening. The leader spoke in sharp terms. "As per military order, you are forbidden from walking outside at this time, and I have a duty to place you under arrest!"



The Chacham began to protest and insisted that he was unaware of any decree forbidding people from being outside. The British would not have any of it, and they ordered him to come with them down to military headquarters. They placed handcuffs on his wrists and told him to get into the jeep for the ride to HQ. At the sight of the automobile, R' Mordechai recoiled in shock and fear. Riding in a jeep on Shabbos was forbidden and he would not get inside. The soldiers pushed and cajoled, but R' Mordechai held his own. Finally, the four British soldiers lifted up the Chacham and forcefully threw him into

the jeep. Then, they all quickly jumped in, and the driver started the engine.

Suddenly, a loud series of explosions went off and the soldiers all dropped to the ground, pulling out their weapons in order to return fire. They waited a few seconds as the smoke cleared, hoping to catch a glimpse of the enemy who was shooting at them. But there was no enemy. They stood up and looked about, and they all saw an amazing sight: the explosions they had heard were not from guns or bombs. It was the sound of all four tires on the jeep exploding at the same time! They bent down to examine the jeep and saw that the tires were all flat, shredded, and the jeep was not going anywhere anytime soon. This was not something they were used to and the leader's gaze fell on the Chacham sitting in the back of the jeep. It occurred to him that this must have happened to protect the man's honour, and he quickly released him, apologizing for the inconvenience. He even ordered two soldiers to walk with R' Mordechai home and protect him along the way!

From Our Sages

וַיּוֹרֵהוּ ה' עֵץ '***And Hashem showed him a tree***.' (15:25)

The Midrash explains that Hashem uses bitter to sweeten bitter. The wood of the tree that sweetened the bitter waters was also bitter, but the end result was sweet, and the water was made drinkable.

So it is with human nature. When a person in a depressed and bitter mood sees someone even worse off than him, he realizes that his life is really not as bad as he thought. (**Ktav Sofer**)

To add value to others, one must first value others.

Concepts In Avodas Halev From R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמָהּ מָרָה 15:23



Immediately following the glorious miracles that transpired at the Yam Suf, Bnei Yisroel travelled for three days and arrived in "Marah." It was called by this name because when the people found water, they were unable to drink it due to its bitterness - **כִּי מָרִים הֵם**.

Moshe davened on behalf of the Nation and Hashem showed him a tree, which he threw into the water and the water instantly became sweet, enabling them to drink and enjoy the water. **The Mechilta** says that it was a bitter tree and a miracle occurred. Normally, when water is bitter, one adds sugar to sweeten it. Here, a bitter tree sweetened the bitter water.

My machshava is based on the posuk in Sefer Shoftim (14.14): **מעז יצאה מתוק** - "*From the strong (bitter) came out sweetness.*" The Navi is teaching us that sometimes the sweetest outcome in life will emerge from the most bitter of pain. We, as individuals, must realize that when a situation appears bitter and dark, a bit of Tefillah and Emunah can produce the sweetest results. We see this in the words of the posuk, **וימררו את חייהם** The trop (cantillation) on these words is **קדמא ואזלא** which is 190 in gematria.

This alludes to us, says the **Apter Rav zt"l**, that because of the bitter life in Mitzrayim, Bnei Yisroel were able to leave 190 years earlier than originally foreshadowed. From the harsh bitterness of the slavery, came the sweetness of an early redemption. Hashem

chose to preserve this lesson for our future lives through the Geulah and the bitter waters of Marah.



This is also the connection between Tu B'Shvat and Shabbos Shirah. After all, shouldn't the "New Year" for trees be celebrated when the trees are in full bloom with flowers and fruit, instead of at a time when they are bare, and snow covered; a time when we can't imagine anything ever growing from them? Life can sometimes be bitter and it seems that Hashem may be adding even more bitterness. But the lesson of this "Tree Holiday" is that even at this bleakest time of the year, we look to the future and celebrate the fruit that will eventually grow.

Indeed, **מעז יצאה מתוק** - from the harsh bitterness emerges sweetness.

Drush V'Chiddush

One of the most widely discussed issues in Jewish theology (which is brought up at just about every sheva berachos) is on the famous words of Chazal **קשין מזונותיו של אדם כקריעת ים סוף: פסחים קיח.** - ***"Providing man's sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea,"*** and the corresponding dictum סוטה ב. , **קשה לזווגן כקריעת ים סוף** - ***"It is as difficult to pair them (husband and wife) as the splitting of the Red Sea."***

What precisely was so difficult about Krias Yam Suf? Who was it difficult for? Hashem? Can something really be difficult for Hashem? No, of course not! There is nothing that is **קשה** - difficult for Hashem to achieve. Rather, it is a question of **רצון** - if Hashem wishes to do something or not.

The gemara **סוטה לז.** recalls how the Jews approached the Red Sea, staring into its deep abyss, uncertainty and trepidation registering on their terrified faces. Until Nachshon ben Aminadav, of the tribe of Yehudah, plunged into the water and began to walk. Still, the water did not part. Until it reached his nostrils – **באו מים עד נפש** - and suddenly the greatest miracle of all time occurred: the Red Sea split!



The lesson, says **R' Yitzchok Marinover Shlit'a**, is that Hashem will only perform a miracle for a person as long as he doesn't lift up his nose, in other words, he does not act with conceit and arrogance, for the moment a person becomes arrogant and "thumbs his nose" at Hashem and people, Hashem finds it "hard" to assist him - He refuses to rescue an arrogant person, or provide his basic needs such as sustenance and shidduchim.

Just as Nachshon was saved for he didn't raise his nose, Hashem will only provide for the humble - not for those who walk with their nose in the air!

There are men who travel far to look for something that they can find in their own homes. " -Mishle Yehoshua

Cloud Of Glory

When Bnei Yisroel travelled in the desert they had a that led them by day and a pillar of fire that led them by night.



Based on this, the **Cheshev Sofer** gives us an interesting insight into the journey of life. The road we take in life is not always smooth. We all have our ups and our downs. The trick in life is to remember that WE are being led. It is not OUR doing that brings us success and we should not spend time blaming ourselves when things seem bleak.

The first words of the Shulchan Aruch state: **שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד** - ***"I place Hashem before me at all times."*** At all times means at all the different stages of life; Sometimes we are up, it's the morning, the daytime of life. The sun is shining brightly. We are on top of the world! Maybe we just won the lottery! Or got a great job! At such times we are meant to put the CLOUD in front of us and not let our good fortune go to our heads. The Torah tells us: *When your heart swells, you take credit for your accomplishments and you forget Hashem.* It is at these times that you need to remember the Clouds of Glory. It is Hashem who is leading you to success.

But life is a cycle, and the cloud reminds you that life will not ALWAYS remain so sunny. Dark days will come, and eventually life turns to night, to darkness. We cannot see any sunshine or light. We feel sad, lonely, unappreciated or broken in spirit. It is at these night times that we must again remember to place Hashem before us. At

this time, we must see Hashem as a pillar of fire! A bright, strong light that can light up the darkest and most difficult periods of life.

Hashem loves us and He never leaves us. But it is up to us to place Hashem in front of us at all times. No matter if we are up or if we are down, we must ALWAYS remember that it is Hashem and ONLY Hashem who can lead us successfully through all the various light and dark stages of life. We would be wise to follow Him blindly.

R' Mendel of Rimanov ZT"L would say: וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו מָן הוּא כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ מַה־הֻוא 16:15



The mann that fell for the Jews in the desert, was Heavenly food, spiritual nourishment, the sustenance of the angels. It had such an incredible impact on the people eating it that it caused them to change as well. So much so, that each and every Jew that ate the mann was unrecognizable to his fellow Jew.

That is why the posuk states: ***'And they said, each man to his friend, what is this?'*** They looked at one another and did not recognize each other. It was only after Moshe explained, 'This is the bread that Hashem gave,' did they understand."

Tu B'Shvat



Rabbi Asher Balanson Shlit'a (Ohr Yerushalayim) would say: "Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for trees is in the middle of the winter. Even though the fruit has not appeared yet, we consider it as if the new year has already begun because the sap has risen, and in the sap is stored the inner strength of the trees (Rashi). One must learn from this how to act towards other people. How many times do we pay attention just to the outside of a person, his clothes and outward appearance, and not the inside, his neshama?

The person standing in front of us can appear barren without fruit or flowers but deep down he has an inner strength that can bring forth very special abilities - his fruit. If one sees a bare tree and neglects to care for it, its fruit will not come out. Similarly, if we don't take care of the person in front of us, his fruits and potential will also not come out."

One should never despair, no matter how difficult their circumstances may be, because Hashem always has a plan. ~ Rav Chaim Kanievsky ztl.

"What is lofty can be said in any language, and what is mean should be said in none." ~~ Rambam

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz ZT"L (Sichos Mussar) says:



"At the sea, the Jewish people greatly outnumbered their Egyptian pursuers and yet they wouldn't think to fight back because they still maintained their 'slave mentality.'

The same principle applies to each person in his battle against the evil inclination. If a person views himself as inferior and feels excessive guilt, he will not even try to fight against his negative impulses. Since he does not believe in himself and his abilities, he feels utterly discouraged. Our task is to view ourselves in an elevated manner. Internalize the knowledge that you have great potential. Be aware of your strengths and know that when you are resolved to be victorious over your impulses, you will succeed."

14:16 וְאַתָּה הָרֵם אֶת־מַטְּךָ וּנְטֵה אֶת־יָדְךָ עַל־הַיָּם

Towards the latter half of the eighteenth century, a movement was emerging that was meant to challenge, rather than revive, the traditional spirit of Yiddishkeit. In 5542 (1782), Naftali Hertz Wessely of Austria published a book entitled Divrei Sholom V'emes (Words of Peace and Truth), advocating a major change in the way Jewish children should be taught. The cheder system must be revamped, he said, and a new spirit of scientific inquiry and secular knowledge must be introduced into the curriculum. This work was a defining manifesto of the burgeoning Haskalah movement.

The saintly **Vilna Gaon, R' Eliyohu of Vilna ZT"L**, realized that this book contained the seeds of a spirit of disrespect for the Sages and their interpretation of the Torah. He ordered that the book be

ridiculed by having it placed in the kunah, the pillory, outside of the Great Synagogue in Vilna. And then it was publicly burned. The Gaon worked all his life to discredit the Haskalah and prove the folly of their ways. Even their leaders, who claimed to be wise and understanding of the Torah, would attempt to twist the holy words to their own benefit and purpose. The following story gives one a sense of how people of the time understood the conflict between the Gaon and the Maskilim.



The curators of a prominent Russian museum owned a small stone that was reputed to possess remarkable powers. Many scientists came to experiment on the stone, but no one could discover its abilities. The museum committee decided to ship the stone to Germany, the cultural and scientific centre of the world. But the German scientists could not discover the properties of the stone either. They decided to return the stone. At that point, Moses Mendelssohn, a leader of the Haskalah and a scientist on the committee, stood up. "Gentlemen! There is a certain Rabbi Eliyohu of Vilna who is renowned for his wisdom and attainments. Before we return the stone to Russia, let us send it to him and see if he can unveil its mysterious powers."

A delegation of two German professors made their way to Vilna. Soon they were standing before the Gaon in rapt silence as he examined the stone, rolling it about in his fingers. At last, the Gaon looked up and motioned to his attendant. "Reb Hirsch," he said to his gabbai, "please bring in a glass of water." When the water was brought in, the Gaon took the stone and dropped it into the glass. There was a fizzing noise, a cloud of steam and then an amazing thing

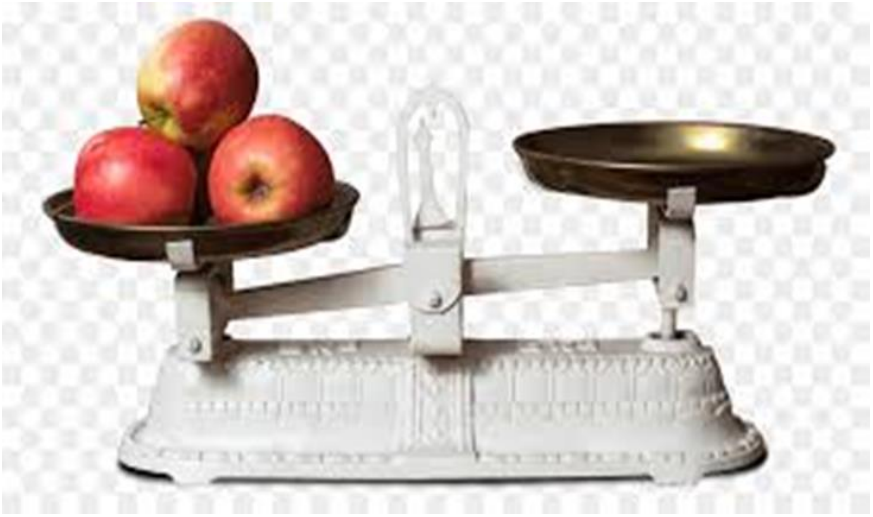
occurred: The water in the glass disappeared! One of the professors picked up the glass, looked at it from all sides and handed it to his colleague. This was wonderful. The glass was stone dry! But where had the water gone?

The two professors looked back at the Gaon. "Please, honoured Rabbi, you must explain!" The Gaon said, "This stone is a sapphire. When placed in water, it immediately breaks the water down to its chemical elements: the gases of hydrogen and oxygen." The two professors were astounded at the scientific genius of this rabbi living in a remote Lithuanian town, and they took their leave with great respect. When the scientists returned to Germany, they reported on the Gaon's incredible insight. Moses Mendelssohn was present at the meeting, and he stood up and exclaimed excitedly, "If so, we have discovered a naturalistic explanation for the splitting of the Red Sea!

The sages of the Talmud relate that the staff of Moshe was made of sapphire. Obviously, when he raised the staff over the sea, the water dissolved for purely natural reasons, settling into its basic elements of hydrogen and oxygen." When the Gaon heard of Moses Mendelssohn's statement, he was outraged. "Heretic!" he proclaimed. "Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu, 'Lift your staff and stretch out your hands.' The Medrash explains that the word הָרֵם - 'Lift,' means set aside. In other words, rather than use his staff to cause the water to part, Moshe Rabbeinu set it aside and only lifted his hands above the water. This was done so that heretics shouldn't claim that the water split naturally. This was indeed the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea!"

"Act the way you'd like to be and soon you'll be the way you act."

A poor woman walked into a grocery store. She approached the owner of the store behind the counter in a humble manner and asked if he would allow her to charge a few groceries. She softly explained that her husband was ill and unable to work, she had seven children and they needed food. She would do whatever it takes to pay him back if he would just allow her to buy on credit this one time.



The grocer, a big gruff man, scoffed at her request and suggested that she leave his store if she had not the money. Visualizing her family's needs she pleaded again. "Please, sir, I will bring you the money as soon as I get it." The grocer was not the compassionate sort and threatened to have her forcibly removed if she did not leave. He told her that he would not extend her credit and she had better leave. The woman was crestfallen and looked around the store for assistance of any kind. A well-to-do customer who overheard the conversation between the poor woman and the grocer said that he would cover the cost of whatever she needed for her family.

But the grocer decided to have a little fun first. "Alright. I'll tell you what," he said to her, "put your grocery list on the scale and whatever your list weighs, I will give you that amount in food." The woman at first didn't understand. But after considering it over for a moment, she reached into her purse, took out a piece of paper and scribbled something on it. She then laid the piece of paper on the scale carefully with her head bowed.

The grocer and the customers stared in amazement as the scales went down and stayed down. Shocked, the grocer murmured, "I can't believe what I'm seeing." He had no choice but to put the groceries

on the other side of the scale. The scales did not balance as he continued to put more and more groceries on until the scales could hold no more. And it still wouldn't balance!

Finally, he grabbed the piece of paper off the scales and looked at it with wide eyes. It was not a grocery list at all; it was actually a prayer which read, ***"Please G-d, You know my needs and I am leaving this in Your hands."*** The stunned grocer gave her the groceries that he had placed on the scale and stood in awed silence as she thanked him and left the store.

The wealthy customer handed him a fifty-dollar bill and said, "This should cover it. And believe me, it was worth every penny!" It wasn't until later that day that the burly grocer discovered that his scale was actually broken and only one side would go down! But he did understand, all too well, that only G-d knows the full weight of a heartfelt prayer!

whY I Matter - Young Israel of Midwood

וַיּוֹשַׁע ה׳ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרָיִם וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם ***"On that day, Hashem saved Yisrael from the hand of Egypt, and Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore."*** (14:30)

R' Yosef Yozpa Han Norlingen z"l (1570-1637; Frankfurt, Germany) writes: It is written in Sefer Chareidim that among the ten things that bring about atonement of a person's sins without any suffering is to recite this verse [during prayer] with joy and song, with the same immense joy that it was recited at the time of the splitting of the Yam Suf.

R' Yosef Yozpa concludes, I myself have the practice to recite the verse with the trop, like one reading the Torah.



One of the citizens of Apt was a very wealthy man, who owned several factories and had wide real estate holdings. He was the most influential and highly respected citizen of the community. One day, he told his Rebbe, **R' Yehoshua Heschel ZT"L**, that he was much bothered by the posuk in the daily prayers: *"Hashem lowers the mighty to the ground, and lifts the down-trodden to the heights of heaven."* "In what manner could G-d humble me?" he asked. "If some of my businesses were to fail, others would still survive. And if in some way I was to lose all of my assets, my children are independently wealthy. How would G-d single me out to lower me to the ground?"

The Rebbe rebuked him sharply. "Do not be so foolish as to challenge Hashem. Simply accept on faith that nothing is beyond Him." Later that day, the wealthy man began to be plagued by the thought that he should convert to another religion. At first, he was able to dismiss the thought as an absurdity, but it gradually increased in intensity, and he could not dismiss it from his mind. Soon he was totally consumed by an irresistible urge, and as one possessed, found himself in the priest's rectory, professing his desire to convert. Seized by this strange, passionate desire, the man fell to his knees and began crying, pleading with the priest to accept him. The priest, noting his tears said, "I have difficulty in accepting your sincerity. However, if you genuinely wish to convert, you must demonstrate

this by transferring title of everything you own to the church. If you do this, then I will believe you are sincere."

Unable to resist the intense urge which had overtaken him, the man wrote out a document giving everything he owned to the church. The priest put the document into his desk, and told the man to wait a bit, for he would return shortly for the conversion ritual. No sooner had the priest left, then the strange urge abruptly disappeared. As if awakening from a nightmare, the man looked about him. "What on earth am I doing inside a church?" he said, and promptly ran out. The man then remembered what had transpired. He realized that he was now financially impoverished. He owned nothing. He was poor and terribly alone.



It was late at night when it occurred to him that the Rebbe might have compassion, for the holy Apter Rov never turned anyone away. He broke into profuse tears and confessed to the Rebbe what he had done. The Rebbe looked at him with pity. "Now, my child," he said, "do you see how simple it is for Hashem to humble someone?" "I am doomed forever. Nothing can save me," cried the man. "But you forget the second half of the prayer," the Rebbe said. "'He elevates the downtrodden to the heights of heaven.' You must now have faith that Hashem can do this too. Go home, sleep, and trust in Hashem."

Late that night, a flash fire broke out in the church, destroying part of the rectory. There was no desk, no document, no evidence that anything had happened. When there seems to be no escape from a dilemma, one must never lose faith in the infinite wisdom and power of Hashem Yisborach.

Torah Gems

וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֹּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֶאןָ כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתֻפִּים וּבִמְחֹלֹת 15:20

After the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, Bnei Yisroel sang the Shiras Hayam - Song at the Sea. The women did not join the men singing and instead sang a Shirah on their own, led by Miriam Haneviah, sister of Moshe and Aharon. However, we find a stark contrast between the song of the men and that of the women, in the fact that the women employed musical instruments. Why didn't the men use instruments as well?



R' Chaim Abulafyah ZT"L, in Eitz Chaim, writes that the women used musical instruments to ensure that their voices would not be heard by the men. Miriam was fully aware of the prohibition of **קול אשה** - (Hearing) a woman's voice, as the men would inevitably have heard the women sing had they sang with them together. Even according to the opinion which is lenient concerning a family singing together agrees that if the males and females are not all of one immediate family, this prohibition still applies. Therefore, since the whole of Klal Yisroel were there at the time, it was forbidden for the men and women to sing the Shirah together.

Instead, Miriam led the women to a place where they could not be heard by the men, so that they could sing their own Shirah. To further ensure this, the loud volume of the instruments completely drowned out their voices. This, then, is the intention of the posuk: *"And all the women followed after her,"* they followed her away from

where the men stood. "*With musical instruments and dance*" - to ensure that the men did not hear their voices or see them frolic.

Do You Believe?



There was a famous stuntman who announced that he was planning a daring stunt: He was going to walk over Niagara Falls on a tightrope as he wheeled a wheelbarrow across. A huge crowd gathered to watch this amazing act and the stuntman did not disappoint. With ease, he walked across the tightrope and the crowd went wild with applause.

A short time later, he announced an even more daring stunt. This time, he would walk over the Falls on a tightrope, while wheeling a wheelbarrow - blindfolded! Who could miss this? The crowd gathered below but before he began, the stuntman decided to tease the crowd. With theatrical grace, he stood on the edge of the high wire and called out, "Do you believe I can walk on this tightrope blindfolded?" The crowd shivered in anticipation and screamed out, "Yes, we believe!" in one voice. "Well, then, do you believe I can walk on this tight rope blindfolded with a wheelbarrow?" Again, they screamed back, "Yes, we believe!" "And do you believe I can do it blindfolded with a person inside the wheelbarrow?" "Yes, we believe," they shouted in a frenzy. "In that case," shouted the

stuntman, "who volunteers to go in the wheelbarrow?" There was silence.

When Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped into the Yam Suf, he displayed a perfect belief in Divine salvation. We, too, must take the first step and show that we are wholly dependent on Hashem, rather than thinking that we can live without Heavenly assistance. The question is: are we ready to jump into Hashem's wheelbarrow?

וַיּוֹשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרָיִם וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם ***"On that day, Hashem saved Yisrael from the hand of Egypt, and Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore."*** (14:30)



The Ohr Hachayim notes that the Jews were not considered free until the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea. We learn from this that a person isn't free until he/she personally feels free.

A person who worries and feels insecure remains imprisoned. To be free, one must gain control over one's thoughts and worrying. For if one worries about the future, even if events turn out exactly as one hopes, one still suffers (unnecessarily) in the present.

"A good man who speaks evil is like a palace next to a tannery: one defect destroys all the grandeur." ~~ Talmud, Shabbat 56b

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך . *Any of the diseases that I placed upon Egypt, I will not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer* (15:26)

The Vilna Gaon, zy"a, explains that this posuk alludes to the difference of the Tannaim in the Haggadah, as to how many Plagues befell the Mitzrim in Egypt and how many at the sea, until R' Akiva stated that they were smitten with fifty plagues in Egypt and two hundred and fifty at the sea.

What difference does this make to us? Rather, since the posuk guarantees that "any of the diseases that I placed upon Egypt I will not place on you", Chazal wanted to increase the diseases that were placed on Egypt so that Israel would be spared from a greater number of diseases!

Me'oros Ha'Tzaddikim

Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk - The Pnei Yehoshua 14th of Shevat - The Vow that Saved His Life

Author of the Talmudic commentary, Pnei Yehoshua, and grandson of the famed Rav Yehoshua, mechaber of the Maginei Shlomo and responsa Pnei Yehoshua, for whom he was named, Rav Falk served as the head of the rabbinical court in Lwów after the Chacham Tzvi and afterward in Berlin, Metz and Frankfurt.

During his tenure in Lwów, a calamity occurred in which an explosion of several barrels of gunpowder caused a terrible fire that killed some thirty-six Jews, including his in-laws, his wife and daughter. It was during this tragic episode, which the mechaber of Pnei Yehoshua describes in great detail in the introduction to his multi-volume Talmudic commentary, that he was trapped under the rubble.



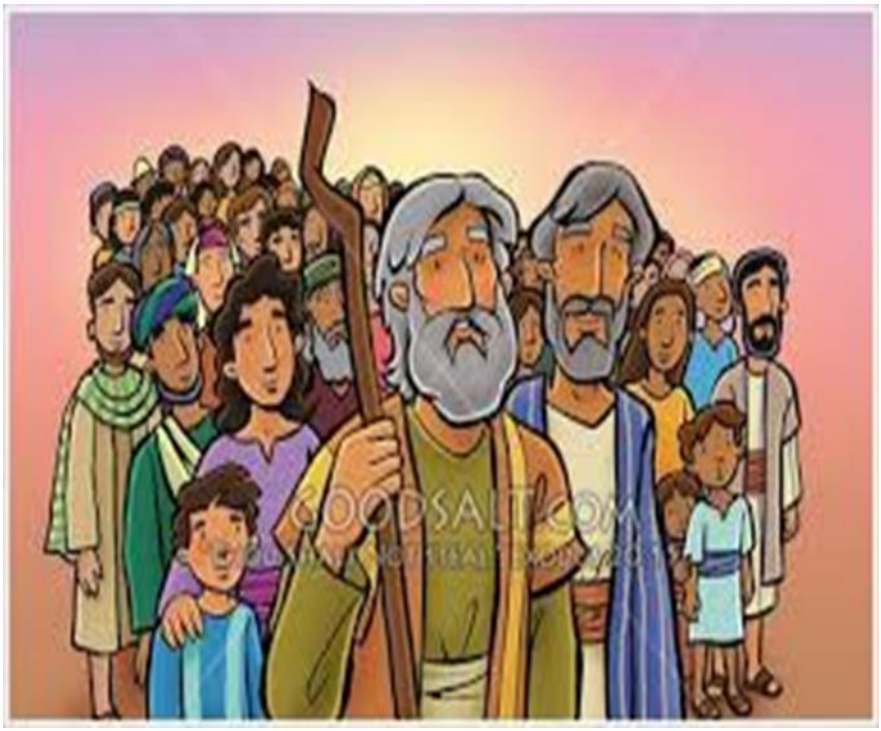
Lying there beneath the heavy beams of his destroyed home, paralyzed by shock, he waited for the collapsing structure to subside. As he lay there immobile, he vowed to Hashem that just as his illustrious maternal grandfather, the mechaber of Maginei Shlomo, for whom he was named, authored a commentary on the Talmud, should G-d help him to survive this disaster, he vowed that he too would not rest until he had studied, reviewed and authored a similar Talmudic commentary.

Miraculously, no sooner had he vowed this, than the rubble mysteriously parted and he found a path through which he crawled out – unscathed. Seeing this open miracle and understanding that Hashem had accepted his vow, he undertook to study and write novel interpretations and commentary on the Talmud and its commentaries, Rashi and the Tosfos. It is this famous multi-volume work which has preserved his fame till this day.

"People say, "Time is money" but I say "Money is time," for every luxury costs so many precious hours of your life." ~~ The Chofetz Chaim

"The trip is never too hard, if you know you're going home."-The Chofetz Chaim.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter



ויגד למלך מצרים כי ברח העם 14:5 **תורת גבריאל** -

Paroah said that Klal Yisroel could leave Mitzrayim. Shortly after allowing them to leave, he was told that Klal Yisroel left, and he chased after them. What caused Paroah to chase them after he gave them permission to leave?

As the Zohar says, **העם** refers to Eirav Rav. The Zohar also tells us that there were 2.4 million Eirav Rav who left Mitzrayim together with Klal Yisroel. It was when he heard that **העם**, the Eirav Rav, were leaving that he chased after them. Klal Yisroel along with the Eirav Rav leaving Mitzrayim, left Mitzrayim devoid of people.



R' Meir Shapiro ZT"L (Lubliner Rov) would say: "Do you think it's easy to be happy? A consistent state of happiness demands hard work. One must make a conscious effort to think in a manner that allows him to always feel happy."

ופרעה הקריב, וישאו בני ישראל את עיניהם והנה מצרים נסע - תורת גבריאל
אחריהם וייראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה׳ 14:10

"Paroah approached, B'nei Yisroel raised their eyes and behold – Mitzrayim was journeying after them, and they were very frightened; B'nei Yisroel cried out to Hashem."



Klal Yisroel left Mitzrayim, and the Mitzriyim chased after them. Klal Yisroel were 600,000 without the Eirav Rav. They outnumbered the Mitzriyim greatly. If so, why did they fear the Mitzriyim chasing after them?

Klal Yisroel were subjugated under the control of Mitzrayim for hundreds of years. Seeing their captors chase after them, automatically created fear within them even though they outnumbered their captors. A second reason they feared was because the Mitzriyim possessed something they did not.

The Posuk says, **נוסע** –singular – Mitzrayim as one unit chased after Klal Yisroel , whereas the Medrash tells us that Klal Yisroel were not completely united at this juncture. Especially in battle, unity is of utmost importance. Being that the Mitzriyim had it, and they did not, they feared them.

"Nobody is ever impoverished through the giving of charity." ~~ Rambam

זוהר –הפלא המיוחד בנס קריעת ים סוף ***"The unique wonder that occurred by the miracle of the splitting of the sea".*** There was something unique about the miracle of Krias Yam Suf, that which is not found by any other miracle. There are miracles that "save", and miracles that "punish". However, at Krias Yam Suf both of these contradictory factors occurred. The sea split to "save" Klal Yisroel, and the same miracle then "punished" the Mitzriyim by drowning them.

14:5 ויגד למלך מצרים כי ברח העם - חתם סופר



Paroah allowed Klal Yisroel to leave Mitzrayim. However, after they left, his astronomers told him that in the future Klal Yisroel would once again go to Golus - Golus Bavel. When Paroah heard that, he chased after Klal Yisroel. If they were not going to complete freedom, he wanted them to be his slaves. A Remez to this can be found in the words, "**ויהפך לבב**" - ***"And his heart turned."***

If you transpose the word **לבב** you end up with **בבל**. Paroah saw Golus Bavel and therefore he chased after them.

R' Nachman of Breslov ZT"L would say: "The best present you can give people is to give them back their self-confidence."

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

In this week's Parshah, we learn how Hashem split the Yam Suf for Bnei Yisroel to escape from the attacking Mitzrim. Why was it necessary for Hashem to split the sea, when He could have directed Bnei Yisrael to use boats or rafts which would have minimized the need for such a great miracle, while at the same time still saved the Bnei Yisrael?

Rav Shimon Sofer answers based on the Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 21:7) which correlates the splitting of the sea as a reward for Avraham Avinu splitting wood for Akeidas Yitzchok (Bereishis 22:3). Avraham could have kept the wood complete in its natural state, which would have taken longer to burn and build a proper fire, which would enable him to spend more time with Yitzchok. Instead, he chose to split the logs so that the fire would start quicker.



In this merit Hashem ensured that Bnai Yisrael would be saved in a quicker fashion, by entering the split sea and not having to travel on boats— with the constant fear of capsizing, which would only end when they reached the other side. Hashem ensures that even the smallest of details which a person invests for Him will be properly rewarded in-kind!

R' Nachman of Breslov ZT"L would say: "The best present you can give people is to give them back their self-confidence."



Parsha Pages - 50 Miracles Of Krias Yam Suf

Krias Yam Suf was far more dramatic and miraculous than a "simple" splitting of the sea. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (5:4) says that 10 miracles happened to Bnei Yisroel during Krias Yam Suf. The Bartenura lists them.

The Mei'am Loez counts 50 main nissim that happened to Bnei Yisroel from when they left Mitzrayim until after Krias Yam Suf. He actually divides them into subparts for a count of more than 150.

1. Seven Ananei HaKavod protect them in four directions and even below their feet. The seventh led the way levelling the ground.

2. Hashem put in Paroh's heart to chase them despite all he had been through.

3. At night of Krias Yam Suf the cloud that led them went behind them. It darkened the night for the Mitzrim and lit up the light for the Jews.

4. The Mitzrim shot spears and arrows and not one person was hurt.

5. The Yam Suf split when they were in up to their nostrils.

6. All the waters of the world, including underground and in the heavens and in cups, split as well (into 12 parts see below).

7. The Yam Suf split into 12 thoroughfares for the 12 Shevatim. The water did not split completely right away, only as they walked it kept opening further. This was to teach them Bitachon.

8. The water covered them on all sides including above their heads forming a tent.

9. The floor of the Yam Suf dried completely like there was never any water there.

10. The floor became a beautiful mosaic.

11. The water formed crystals so that the Shevatim were able to see each other.

12. There were fruit trees for the mothers to feed the crying hungry children. It smelled of sweet fragrances and not sea water.



13. From the walls came sweet drinking water.

14. Not a single women miscarried from all the trauma of the Mitzri onslaught and the stormy winds. Many of the women from the Eirev Rav miscarried, as only the Jewish women were protected.

15. The depths of the Yam Suf were levelled. They did not have any trouble going in or out. The water formed a floor where it was deeper that other parts.

16. The leftover drinking water hardened in its place.

17. Even the old and infirm were able to move across swiftly without holding everyone back, despite that it was night-time and they were all terrified of the Mitzrim who were in hot pursuit.

18. The walls of water stood so high all he nations of the world were able to see them.

19. Vegetation grew from the ground for the animals to eat.

20. The foolish Mitzrim chased then into the Yam Suf despite their bad experiences with the Makos.

21. When the Mitzrim entered the Yam the floor became quicksand swallowing them up.

22. The Amud Aish scorched the floor and the horses lost their shoes and burned their feet.

23. One wheel fell of each chariot letting continue to move at top speed while flipping over and over on its head until it reached the water.

24. Many Mitzrim fell out of their chariots and could not get up, as if they fell from great heights.

25. Hashem formed the waves into female horses, causing the horses to head towards them with great speed.

26. Even though the floor was muddy when a Mitzri fell it was hard like rock. When the walls of water came crashing down on them it was hard like stones, breaking their heads.

27. From the Shamayim it rained down on the Mitzrim stones and hot coals. Also all the arrows they shot were returned to them as fast as they went out.

28. The splitting of the Yam caused a huge boom that was heard throughout the world like a roaring lion.

29. The wind was at the same time hot and cool. It melted the ground for the Mitzrim and dried the water for Bnei Yisroel.

30. Although ice melts slowly, the walls of the Yam Suf melted instantly not giving the Mitzrim time to run away.

31. If a Mitzri escaped alive the water chased him and dragged him back in to drown him.

32. There are different opinions about the logistics but according to one opinion, after the last Mitzri entered the Yam, all of Bnei Yisroel were still inside. For Bnei Yisroel it remained split while the Yam on the Mitzri side returned to its normal flow.

33. The Mitzrim that were right behind the Bnei Yisroel could not jump over to their side and were drowned. Similarly those near the shore also were not able to retreat to safety.

34. Hashem stirred the Mitzrim in the water like a pot of soup.

35. The horses could not free themselves from their chariot preventing the agile horses from swimming to the shore.

36. The powerful waters of the lowers depths rose to meet the waters of the upper depths, painfully raking their bodies between the two currents and stripping them of their clothes.

37. The waters tossed them up so that they can fall even deeper as they suffered at every level of the sea.

38. The floor of the Yam opened and swallowed many Mitzrim inside.

39. Hashem lifted Mitzrayim up so that the people can witness the destruction of the Mitzri army in the Yam Suf. The waters of the Yam Suf even went out of Mitzrayim to drown their families of the Mitzrim who were in the Yam.

40. All the Mitzrim were then spit out to the dry land so that the doubters among Bnei Yisroel could verify that they did not escape.

41. The Mitzrim landed on the shore near death but not dead so that they can see that Bnei Yisroel survived. Another reason was so that each person could identify his tormentor and finish him off himself.

42. Although the many foreign soldiers in Paroh's army suffered in the Yam Suf they all survived.

43. Although Paroh led the way and took the brunt of the crashing sea walls, he was the lone survivor, in order to tell the world the greatness of Hashem.

44. Even Micha and the people that worshipped his avodah zara survived.

45. Although Bnei Yisroel took all the riches of Mitzrayim on the way out, that was only from private people. The royal treasures remained intact. They were taken by Paroh in the pursuit and were washed ashore, for Bnei Yisroel to take, after the Mitzrim were killed.

46. Even the Mitzrim that were swallowed inside the sea were spit out so that their death could be accounted for.

47. The land and the sea threw the Mitzrim back and forth since neither of them wanted to take responsibility for them, until Hashem promised the land it would not be held accountable so it swallowed them up for a proper burial. As instruments in the Kiddush Hashem, the Mitzrim merited burial.

48. Hashem performed Techias HaMeisim on Yaakov so that he could witness that Hashem kept his promise and took his children out of Mitzrayim. All of Bnei Yisroel saw Yaakov standing there. Some say all three Avos were there.

49. All of Bnei Yisroel received Nevua, prophetically seeing the Shechina and saying the Shira simultaneously with Moshe.

50. All the babies and even children in their mother's womb said Shira.

Although it is commendable to keep speech to a minimum; if you see someone sad and distressed, it is a great mitzvah to boost his spirits by conversing with him.- The Chofetz Chaim, zt''l

Slave woman at the Sea



"Even a mere slavewoman (shifchah) saw- **ראתה שפחה** at the sea that which the prophets did not see." (Shir HaShirm Rabbah 3,9)

The format (**שפחה** a slavewoman) is stated in the singular. Who is this person that saw what later prophets would not be able to see?

Gur Aryeh- The singular form indicates that it applies to each and every individual.

Lev Simchah- The person was Batyah the daughter of Paroh. She merited to this high level since she saved Moshe from the river.

Rav Menachem from Pano -The level of shifchah is the level of action in this world. Each member of the Jewish community at that time merited to this high level which exceeded the level of the community during the times of the prophets.

Tiferes Shlomo -The Sitra Achara ("the other side" from holiness) is called shifchah. The word **ראתה** can also indicate fear. At the sea even the Sitra Achara was in awe of the Divine Presence.

The Mefuar -The shifchah refers to the Eruv Rav (mixed multitude) that went out with the Jews. Since the Jews left the slavery of Egypt they were no longer in the status of slaves. However, prior to

Matan Torah, the Eruv Rav were not yet converts and could still be called slaves.

Kli Yakar -Alludes to the ministering angels that exist in closeness to G-d at all times except (**ולא קרב זה לזה כל הלילה**) the night of the Shirah.

Segulah Yisrael (Tamani Chachum) -This shifchah is Miriam, who was like a maidservant to HaShem.

Rambam (Eight Chapters)- Intention of the Medrash is that even the lowest of woman of Israel was able to perceive this high level of revelation.

Lekutei Halachos -This shifchah refers to the concept of **לארץ חוץ**, outside of the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is like a wife to HaShem, whereas the lands outside are the status of a maidservant.

Shabbos Treasures



Sefer Ziv HaShabbos writes that after davening Maariv on Shabbos night, and we are ready to head home from Shul for the Seudah, it is not the time to start talking with others, or gathering in groups around the Shul. It is even not the right time to talk at length about Divrei Torah! Everything has its time and place, and the time right after Maariv on Shabbos is the time for one to go home with Simchah and a high spirit, to begin the first of the Shabbos Seudos. After all, the Gemara in Shabbos (119b) states that there are two

Malachim waiting to escort us home from Shul. How can we make them wait for us while we finish talking?

Additionally, this idea can be extended to other areas of our lives. The Gemara in Chagiga (16a) says that the walls of one's house are keeping watch, to report what goes on. We learn from these Chazal that we are obligated to constantly have a higher level of conduct, especially on Shabbos!

Parshah Thoughts - By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Once it was clear that the Bnei Yisroel were not returning to Mitzrayim, Pharaoh was told that they ran away, and the Egyptians decided to pursue them (14:5). Rashi notes that their choice to pursue was predicated on their wanting to get back their money.

The Alter of Kelm would teach that the reason we are obligated to remember and recall Yetzias Mitzrayim daily is because we can learn all life lessons from it.



Rav Yaakov Galinsky explains that this particular interaction shows us how blind sighted we can become by the desire for wealth. By wanting their gifts back, the Egyptians forgot about the Plagues, particularly all the devastation they caused, and of their actual encouragement of Bnei Yisroel to leave— and only thought about the money.

Living Jewish



The Polish government at one point decreed that Jews had to dress and look like the gentiles. Two officers barged into the home of **Reb Hillel Paritcher** to cut off his peyot. Reb Hillel held his long peyot tightly, not allowing them to do so. Forcefully, they withdrew their swords and began hitting his hands and head..

His neighbour, a tailor who had a good relationship with the officers, came running, and after promising them gifts, he convinced them to leave. Very thankful, Reb Hillel promised the tailor that after 120 years, he would be buried near him.

Many years later, Reb Hillel was brought to burial in the distant city of Cherson. The tailor, getting older, travelled to live with one of his children. On his way, he stopped in Cherson and stayed at the community hostel, where he fell ill and passed away.

The Chevra Kadisha, intended to place him in the section for unknown people, but due to the fierce winter snow, they unknowingly buried him near Reb Hillel. When spring arrived, people visiting the cemetery noticed an unknown grave near Reb Hillel. After some inquiry about this person who had this great merit, they revealed the promise made to the tailor, and recognized the Divine Providence that brought his promise to fruition.

Reb Hillel explained that his intense resistance came from a handwritten note of the tzaddik **Reb Pinchas Koritzer** in which he writes that the goyishe clothing was the 50th gate of impurity ,which had the Yidden fallen in it they would not have been able to be redeemed. Similarly in the times of Moshiach there will be an

endeavour to make the Yidden change their clothing, and unfortunately they will succeed.

It will only be in the merit of individuals that will go on self-sacrifice not to change their dress, that all the Yidden will go to the Geula. Reb Hillel concluded, "Anyone that would have this note would put their life on the line for Yiddishe dress."



R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

מן הוא כי לא ידעו מה הוא ***It is Manna, for they did not know what it was*** *(16:15)*

It is well-known that the main distinguishing characteristic of the Manna was the scent, that is, that it had the fragrance of any type of food in the world, however, its appearance was singular as it states (Bamidbar 11:6) **בלתי אל המן עינינו** -***"We have nothing before our eyes but the Manna".***

It seems that this is why it is called **מן** , because these two letters are the only letters in the alphabet that can be clearly heard while the nose is open, for if the nose is held closed these letters cannot be clearly heard. Since the distinctiveness of the Manna is with the nose— by smelling its aroma, therefore, it is called by the letters that are specifically linked to the sense of smell. (***Kli Yakar***)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



The Rosh HaYeshivah, **Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman**, was very ill and was in and out of the hospital. On a day that he was doing well and clearly overcame a dangerous hurdle in his health, a doctor that was looking after him said to the Rosh HaYeshivah that he was very happy with how well the Rav is doing, and that it was astounding and apparent to him that he is alive only through a miracle. Without hesitating, Rav Shteinman replied, "You too, are only alive through a miracle!"

Parashas HaMan

There are people who read parashas HaMan on the Tuesday of Parashas Beshalach as a segulah for parnassah. The truth is, it's always good to say Parashas HaMan.

The Shulchan Aruch (1:5) states, "It is good to say the Akeidah and Parashas HaMan." The Beis Yosef explains, "…So we will believe that all our mezonos (food) comes by Hashem's providence." **The Rabbeinu b'Chaya** (Shmos 16:20) writes, "The chachamim have a kabbalah (tradition) that it is certain that whoever reads Parashas HaMan every day will never lack food."

The Tashbatz writes in the name of the Yerushalmi, "Whoever says parashas HaMan every day is guaranteed that he will not lack food." The Tashbatz adds **ואני ערב**, "***I guarantee this.***"

וְהָיָה֙ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁ֔י וְהֵכִ֖ינוּ אֵ֣ת אֲשֶׁר־יָבִ֑יאוּ וְהָיָ֤ה מִשְׁנֶה֙ עַל֙ אֲשֶׁר־יִלְקְטוּ֙ י֣וֹם יֽוֹם׃
On the sixth day, they will prepare what they bring in, and it will be twice as much as they gather daily. *(16:5)*



On every weekday during their sojourn in the desert, the Children of Israel were commanded to collect just one portion of the manna. But on the sixth day, they were told to collect two portions: one for Friday and one for Shabbat. It is for this reason that we say the blessing "hamotzi" over two loaves of bread on Shabbat.

The Manna

The commentaries ask, how did the Yidden in the desert perform the mitzvah of tzedakah? No one needed food, because the manna fell for everyone. They also didn't need clothing, because **שמלתם לא בלתה מעליהם** ,their clothing never became torn and worn.

Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorke zt'l said that they gave tzedakah with words. People said kind words of encouragement to one another, and this is a form of tzedakah.

The Chidushei HaRim answered that the manna tasted like the foods one imagined. But there were poor people who didn't know the taste of meat and fish. The wealthy people did tzedakah with them by teaching them the taste of these foods, so they could taste them in the manna as well.

May One Eat Bread Loaf's Ends?



Q. I have heard that some have the minhag (custom) not to eat the end slices of a loaf of bread. What is the reason for this?

A. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l said that he did not know of any source for this minhag, and presumably he was not concerned about this. This was also reportedly the response of **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, shlit"a.**

However, the **Minchas Yitzchak** (9:8) writes that he personally was careful not to eat the ends of a loaf of bread, because people say that it causes one to forget their Torah learning. Although he writes that he too does not know of any source for this minhag, he advises that the minhag be continued.

He quotes a Yerushalmi (Terumos 8:3) which says that when it comes to matters of sakana (danger), one must be concerned for what people say, even if it appears to be without merit. He suggests that forgetting Torah knowledge might be comparable to a sakana.

Some have suggested that the source for this minhag is the Gemara in Horiyos (13b). The Gemara lists 10 things that can cause one to forget their learning. One of them is if one eats from a loaf of bread that is not fully baked. It could be that in some communities the loaves were crammed into an oven and this led to the ends not baking fully. However, today the ends of the challah are often the crustiest part of the bread, and therefore this concern no longer applies.

וַיִּירְאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל And they were very fearful, and the Children of Israel cried out (Ex. 14:10)

The reason the Children of Israel cried out was the fact that "they were fearful." It disturbed them greatly that they were afraid of the mortal Egyptians, rather than only of G-d. (*Ma'or VaShemesh*)



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Some people have a custom to feed the birds food on Shabbos Shirah. There are poskim (such as the Magan Avraham 324:7) who say that we shouldn't keep this custom, because it is forbidden to feed birds on Shabbos (unless you own them). For those who do have this custom, what's the reason behind it?

One reason is to reward birds for the good deed they did. Moshe Rabbeinu told the nation that the manna wouldn't fall on Shabbos, and therefore, no one may go out on Shabbos morning to collect manna. Nevertheless "On Shabbos, some people from the nation went out to collect [the manna] but they didn't find."

Who were those people? Chazal say they were Dassan and Aviram. On Friday night, they scattered manna in the fields. They intended to collect them on Shabbos morning to show the nation that the manna falls on Shabbos too. Their plan was foiled, because the birds came and ate up the manna they put out. To repay them, there are those who feed them on this Shabbos, when we read about the manna in the Torah.

Another reason for the custom is so we can study how birds eat, and learn a lesson in hishtadlus and bitachon. The birds peck at the food and then raise their heads towards heaven. They do a bit of hishtadlus, and then they raise their heads heavenward.

This teaches us the proper way to go about work with bitachon. We do our hishtadlus, and immediately afterwards, focus on Hashem, the true source for our parnassah.



Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan - Falling Into Life

"Are you alive?" the police officer asked rather solemnly. "Yeah, why not?" I replied. Those spoken words are the last memory I have of that night, September 17, 2009. The rest was all told to me later by my family.

It was the evening before Rosh Hashanah and I had just finished delivering a class in Lakewood, New Jersey. "Rabbi!" a man shouted. I turned to my side, immediately registering who it was that was calling my name. It was Rico, my dear friend who oversees the CD distribution of various Torah classes throughout several Syrian communities. "Before you head home to Brooklyn, would you be able to take these CD's of yours? There are three hundred here. Take them and distribute them in different *shuls*." "Sure, that would be great!" I enthusiastically replied, as I grabbed hold of them and placed them down on the front passenger seat. And with that, I began heading home.

70 mph… 75 mph… 80 mph… I sped down the Garden State Parkway. The next thing I knew, a police officer stuck his head through the window on the driver's side and stared me straight in the eyes. "Are you alive?" he asked rather solemnly. "Yeah, why not?" I replied.

At 80 mph, my car had dropped 104 feet from the Garden State Parkway to the adjacent road down below. Astonishingly, the car

continued moving and spinning until it wrapped itself around the highway divider.



The police arrived several minutes later, shocked at the sight that stood before them. The car was sandwiched like an accordion, leaving nothing left, save the driver and passenger's seats. Not even an ambulance was called upon immediately, considering the likelihood of anyone surviving such an event. Without a doubt, the driver was dead, concluded all those around. All that was left to do was clear debris and fill out paperwork.

Until one lady volunteer on site gave a scream. "Look! Look! Someone's in there… someone's in there!" That was when the police officer approached me and asked if I was alive. And I was. At the moment, I didn't even realize that I was in an accident. The shock was so great that it was as if nothing had happened… until just moments later when I blacked out.

When I awoke, there I was sitting in a hospital bed at Robert Wood John hospital in New Jersey. I looked around the room and focused my gaze on the many students and family members standing and sitting. It was a heart-warming sight. But just then, my brother walked in the room.

He had just come from the junkyard, where the few remaining pieces of my car were taken. My brother had specifically gone there to retrieve my *tefillin*, which had been in the car with me, and had not been spotted. Perhaps, we surmised, it was somewhere in the car. To our delight and surprise, it was.

"When I arrived at the junkyard lot," my brother relayed, "the manager approached me and asked what I was looking for. I informed him of the car model and year and recounted the events of the previous night. 'Oh yeah,' he said, 'that was some crazy accident last night! My condolences to your family on your loss.' My brother turned to him with a serious and perturbed look. 'What do you mean? My brother, he's alive.'

The manager's heart skipped a beat. 'What did you say?' he said in an outburst of disbelief. 'There's no way he can be alive! No one could have survived that drop off the Parkway at that speed!' 'He's alive…!' my brother repeated. 'And I came here right now to retrieve his religious articles from the car.'

'I made my way to the car,' my brother continued, 'and looked around at what was left. Honestly, barely anything remained. Yet I climbed into the car and leaned down, grabbing your *Tefillin*, which still amazingly remained intact. But that is not what caught my eye most. It was something else.

'All over the floor and seats were what looked like sparkling diamonds. Little pieces of what seemed like glass were sprinkled all over the place. I'm not sure if some part of the car shattered and broke. Duvi, do you have any idea what it may be?'

I looked at him, a blank stare enveloping my face. 'I don't know,' I responded rather quickly. But then, after allowing the thought to settle with me, it hit me. 'You know what?' I said with a burst of life. 'You know what that is? Before I left Lakewood, Rico gave me 300 CD's of all sorts of Torah classes which he wanted me to distribute

after arriving in Brooklyn. The CD's and their covers must have broken due to the impact and shattered, and that's what you saw.'

My brother looked back at me, now slowly taking out from under his jacket a CD. 'Duvi,' he said, a tone of genuine disbelief flooding his face, 'look at this. It was the only CD that remained intact.' I took hold of it in my hands and stopped breathing for a moment, as I stared at the title.

Where's your bulletproof vest? Where's your pair of *Tzitzit*? Then and there, I realized what had happened. Hashem had caught me and saved my life in the merit of my wearing *Tzitzit*. It was the greatest protection and bulletproof vest to spare my life.

When the doctor later reviewed my medical report, I was in for another shock of my life. A sprained thumb. That was it. No breaks, no surgeries, nothing. 80 mph, a 104-foot fall and a sprained thumb. No broken bones, no dislocations, no surgeries. The verse I was familiar with immediately took on new, personal meaning, "All my bones shall declare, 'G-d, who is like You?' (*Tehillim* 35:10).

Unbelievable. Absolutely unbelievable. But the truth is that when the Creator of the world is at our side, nothing is ever too unbelievable. Even the greatest fall and the most unlikely of circumstances are possible, and the reason is simple. G-d is our safety and security every step of our way down the literal and figurative road of life.

The Yenuka Rav: "The Tana Rabi Chanina was on a level so high that nature didn't control him! All who links themselves to the holy Tana and the Segula of giving Challa and wine to the poor will be Zocheh to see miracles above nature"

Feeding Birds on Shabbos Shirah



Some have the custom to give challah to the birds on Shabbos Shirah. (The *poskim* discuss the halachic aspects of this custom because on Shabbos, one mustn't feed animals or birds that he doesn't own. As the Magen Avraham שכ"ד ז' writes, "Some have the custom to give wheat to birds on Shabbos Shirah, and it isn't correct, because **אין מזונותם עליך**, it isn't your responsibility to feed them." Therefore, some put out the food on *erev Shabbos*, and some let children put out the food.

Various explanations are given for the custom of providing food to birds on Shabbos Shirah, and many of the reasons are related to the *mon* – the time in history when Hashem revealed to the Jewish nation that He supports them.

When birds eat and drink, they bend their heads forward to pick up the food, and then they immediately raise their heads (to help them swallow it). We give food to birds on Shabbos Shirah, to remind us how a Yid should go about earning his *parnassah*. He should make *hishtadlus*, and then immediately raise his eyes to heaven – to the One Who gives us *parnassah*.

The Rayatz of Lubavitz *zt'l* writes that he heard from reliable sources that every Shabbos Shirah, all cheder children in Prague, with their *melamdim*, would gather in the courtyard of the **Maharal's *zy'a*** beis medresh, and the Maharal would tell the children the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf*.

He would repeat the Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:10) which says that as Klal Yisrael sang Oz Yashir, birds sang along with them, which

beautified the harmony of their singing. The Midrash also states that, miraculously, fruit trees grew in the Yam Suf, and as the Yidden passed through the Yam Suf, whoever wanted to picked fruit to eat.

The Maharal added that the children in the Yam Suf gathered some fruit and fed them to the birds, as a reward for their singing along with the Yidden. After telling the children the miracles, the Maharal would give a bowl of kasha (buckwheat) to the *melamdim*, the *melamdim* distributed the *kasha* to the children, and the children put it out for the birds to eat.

So, in addition to the halachic consideration, there is a special benefit in having the children give the food to the birds. This commemorates that the children fed the birds at the Yam Suf.

Parsha Points to Ponder



How were Miriam and the women allowed to sing the Shiras HaYam (15:21) when the law is (Even HaEzer 21:1) that a man is forbidden to hear a woman outside of his immediate family singing? *(Peninim MiShulchan HaGra, Tiferes Yonason, Nachal Kedumim)*

The **Vilna Gaon** answers that for this reason the verse says that Miriam answered the men, meaning that she told them that they could sing, but the women in fact could only say the words due to the prohibition against singing in the presence of men.

Rav Yonason Eibeshutz suggests that for this reason Miriam and the women took instruments with them, so that the din of their instruments would drown out their voices so that they could sing without being heard by the men.

The **Chida** cites the Gemora in Niddah (13a), which rules that activities which would normally be forbidden because they could lead to forbidden thoughts are permissible when in the presence of the Shechinah. Since Chazal teach that there was a tremendous revelation of the Divine presence at the Yam Suf, the women were permitted to sing in front of the men without being concerned that it may lead to inappropriate thoughts.

Rabbi Y Richtman- Divine Assistants..



After the men sang Az Yashir, Miriam leads the woman in a joyous song and dance. She begins with the words "vata'an lahem Miriam" and Miriam answered them.

The Yalkut Mamarim asks what was she answering, and why does it say la'hem (masculine sense) and not la'hen (feminine sense) which would make more sense, since she is speaking to woman? He answers that she was responding to a question that the woman were asking. They asked "we know the whole purpose of leaving Egypt was to get to Har Sinai and receive the Torah, which is learned by the men. However women are not obligated to learn Torah. Therefore, why should we leave playing instruments, and singing a song"?

Miriam answered them "look ladies, don't you see the horses and riders drowning in the water. Why is that? Why should the horse be drowned they didn't do anything? That is your mistake, they did do something wrong, they helped the riders pursue the Yidden. For helping the wicked there is a punishment. How much more so is there a reward for helping someone do the right thing."

She was answering the ladies, that we should be joyous to leave Egypt and get the Torah. Through us encouraging our husbands and sons to go learn Torah we will receive the equal amount of reward. This is also why la'hem was said in masculine, she was telling them our joy comes through helping the men.

Just five! Written by Rafi Jager



In this week's Torah portion, a fascinating interpretation can be learned from the interpretation of a single word. The Torah states, **וַיַּסֵּב אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הָעָם דֶּרֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּר יַם־סוּף וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם "And the Jews went up from the land of Egypt chamushim"** (13:18). Rashi explains that the word "chamushim" means that the Jews left Egypt armed.

Rashi continues and mentions a possible alternate explanation: The Jews left "mechamushim" meaning one out of every five Jews were taken out of Egypt, and the other four-fifths died during the plague of darkness.

These explanations are wonderful, but there is a problem. Usually, when Rashi brings a second explanation, the additional one is in some

way related to the first explanation. However, in this case, the two ideas seem to be totally unrelated.

If we take a look at the Aramaic translation/commentary of Yonatan ben Uziel, he states that "chamushim" means that every Jew came out with five children. Now, if we look at another Aramaic translation, this time the commentary of the Targum Yerushalmi, it explains that the Jews left armed with good deeds.

Now we can understand the connection between Rashis two seemingly unrelated explanations of the word chamushim, the first that the Jews left Egypt armed, and the second that one-fifth of the Jews were taken out of Egypt while the remaining ones died during the plague of darkness. The Jews went up from Egypt armed with good deeds. These good deeds consisted of the surviving Jews taking in the wives and children of the four-fifths who perished during the ninth plague of darkness. Those surviving Jews were armed with the merit of the acts of kindness they did in taking care of their deceased brothers' families as if they were their own.

Bittersweet



One of the miracles in this week's parsha speaks about the bitter water turning into sweet, drinkable water. The medrash explains that, at the time when bnei yisroel had nothing to drink because the water was bitter, Hashem taught Moshe how to daven and he said: say" make the bitter water sweet". This seems like a strange conversation. Moshe has been davening for the last three parshiyos. Not once do we find Hashem pulling him aside and giving him a crash course on how to daven.



Why now? **R' Yaakov Meir Schechter** explains that they had bitter water in front of them, and there are two ways Moshe could have davened.

One way is to ask Hashem to give us different water that is not bitter or he could daven that Hashem should make the bitter water sweet. This is what Hashem was teaching him and, in essence, teaching us. The proper way to approach the problem is to make that which is bitter, sweet. When Hashem does this it will show Klal Yisroel that Hashem has the ability to take something which is bitter, challenging, hard, and turn it into something sweet. This is the way we should daven, that Hashem gives us the strength to take the difficult and turn it into something good. With this type of outlook we will be able to recognize that everything is really a blessing in disguise.

Parsha Thoughts By: Mordechai Sapoznick

In this week's Parsha, Bnei Yisroel started to travel in the midbar. Hashem led them through the midbar by day with a cloud, and by night He led them with a pillar of fire.

How could Bnei Yisroel travel by day and by night? Wouldn't they get exhausted if they travelled continuously without a break?

Rabbeinu Bachaya answers that Bnei Yisroel were so anxious to receive the Torah that they travelled every moment they were able to in order to receive the Torah as soon as possible!

Have Faith



As Bnei Yisroel crosses the Yam Suf, Moshe leads them in the singing of Az Yashir. Why is the word "Yashir" written in future tense, it should have been written in present tense, since they are singing it at that moment. Rashi brings a medrash that explains that the word yashir is written in future tense to allude to the event of techiyas hamaisim.

The Belzer Rebbe had a small minyan of survivors in Tel Aviv after the war. On the first Shabbos Shira after the war the Rebbe asked how was bnei Yisroel able to sing shira at Kriyas Yam Suf? We know that there were many thousands, possibly millions, of Jewish people who died in the makka of choshech. This would mean that at the time of this miracle, which was only seven days after the Yidden left Mitzrayim, almost everyone lost family members. While they were overjoyed at witnessing this nes they were also pained by the loss of their loved ones.

When they sang the Shira, Moshe was telling them that let us sing now on the miracle we witnessed and find comfort in the fact that we will, in the future, be reunited with the loved ones that are no longer with us. With that, the Tzadik looked at his minyan and tried to encourage them with that same message. Even though right now we are all in pain that we lost are loved ones, we must have faith in Hashem that there will be a time when we will be reunited with them. This is the answer why right now there is an allusion to techiya hameisim to give those yidden much needed chizuk.



The Power of Tefillin

The following amazing true story illustrates the power of tefillin to awaken in Jew the love between him and his Creator.

As the Eretz Yisroel-bound El Al plane lifted off the tarmac of New York's JFK International Airport, Shalom realized suddenly that he had left his tefillin in the trunk of his car. In his mind's eye, Shalom could see the tefillin in the trunk of his Chevrolet.

Shalom thought back to his bar mitzvah fourteen years earlier and remembered the pride emanating from his father when he had presented the tefillin to Shalom. His father, Yehuda, had always been very careful to fulfill the mitzvah of tefillin properly and made an extraordinary effort to obtain the best possible pair for his son.

The parshiyos of Shalom's tefillin were written by a G-d fearing soifer who was an expert in all the laws pertaining to tefillin. The batim containing the parchments were also formed by a G-d-fearing expert, one who used all the finest materials. His grandmother had embroidered a beautiful velvet bag lovingly to protect them.

And now Shalom had inadvertently left them in the trunk of his car for the next ten days while he vacationed in Eretz Yisroel. This, too, is for the best, he thought to himself.

The ten days in Eretz Yisroel flew by, and Shalom had to return to the United States. When he went to retrieve his car from the long-term parking lot at JFK International Airport, Shalom discovered that his car had suffered a break-in. He checked the trunk quickly. His tefillin were gone - Stolen.

Shalom went to the police station and filed a report of the theft, giving the desk sergeant the details of how to contact him should his tefillin ever show up. Then he got into his car and drove himself home to Philadelphia.

Shalom went to his mother's house for his first Shabbos back from Eretz Yisroel. When he told her about his tefillin, she offered him the use of his father's (who had passed away.) "I'm lending these to you until your nephew Yehuda will be a bar mitzvah in twelve years. It's important to me that, since he is named after Daddy, of blessed memory, he should wear these tefillin. "Guard them with your life," she told him. Twelve years would be plenty of time for Shalom to get himself a new pair of tefillin.

Six years passed. Shalom came home from work one day and heard a message on his answering machine from the New York City police department. They left a phone number and a request that he contact them as soon as possible. When he reached them later that evening, the sergeant told Shalom that a religious object of his had been turned in. "Please come as soon as possible to reclaim your stolen goods."

The next morning Shalom hopped into his car, and drove up to New York. After presenting his identification to the police officer at the front desk, Shalom was ushered into an office. The officer introduced himself as Howard and proceeded to tell the following story.

"Three days ago, an elderly Russian gentleman presented himself at the precinct, placed your tefillin bag on the table and told the following story. “I own a pawn shop a few blocks away,” he began. “About an hour ago a man came into my shop and wanted to pawn these.” He pointed to the tefillin lying on the table. “I'm not religious myself, but I recognized immediately that these were phylacteries. Jews call them tefillin and wear them during the morning prayers.

“I told the man to forget pawning the tefillin, as I was willing to buy them from him. I paid him cash and took the tefillin. My hands began to tremble and shake. I don't know what came over me. Since these tefillin had obviously been stolen, I locked up my shop and came here, to the police station, to see if I could perhaps help return them to their owner. The embroidery says Shalom son of Yehuda Goldberg. Is their any record of this theft?” Asked the Russian pawn shop owner.

"I picked up the tefillin," continued the police officer Howard, "to see what they were. The strangest thing happened when I held them in my hands. I felt a hot flash and began sweating profusely. My hands were trembling and shaking. Why would a Jewish object cause such a reaction in me, a Gentile? I locked up the tefillin in my desk, planning to investigate their background the next day.

That night I couldn't shake the memory of my hands trembling and shaking. I wondered again why a Jewish object should make such an impression on a non-Jew. Disturbed, I told my mom the story, asking her what she thought of the matter. She didn't seem surprised at all.

“Howard, when I was a teenager I rebelled and left home to marry your Dad,” she told me. "I never told you that my parents were Jewish, did I? Well, by Jewish law, since I am Jewish, so are my children, Howard, maybe the tefillin had such an impact on you because you yourself are Jewish!”

Shalom, the owner of the tefillin, was sitting on the edge of his chair by now. "I've often felt like something was missing in my life," the police officer Howard continued. " Apparently, my Jewish soul was hungering for some spiritual nourishment. I am going to start investigating my heritage. Can we keep in touch?" Shalom agreed.

The story doesn't end there. When he arrived back in Philadelphia, Shalom brought the tefillin to Rabbi Shreiber, his soifer, to have them checked. Who knows where the tefillin had been during the

past six years and whether or not the letters on the parchments were still intact? Shalom told Rabbi Shreiber the entire story as Rabbi Shreiber opened up the outer boxes.

Rabbi Shreiber checked the parchment and began to cry. "Why are you crying?" Shalom asked. "These tefillin are as kosher as the day they were made," Rabbi Shreiber declared emotionally. "I would like to buy them from you, if I may." "I'm sorry," said Shalom, "but these tefillin are even more precious to me now. They are my own personal reminder of how Hashem runs the world."

Don't Be A Bird Brain! - by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick



וַיָּמֹדּוּ בָּעֹמֶר וְלֹא הֶעְדִּיף הַמַּרְבֶּה וְהַמַּמְעִיט לֹא הֶחְסִיר אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ לָקָטוּ And they measured (the mannah) with an omer, and whoever gathered much did not have more, and whoever gathered little did not have less; each one gathered according to his eating what he needs to eat. (16:18)

When the Jewish People gathered the *mannah*, each one collected what was necessary for him and his household. Those who spent the effort to gather more did not benefit from it in any way since the additional food went to waste, and those who only took a little, were still fully satiated.

This daily and open miracle ingrained within the entire Jewish People the truth that Hashem provides precisely the right amount for every person. The importance of remembering this message is demonstrated by the fact that Hashem commanded Moshe to keep a portion of *mannah* for future generations to recall how He

provided for each of our specific and individual needs in a place where there were no natural resources. For us today, who are not able to view this portion of *mannah*, the importance of remembering this lesson is all the more crucial.

This message was beautifully illustrated by **Rav Tzvi Hirsch Friedlander** who was approached by a storeowner who came to the Rav steaming with anger that someone was opening the same store opposite him. Until now, the man had enough money to support his family, but now that a new store was about to be opened, how would he be able to provide for them?

He answered with the following parable: There was once a man who bought a chicken. He placed this chicken in a spacious coop, provided his food, changed his straw, and the chicken was very happy. Then, one day, the owner opened the door and placed in another chicken. The first chicken started to get worried; how will he survive on only half of his feed? Immediately, he started to attack the new chicken.

Rav Friedlander told this man that the chicken didn't realize that just as his owner had provided him as much food as he needed, it was the same owner who placed the new chicken in the coop and would surely provide enough food for both of them. The bird brain just sees the equation in front of him: two chickens mean less food. But although the human mind *cannot* fathom the calculations that Hashem makes to give us precisely what we need, it *can* fathom that we have a Father Who loves us, knows what we need and has the means to provide it,without anyone else losing out.

"Cleanliness and order are not matters of instinct; they are matters of education, and like most great things, you must cultivate a taste for them. "

No stick Written by D Fine



As Bnei Yisrael seem to be trapped between the Egyptians and the sea – with no way out – HaShem commands Moshe (14:16) 'lift up (harem) your stick and stretch your hand over the sea and split it…' Indeed, the sea split, the Jews safely crossed (the Egyptians did not) – and the rest is history. But why was Moshe told to lift his stick over the sea – HaShem did not need an angled stick in order to perform the miracle, so why was this necessary for or related to the miracle?

The Kli Yakar answers that the word harem does not mean 'lift up' in this context, but rather 'take away/remove.' He goes on to explain that the Egyptians were clinging on to their false belief that without Moshe's stick HaShem could not perform any miracles. Thus, in order to make it clear for the Egyptians that the miracles had nothing to do with the stick, Moshe was told to put the stick away for this one. It was because the splitting of the sea was the greatest miracle – and Divine revelation – of all the plagues that the stick had to be put away here.

One lesson to take out of this is what desperation can do to someone's mind; the Egyptians still wanted to believe the ludicrous idea that the staff was performing the miracles – not HaShem – because that would be easier than changing themselves, their beliefs, and their value systems.

Focus on the Positive! Written by Moshe Kormornick



After everything that G-d had done for the Jews – taking them out of Egypt, Splitting the Sea, destroying the Egyptians – miracle upon miracle! And only 3 days after the Jews left the seashore where these miraculous event occurred they arrived at a place called Marah and started shouting and complaining because they had no water.

For this action the Jewish people were criticised in the Torah. Now, what's wrong with complaining that you don't have water?

Especially considering that they were in effect complaining to G-d, who is the Ultimate provider and should (and obviously could) give them anything!?!! We are shown a hint about why the Jewish people were criticised in the following verse:

וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם ***"They came to Marah, but could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter…"*** *(15:23)*

If one looks at the verse at the simple level, the Jewish poeple came to this place of water, but couldn't drink because the waters were bitter. But the Bal Shem Tov asks us to look at this verse again for a deeper understanding of why the Jewish people were criticised:

"They came to Marah, but could not drink the waters because THEY were bitter…" ie. THEY refers to the Jewish people. The Jewish people were so bitter about not having water that anything that they encountered became bitter. Here we see a fundamental fault that we are all guilty of. Why were the Jewish people criticised for complaining and being angry to G-d? They were not wrong to ask for

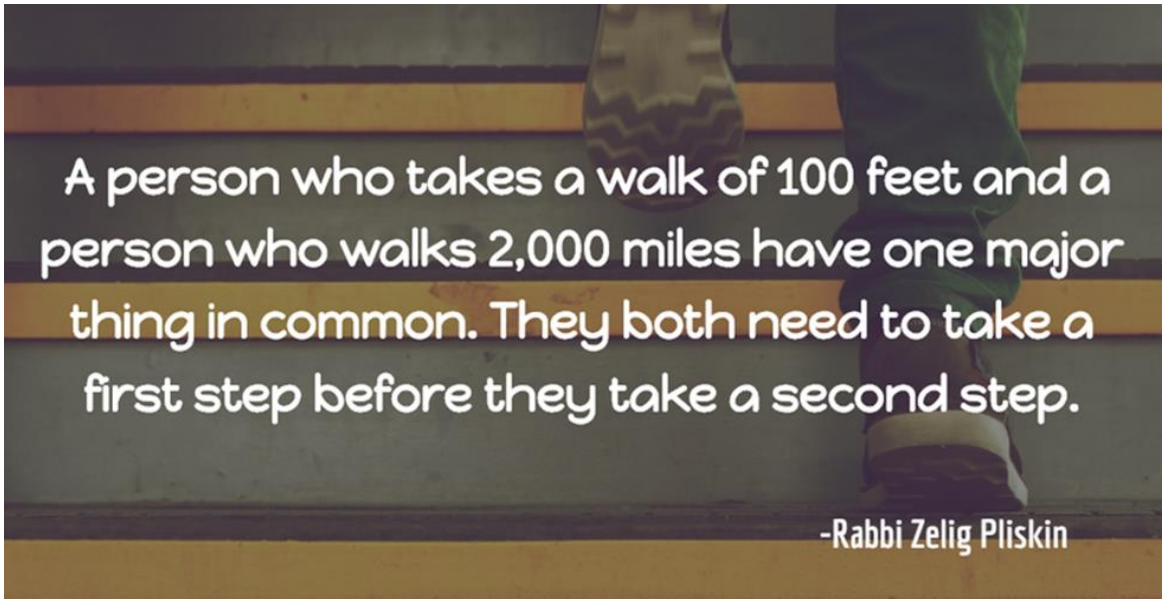
water, their fault lay in where their focus was directed. Only a very short amount of time after all the miracles that G-d had performed for them, and they focused purely on the negative!

It occurs so often that we encounter somebody who does something we find inappropriate or rude, and forever more we can only think of him as this rude person regardless of the good deeds he continues to do. Or if we are ever told something negative about a person we are yet to meet, at our first meeting we are naturally negative to this person!

This also applies when we wake up 'in a bad mood'; if we don't do something uncomfortable and drastic to make us happy, anything that happens will be seen only in a negative light.

What's the right way to go about things? Focus only on the positive and that way we will get on with people and be a lot happier in our day. And if bad things do happen (G-d forbid) we must focus on everything that we have going for us – sight, hearing, legs, arms, family, friends, a home, even the ability to go to the toilet! etc. etc.

And if we s consider this list and focus on the positive every time something gets us down, it's pretty hard to stay miserable!



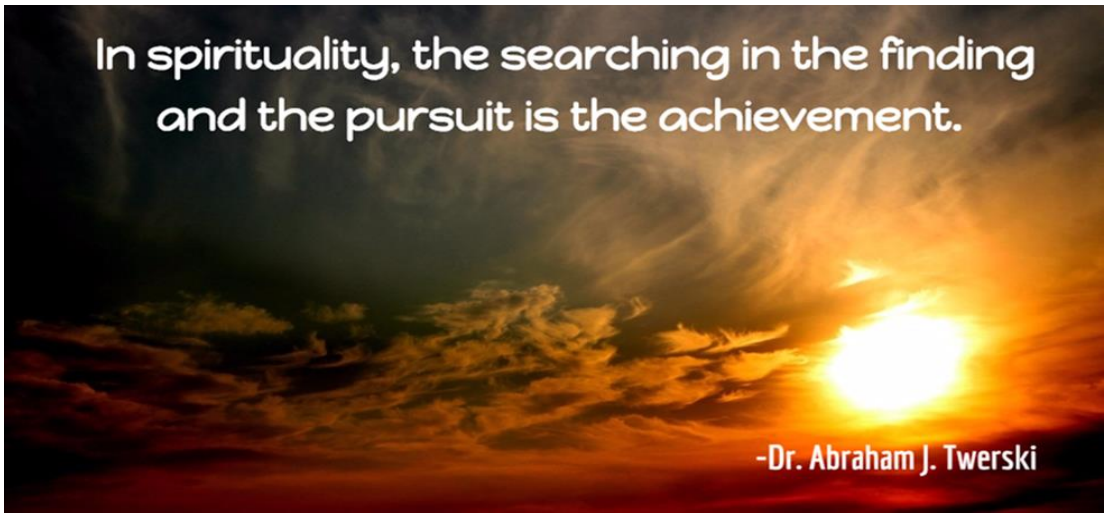
Torah Anytimes Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - Every Day



One of the blessings we recite each morning is, "Blessed are You, Hashem, Who has not made me a non-Jew." The question begs as to why we recite this blessing every day? Was there any chance that we might have woken up this morning and found that we were no longer Jewish? Why is this blessing not simply a one-time ordeal that we say as we become bar or bat mitzvah?

Being Jewish does not mean being on an unassailable platform of holiness. Rather, being holy entails struggling every day with the yetzer hara, the evil inclination, which can only be subdued with prayer, merit and the help of Heaven.

Every day we thank Hashem for the privilege and responsibility of being created Jewish, and each day we wake up and become Jewish again, by reminding ourselves that being Jewish doesn't mean just having the great Sea Splitting moments of spirituality in life; it means getting out of bed and being prepared to fight our own battles with the help of Hashem… each and every day.



Rabbi Eitiel Goldwicht - One Dollar



I remember as a kid, after I must have done something noteworthy, that my father handed me ten dollars. Without skipping a beat, he took the opportunity to teach me about the mitzvah of giving maaser, a tenth of my earnings to charity. And so I gave one dollar to tzedakah.

My father then proceeded to ask me, "How much money do you have now?" "Nine dollars," I proudly replied. My father then shared with me words that I have never since forgotten. "You know how much money you have left? One dollar. Those nine dollars you are still holding, you might lose them or spend them on candy, but the one dollar you gave to charity, no one can ever take that away from you. The reward in Heaven for that mitzvah is something that will last for eternity."

The "Eyes" Have It - By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach



The current wave of anti-Semitism in Europe lends special relevance to a little-known Holocaust story which appears in the latest volume of "*Aleinu Leshabeach*" in Hebrew.

A Nazi officer decided to have some fun together with his comrades at the expense of a Jewish prisoner. He called him into the room where the group was gathered and said to him:

"When I was young, I had an eye removed and replaced with a glass one. The surgeon did such a masterful job that no one was ever

capable of detecting which of my eyes was real and which was glass. If you can correctly identify which is the glass eye you will live, but if you fail to do so you will be shot on the spot."

While all the officers chuckled with sadistic pleasure at what they viewed as an exercise in futility, the Jew marched towards his one-eyed tormentor and correctly pointed to the glass eye.

When asked by the surprised Nazis how he had managed to succeed where all others had failed, he offered this explanation:

"Your hatred of Jews is so intense that it is reflected in your very eyes. When I failed to see this hatred revealed in one of your eyes, I realized it couldn't be your real one!"

Dr. Jack Cohen - Sharing the Garment



Just under a year ago, **Rabbi Benjamin Blech** celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary in Los Angeles. Included among the various guests were several noted Hollywood producers and directors, all friends and confidants of Rabbi Blech. After slowly making their way inside, they comfortably settled in and began enjoying the pleasant ambiance and cheerful spirit in the room.

Aside from the many congratulations and good wishes given to Rabbi and Mrs. Blech, what stood out most was the one question asked by nearly all the guests. "What is your secret to a long and happy marriage?" Although one Hollywood personality playfully remarked, "Rabbi, to be married sixty years isn't a big deal around here – it's just that it takes us five or six wives to do it with," the question

remained. But Rabbi Blech was not without his answer; though as he noted, it isn't much of a secret.

"Perhaps one of the very first lessons we are taught in school at the start of our Mishnaic and Talmudic studies is the Mishnah in Bava Metzia," he said. "The Mishnah describes two individuals disputing ownership of a garment, each one substantiating that they found it first. 'This one says I found it, and this one says I found it; this one says it is all mine and this one says it is all mine.' In the face of such disagreement, the court requires them to swear to their claim, which if done, leads to the final ruling that they must divide it. Neither of them walks away with the entire garment. They must split it and share it.



"I used to wonder about the rabbinic wisdom that made this discussion the entryway into Talmudic study for little children," Rabbi Blech continued. "Wouldn't it have made more sense for children to be introduced to Talmud and Jewish law with the laws of blessings and prayers, ways to serve G-d or holiness and charity? But, as I know realize, there is good reason for our education beginning with this teaching.

"As young children, we are meant to learn the importance that we cannot always win because we say 'it is mine.' We must learn to share, recognize equal validity and give up that which we cannot have.

"Marriage is the exact same, and this has been my bedrock of success. 'I' is not as important as 'we.' This is fact may be the underlying, hidden meaning within the word wedding – it is about we.



When such an attitude and perspective pervade every aspect of marriage, then your relationship will thrive. Even when a conflict of interest or desire arises, you will have the tools to work through it."

Such words of wisdom may seem so simple, yet they are so true. A harmonious, blissful and blessed marriage begins when both husband and wife hold onto the same garment and say, "Let us share." It's not about me, but about ***we***.

Az YaShir - By Rabbi Shmuel Ani



When the Torah discusses the Jews' song after the splitting of the Reed Sea, it changes tenses and says that they "will sing" (i.e., rather than they "sang") this song to Hashem.

Or HaChaim says that this shows us that the ability to perceive Hashem's greatness and sing his praises is not limited only to those who traversed the Reed Sea.

Jews are always capable of raising their spiritual visions to the level of song first experienced by their ancestors at the Red Sea.

And that is why we say this prayer every day. The future tense of ***Az YaShir*** gives us the spiritual energy to sing and thank Hashem just like our ancestors did at the Red Sea.

The Day the Rabbi Spoke About Charity to an Audience of Catholic Priests By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

A very talented Chabad Rabbi by the name of Rabbi Shochet, once received an invitation from an organization in Buffalo, New York to speak on the topic of charity before a crowd of Catholic priests and soon-to-be priests.

But he had his reservations about speaking to such a crowd. On one hand he wanted to educate people and speak but on the other hand he wanted to avoid interfaith debates, so he called the office of his Rabbi; the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, and requested one of his secretaries to ask The Rebbe's advice.

The answer came immediately, The Rebbe said that Rabbi Shochet should accept the offer, but he should take care to end his lecture with the story of the 'Rich Miser of Krakow'.

Although the Rebbe's insistence on that particular story seemed a bit unusual, Rabbi Shochet threw himself into the task, prepared himself well and when the date arrived he flew to Buffalo and gave a fascinating two hour-long speech describing the unique Torah approach to giving charity.

He explained that 'Tzadaka' derives from the word 'Tzedek' 'Justice' implying money is not our own, rather it is G-d's and charity is nothing more than passing it on to those who justly deserve it.

But after he had made his point, instead of finishing, he said that he wanted to conclude with the story of the Miser of Krakow as the Lubavitcher Rebbe had requested.

"Once in the city of Krakow almost four hundred years ago lived a rich Jew named Yisroel. No one really knew his last name and no one even cared, because this 'Yisroel' was an intolerable miser. "He lived in a large, plush home that seemed to invite the poor to ask for help, but if ever an unsuspecting money collector would knock on his door,

he would receive an abrupt 'No money!' and a door slammed in his face.

"Now, although it is forbidden to call people derogatory names, this old man was so flagrantly stingy that eventually everyone began calling him 'Yisroel Goy' ('Goy' lit. Gentile) because only a non-Jew could be so callous to Jews. But it didn't help, he remained tight fisted and, unfortunately for him, the name stuck.
"So it continued for many years and everyone almost completely forgot about the old skinflint, until one day the burial society (Chevre Kadisha) received a message for them to come to his bedside. He was dying.



"When they arrived, they saw that he was close to death and with his last energy he took an envelope from under his pillow and said to them feebly, 'Here is two thousand dollars. You're not going to get another penny from me so don't ask. I want you to bury me in a good spot, not near the fence or the garbage dump, and write on my tombstone: 'Yisroel Goy". He then said the 'Shma Yisroel' prayer, closed his eyes and passed away.

"No one knew exactly how old he was, maybe ninety, maybe more, but one thing for sure; no one wept at his funeral, in fact almost no one attended, and they also didn't bury him exactly where he wanted.

But they did write what he wanted on his tombstone: 'YISROEL GOY'. And that was the end of a sad, unfortunate episode in the history of Krakow. "Or so they thought.

"One cold afternoon, about one week later, the Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipman Heller (author of 'Tosfos Yom Tov' on Mishna) heard a knock on his door and opened it to see some fifty hungry faces greeting him with pleading eyes. 'Yes, can I help you?' he asked incredulously, 'Who are you? Where are you from?'

"'We are from here, from Krakow.' One of them cried out, 'and we are hungry, we haven't eaten anything all day.' 'For two days!' Someone else yelled out.

"The Rabbi didn't understand what was going on but he invited them all in, arranged places for them to sit and while his wife was preparing something for them to eat, he heard the following story.

"It seems that these paupers had been going to the grocery store every day for as long as they could remember, taking what they needed, they only had to sign, and that was it. But since yesterday the grocery owner refused to give them anything, so they were all hungry.

"'Very strange' thought the Rabbi to himself. 'So many hungry people! And all from here, Krakow! Could it be that they are lying? I must get to the bottom of this.'

"He waited for them to finish eating, told them to come to his home again tomorrow morning, put on his overcoat, told his wife that he would return shortly and walked out the door in the direction to the home of the town treasurer. From far away he could see that there was a crowd of people gathered at the treasurer's door as well and as he approached, he could hear the treasurer trying to make some sense of the chaos that was prevailing.

'Oy!! Am I glad you are here!' The treasurer shouted out when he saw the Rav. 'Look inside, my house is filled too, there must be three hundred people here, and this is the second shift, a big group just left!!'

"'I know, the Rabbi answered, they came to me also, different people that is, but hungry and all of them say that they are from Krakow and they've been eating for free for years, maybe twenty or thirty years. I simply don't understand it.'

"After everyone had been fed and the treasurer distributed some money for tomorrow's meals, both he and the Rav walked to the house of the Grocery store owner. "'Sure,' he answered, 'I used to give everyone food. They would sign and I'd give the bill at the end of each week to that old rich guy that just died, the one they called Yisroel Goy.

"'I mean, it's been going on for, I'd say forty years, maybe more, even before I owned the store. I mean he was my best customer that old man. But what… he kept warning me not to tell anyone, even my wife. Every time he would pay he said if he heard that people knew he was paying, he'd stop. I don't know why he didn't want me to tell. So I didn't tell anyone.

"'Did you see at his funeral? It was terrible; he almost didn't have a minyan! I guess he only cared about those poor people. But now that he's not around, well, what can I do? I can't give food for free! I mean I have a wife and family too. Maybe I can give something, but he used to give thousands each week! I can't give thousands like him. I hope that's not the reason that you came to my house. I'm sure willing to help, but what can I do?'

"When the Rav and the treasurer heard these words they looked at each other and began weeping. They had made a terrible error in judgment. The Rav declared a day of fasting and repentance for all the Jews of Krakow. The word spread like wildfire, and everyone gathered at the Shul to say Psalms, they realized that they had made a big mistake. After several hours the Rav stood at the podium and announced that they were all going to the graveyard."

"It was a strange site to see so many people walking somberly like a funeral with no coffin. But they all poured into the graveyard and

gathered around Yisroel Goy's grave. For some reason the tombstone was covered with a large cloth but everyone's attention focused on the Rabbi as he stepped from the crowd, stood at the foot of the grave, back to the crowd, and began to speak to Yisroel Goy.

"'Yisroel, Yisroel! We've come here today to say we are sorry.' He paused; the silence was broken by some muffled weeping from the crowd. 'I know you don't need our apologies but we are sorry! We're sorry that we were so cruel, crueler than we accused you of being. And we're sorry that no one was your friend and that no one really cared.' Now the cries were louder, almost everyone was sobbing.

The Rav waited for silence, dried his eyes and continued. "'I know you wanted the words 'Yisroel Goy' written on your tombstone. Well I've done something that I hope you won't mind …last night I had the stonecutter add a word'. With this, the Rav pulled away the cloth to reveal that the inscription now read:

'YISROEL GOY… KADOSH' (Israel, a Holy Nation.)"

Rav Shochet had finished his lecture and the crowd showed their satisfaction with rounds of applause. After he had finished shaking hands and was making his way out the door one of the young men studying for the priesthood approached him and asked if it was possible to speak to him alone.

There was something strangely sincere in the young man's eyes and Rav Shochet set an appointment for the next morning in his hotel room. The young man appeared on time and after sitting down requested that the Rabbi repeat the story he told, and then when he finished, requested an explanation on several points. He listened deeply to the answers, hey shook hands and parted.

Years later Rav Shochet, on a visit to Israel, was praying at the Kotel when a young, religious, bearded Jew approached him and shook his hand warmly. "Do you recognize me?" he asked, "I am the priest that visited you years ago in your hotel room."

Rav Shochet stared at him and was so astounded he couldn't speak.

"Yes,' the young man continued 'you don't know what that story you told about the miser did to me. You see, my mother was Jewish but she didn't tell me. She kept it a secret. She escaped to America from Poland in the war and there she married a devout Catholic. You see, it wasn't so easy being a Jew in those times.

"Just before she died, she told me the same story you told and added that we are related to that holy Jew that supported hundreds of people anonymously in Krakow hundreds of years ago. But I pushed that episode out of my memory. Rabbi, your story woke something that was sleeping in my soul and now I've returned to myself."

Rabbi Shochet now understood why the Lubavitcher Rebbe insisted on that particular story.



Living Jewish

וַיָּרֶב הָעָם עִם־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ תְּנוּ־לָנוּ מַיִם וְנִשְׁתֶּה ***And the people quarrelled with Moshe and they said, "Give us water"*** *(17:2)*

Why was it considered a sin to have asked for water? What else could the Jews in the desert have been expected to do when their supply ran out? However, the Torah states, "And there was no water for the people to drink, and the people quarrelled with Moses"; only later are we informed "and the people thirsted there for water." From this we learn that they started arguing with Moses even before they became thirsty. *(Chidushei HaRim)*

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Shabbos of Emunah





A yungerman once said to **Rebbe Yaakov Yosef of Skver, *zt'l***, before Shabbos *parashas Beshalach*, "The Shabbos for *parnassah* is approaching." The reason Beshalach is the Shabbos for parnassah is because the *parashah* discusses the *mon* that sustained the Jewish nation in the desert.

The Skvere Rebbe corrected him. "The Shabbos of *emunah* is approaching" because in this week's *parashah* the Jewish nation reached a high level in *emunah* (and earned their *parnassah* in the merit of their *emunah*). For example, it says about the miracles of *kriyas Yam Suf* (14:31), **ויאמינו בה'** "*They believed in Hashem.*" They believed in Hashem even before *kriyas Yam Suf*. They believed, because now they attained a higher level of *emunah*.

When someone reaches a high level of *emunah* his beliefs are as valid and real to him as the things he sees with his eyes. They attained this level of Emunah at *kriyas Yam Suf*, as the nation sang (15:2), **זה קלי ואנוה** - "*This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him.*" **זה** is something that one can point to. Rashi writes,

בכבודו נגלה עליהם והיו מראין אותו באצבע, ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראו נביאים "*Hashem revealed himself to them, and they pointed*

to Hashem with their finger. A maidservant at the sea saw what even the prophets couldn't see."

There are 115 *pesukim* in the *parashah*, which is *gematria* **יד אמונה**, which teaches us that the theme of the *parashah* is to have *emunah* that everything happens according to **יד ה'** -Hashem's hand.

So, rather than calling this parashah the *parashah* of *parnassah*, it is more accurate to call it the *parashah* of *emunah*. And when Klal Yisrael have *emunah*, they will have *parnassah*. As it states in this week's *parashah*, after *kriyas Yam Suf* and after the lofty levels of *emunah* that the nation attained (16:4), **הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים** ***"Behold, I will make it rain bread from heaven,"*** because *emunah* is *mesugal* for *parnassah* and many other things too.

They Couldn't Find The Entrance (Exit) By Rabbi Avraham Chayun

Once, **Rabbi Yisrael Abuchatzeira**, **the Baba Sali** had an apartment in Jerusalem. He lived in Netivot in southern Israel but on Thursday Baba Sali would go to Jerusalem to his apartment to mourn over the exile of the Divine Presence. He explained to one of his close students that he goes into exile to Jerusalem once a week to share in the exile of G-d's Divine Presence that is still in exile until the rebuilding of the Temple.

A group of thieves kept track of the Rabbi's apartment and found that it was always empty on Thursdays. So one Thursday they broke into the apartment and started emptying all of the apartment's valuables into large sacks. They took money, a set of gold tableware and other valuables. However, when they wanted to leave they couldn't find the door.

"What's going on?" They were shocked! "There was a door here just before!" They ran their hands along the wall looking for the door and they rubbed their eyes to make sure they were seeing correctly.

They could not find a door… They didn't know that G-d blinded their eyes concealing the door from them as punishment for their attempting to steal from the Baba Sali.



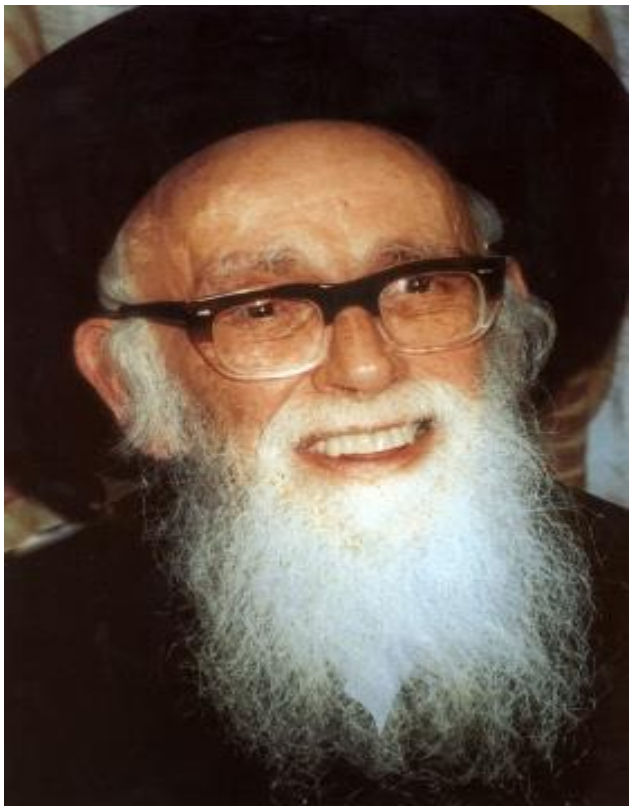
A few hours later a key was heard in the door and it opened. The Baba Sali came home accompanied by his students. They saw the thieves and he told them; "You are looking for nothing! You will not leave the house until every single thing is put back in its place!"

The thieves understood they were dealing with a holy man and quickly started putting everything they took back in its place. However when they looked for the door it still wasn't there. The Baba Sali looked hard at them and said: "It must be you still didn't return *everything!*" They cried, "We did return everything!"

"Look in your pockets" Baba Sali told them. One thief took a golden spoon out of his pocket. The Baba Sali commanded, "Put it back in its draw". The thief ran to do it and suddenly the door appeared to them. They ran out as fast as they could.

"A man should remember three things: that he has only one day to live; that he has only the page before him to study; and that he is the only jew on whom the survival of torah depends."- The Chofetz Chaim, zt''l

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman's Respect For the Lubavitcher Rebbe By Rabbi Sholom DovBer Avtzon





Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was the Rosh Yeshiva of Kol Torah in Yerushalayim. He was asked why he has so much respect for **the Lubavitcher Rebbe**, even though he is not a chossid?

He responded; my father [Rabbi Chaim Yehudah Leib] was the Rosh Yeshiva of the prestigious yeshiva, *Shaar Hashanayim*, a yeshiva of *mekubalim*. So yes, my father definitely was deservingly considered by many as a righteous individual whose prayers are listened to. When people asked him for a blessing, his response was that Hashem will definitely help and he would advise the person to daven in earnest and give tzedokah.

One time in middle of the night there was incessant banging on the door. My father was still up as he was learning and opened the door. An anxious and distraught man entered and between his sobs beseeched my father for a blessing for his wife. She was in midst of a lengthy labour and the doctors were very concerned for her and the baby's safety.

My father reassured him that Hashem will definitely help her and everything would be alright. However, this did not calm the husband. He anxiously repeated that the doctors are extremely pessimistic and he insisted that my father guarantees him that everything will be alright.

Seeing how distraught he was, my father's compassion for a fellow Jew was such that against his nature he gave the person the promise he had asked for. Much relieved, the man thanked him profusely and returned to the hospital full of optimism.

As soon as he left, my father awakened me and requested that I wake up the other members of the family and we should all say Tehillim and give tzedokah. He explained, I just gave a Jew a promise that everything will be alright and in what merit can I guarantee that. But in the merit of the Tehillim and tzedokah that we all are saying now, I hope Hashem will listen to our supplication.

Reb Shlomo Zalman continued, now that was speaking about giving one individual a promise that everything will be alright. Yet my father, who rightfully is considered a gutte Yid (a tzaddik), was nervous and apprehensive of assuming such a responsibility.

Now you are asking me about a Yid that gives this blessing and guarantee on a daily basis, not to one Jew or a few individuals, but to countless people. Yet he does it without any apprehension, confident that his blessing will be fulfilled. Have you any understanding of what that means?

Is that not testimony to his sheer greatness?!

When the going seems rough, look at the jewels you are carrying. ~ The Chofetz Chaim, Zt''l

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld- Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid

This week, Parshas Bashalach- Shabbos Shirah - Tu, Bishvat. We famously sing the Shiras Hayam that Klal Yisroel sang as they left Mitzrayim. And the Torah tells us an amazing thing, that **וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֲחוֹת אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֹּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתֵּצֶאן כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתֻפִּים וּבִמְחֹלֹת** ***Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a drum in her hand, and all the women came out after her with drums and with dances.*** *15:20*

Miriam took her drum in her hand and together with all the women, they used these instruments to sing and make music in front of hashem, to express their gratitude.

There is an interesting question, and that is that Klal Yisroel on the men's side, were singing. Klal Yisroel on the women's side, were not only singing, but they were playing musical instruments as well. It seems that their expression of Hakoras Hatov – thanks, exceeds that of the men. They were going that extra step, beyond what the men did. And the question is – why?

So **Harav Chaim Efraim Zeitchik, *zt"l***, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Ohr Chodosh, explains that perhaps the women felt an even greater sense of joy from the salvation, then the men did, because the women had greater spiritual problems in Egypt than the men had. With everything that went on with the mistreatment of women. Pharaoh did everything to disrupt family life. And when the women came out, they appreciated that, perhaps even more than the men who were subjected to back-breaking labour. And therefore, the women displayed their love and simcha on a higher level than the men.

I always ask ***my boys*** – If you see a guy at the Kossel crying his eyes out – think what happened , what's the story? Maybe something happened to one of his children, maybe he needs a *shidduch*, maybe someone is sick. Who knows? Parnossoh? There could be many reasons. But no one says the other reason.



There was once a very wealthy man that walked to the Kossel with his Rabbi, and he comes and sees that there is a man there who is crying uncontrollably – sobbing tears. And he says to the rabbi, "maybe go over to the guy and see if he needs some help?" Maybe he needs financial help, perhaps he is making a wedding? Maybe he is in debt or has an illness R'L? Tell him that I can write him out a cheque on the spot.

The Rabbi goes over to him and says, "excuse me, I am here with a very wealthy man. Is there something that you need? Is something wrong?" He said, " no, everything is great". The Rabbi says, "what you mean, you are crying your eyes out, how can that be?".

He said, "***no, everything is wonderful. I married off my twelfth child last night, and I have come to say thank you to Hashem***".

How many people would assume that such a person who is expressing such a thing in that manner at the Kossel, that he is happy but would automatically think the opposite. Unfortunately, we don't always recognise our own blessings. We don't appreciate that which we have. And because of that, we don't express the simcha and thanks.

That is what Shiras Hayom is. Take a step back and appreciate all that we have. **The Kotzker Rebbe** says an amazing thing. **וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמָהּ מָרָה** 15:23 .

The Pasuk says that Klal Yiroel came to Marah and they weren't able to drink the water because **מָרִים הֵם** – it was bitter. Says the Kotzker, that it wasn't the water that was bitter, but it was Klal

Yisroel that were bitter! And because they were bitter, they tasted bitterness in the waters.

The Kotzker says that this phenomenon also applies to many areas in our lives. If a person feels bitter, then everything will appear bitter. A person looking for faults, will always find them. But if a person sweetens his own outlook, then he will have a much sweeter world.

That is the Shira- Parshas Bashalach and Tu Bishvat, eating and seeing all the wonderful creations of Hashem. Making Berachos and thanking Hashem and appreciating everything.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Vechol Maaminim -*"Amen" Brings Down the Shechinah and Hastens Healing*

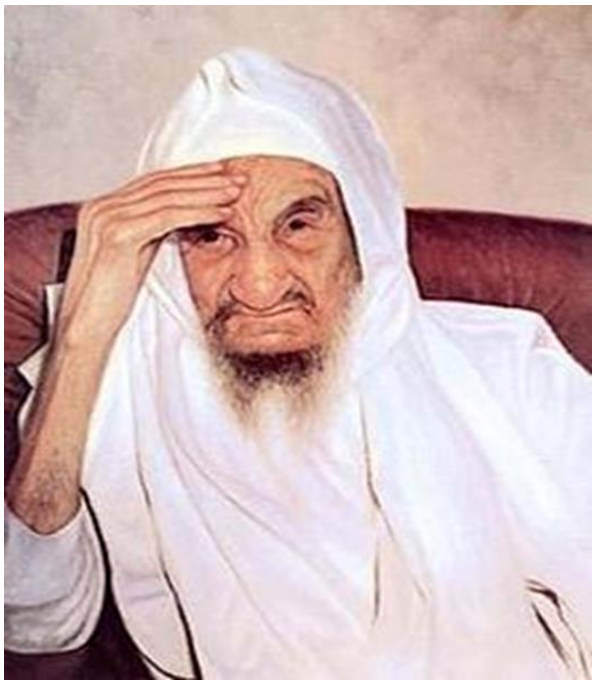
15:26 :כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפְאֶךָ

The Rebbe Harav Aharon Roth, author of Shomer Emunim, explained: When Am Yisrael answer amen, immediately the holy Shechinah descends on that place, and complete healing comes to a person, both physically and emotionally. This is alluded to in this passuk: "Ki Ani" is numerically equivalent to "amen", and Hashem Rofecha" – the Shechinah of Hashem dwells and the person merits a yeshuah.



The mashpia, Harav Eliyahu Roth, would tell his students: "Know that through answering amen properly, we bring upon ourselves good influences in ruchniyus and gashmiyus, and we banish disease from the house. Every person needs to make the calculation– what is more important

to him – to go and seek out doctors or to answer amen aloud? Because it is a wondrous segulah to be spared from all that and to bring a yeshuah and hatzlachah in all areas."



The Medical Convoy From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

Once, a large group of people came to visit the ***Baba Sali*** **(Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzeira) zt"l**. As they waited their turn to meet with the tzadik, they chattered noisily and it was impossible to convince them to lower their voices. They were obviously excited about something.

Rabbi Eliyahu Alfasi, Baba Sali's attendant, approached one of the men in the group and asked what they wanted from the master. "Ask that girl," the man said, pointing to a figure among the women. Alfasi went to her and asked the same question. She looked at him and said, "Don't you know me?"

He searched his memory, but he couldn't recognize her.

The young woman laughed and asked again, "Try to remember."

But try as he might, he could not recall who she was.

Finally, she said, "Would it be easier to remember if added that I was confined to a wheelchair the last time I was here? Now I stand before you, thank G-d, on my two healthy feet."

In a flash, Alfasi remembered. Three months ago, a girl was brought to the Baba Sali's home in a wheelchair. She had begged to be allowed to enter. It was several years now, she had said, that her legs were paralyzed, and she had come from the Beit Levinson

Hospital in Raanana, where the highest-ranking doctors had told her that there was no hope for recovery.



Rabbi Alfasi had explained that it was impossible for her to enter the room of the Baba Sali, but because of her moving request, he would allow her to move her wheelchair up to the door of his room and listen to his words through the door. After the Baba Sali heard her problem, he gave her a blessing for a complete recovery. When she heard this, she began to weep. She asked Rabbi Alfasi to ask the Baba Sali to promise her that she would get well.

In the face of her moving despair, Alfasi could not refuse her request. He returned to the Baba Sali with her words. This time, the Baba Sali gave Rabbi Alfasi a bottle of water and instructed him to tell her to wash her legs with this water. "I give her my word that she will soon recover," said Baba Sali in a loud voice.

The girl heard and rejoiced. She asked those who brought her in to bring her back to the car in which she came. She departed clutching to her chest the bottle of water that the Baba Sali gave her, as tears fell down her cheeks. And now, she had returned to tell the Baba Sali that she was healed. She had walked into the house unaided to demonstrate her ability to walk alone.

To Rabbi Alfasi there was still an unanswered question in his mind. "I understand now that you came to thank the master, but why did you bring all these other people?"

"We are a group of doctors from Beit Levinson. We have been working closely with this patient for four years. Our prognosis was that there was no hope for her recovery. Not only were her legs

paralyzed, but we discovered after many tests that her whole left side would eventually be affected!



"When we saw what happened to young woman after the holy Rabbi gave his blessings, we could not contain ourselves. The whole department felt we had to come and see who this great man is. - We, too, want him to bless us!"

The Power of the Unlocked Door



One of the popular kevarim in Poland is the kever of the **Bnei Yissaschar zt'l**. (There is a hachnasas orchim there, so people can have a good meal and a place to rest before they continue on their travels.)

A yungerman told me that he was at the kever of the Bnei Yissaschar and saw a bachur praying there with immense kavanah. He knew that bachur. It was his neighbors' child. He also knew that this bachur had fallen off the derech ten years before. What turned the bachur around? How was he saying Tehillim with so much sweetness?

When the bachur finished his Tehillim, the yungerman greeted him, and asked him how he did teshuvah. The bachur replied, "Someone

told me something that totally turned me around. The person who told me didn't realize the imprint he was having on my life.

"He told me that my parents keep their front door open every night, as they hope that I will return. They don't want me to come to the door, find it locked, and turn away. That's when I returned home and also to Yiddishkeit, after ten years of wandering."

A Short Message From Mrs. F. Loewi



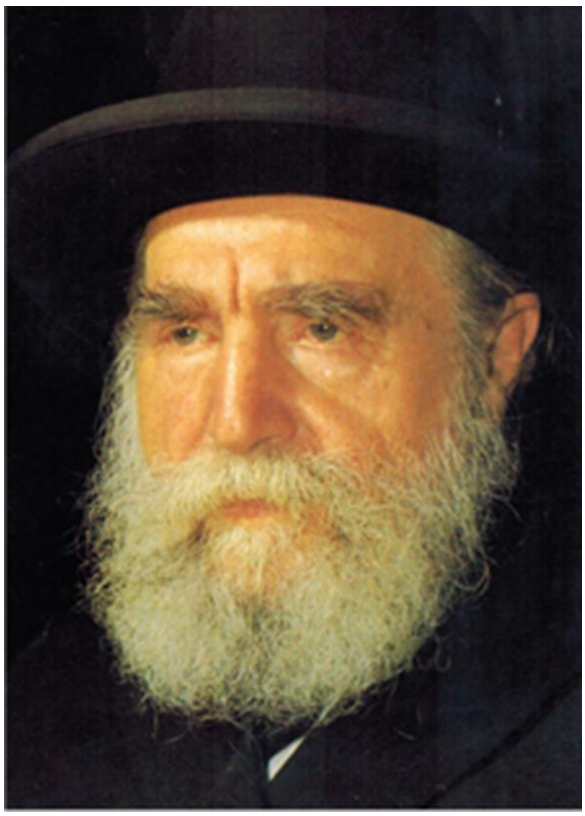


My mother a"h once related a beautiful mashal. Imagine a large room full of people, yet it is freezing cold inside. With no heat available, everyone stands around shivering. One man, seeking to warm himself up, puts on his fur coat. Yet another man, also looking to relieve himself of discomfort, prepares a fire in the fireplace.

What is the difference between these two people? The former warms himself, while the latter warms himself along with everyone else.

In life overall, we are often given opportunities where we can focus on our own needs and help ourselves. Yet then again, those very same opportunities can be turned around to help others. Instead of merely thinking of ourselves, within the very same act, we bring light and warmth to so many others.

Sages through the Ages - Rav Moshe Feinstein



Uzda, Belarus 1895 – New York 1986 By Dr. Benji Schreiber

Rav Moshe was a leading Posek of the second half of the twentieth century. He learnt with his father, the Rov of Uzda, and also in yeshivos in Slutsk, Shklov and Amstislav, before being appointed Rav of Lubań, Poland, where he served for sixteen years.

He married Shima Kustanovich in 1920 and had 4 children - Pesach Chaim, Fay Gittel, Shifra, and R' Dovid - before leaving Europe. Under increasing pressure from the Soviet regime, he moved with his family to New York City in 1936, where he lived for the rest of his life. His son R' Reuven was born after they immigrated to the United States.

Settling on the Lower East Side, he became the Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim. He later established a branch of the yeshiva in Staten Island, New York, headed by his son Rav Reuven Feinstein while his son Rav Dovid Feinstein headed the Manhattan branch.

He was president of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada and chaired the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of Agudas Israel of America from the 1960s until his death. Rav Moshe also took an active leadership role in Israel's Chinuch Atzmai, the main chareidi school system.

Rav Moshe's greatest renown came from a lifetime of responding to halachic shailos (queries) from America and worldwide. He authored approximately 2,000 teshuvos (responsa) on a wide range of issues affecting Jewish practice in the modern era.

In his teshuvos, Igros Moshe, first published in 1959, he gave landmark piskei halacha on many critical topics. Seven volumes were published during his lifetime; and two have been published posthumously by family members.

Along with Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Ovadia Yosef, he was a leading authority in applying halacha to the modern world in which we live. He addressed numerous contemporary halachic issues. He opined on organ transplantation, forbidding heart transplantation because he saw it as murder of both the donor and – given how unsuccessful it was at the time – the recipient. Whether he would allow brain death using contemporary medical criteria remains a controversial subject. He clarified the halachic position on other issues such as cosmetic surgery, risky medical operations and withdrawal of care at the end of life.

He wrote classic rulings on bas mitzvahs for girls, drinking non-shoimered milk, yom HaShoa, Conservative Judaism, donating blood for pay, mechitzos in shuls and at simchos, mixed-seating on a subway or other public transportation, shaking hands between men and women and even smoking marijuana and cigarettes among many others.

In addition, he wrote Dibros Moshe, an eleven-volume work of Talmudic chiddushim (novella). Darash Moshe – his chiddushim on the Torah, was published posthumously. Some of Rav Moshe's early works, including a commentary on the Talmud Yerushalmi, were destroyed by the Soviet authorities.

At his levaya Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said "Who am I to eulogise him? I studied his seforim; I was his talmid (student)."

There are many stories of his kindness humility and honesty. "First, there was his incredible warmth. He never just shook your hand – he clasped it with both of his and gave your hand a hug. He gave you a warm smile and you forgot that the weightiest problems in the world rested upon his shoulders."

"While waiting for a car or even upon awakening from a nap, he would review Tanach over and over again"

"He would say that it is not enough to learn Torah; one must learn Toras Shalom – a Torah of peace" He was asked why he thought he merited living a long life and he answered: "***My whole life I never caused another person pain."***

Rejection Won't Matter! By Rabbi David Ashear



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman told a story of a Rabbi from Israel who was struggling a great deal with parnasa. He was marrying off a child and needed an exorbitant amount of money that he didn't have. With no other choice, he decided to go to America and ask for charity. Before he left, he went to his Rabbi to receive a blessing. The Rabbi told him, "No matter what anyone gives you, whether its $5000, $500, $5 or even 5 cents, always say thank you with a smile and make sure you keep learning Torah when you're not out collecting."

He went, but he was not having a pleasant experience. He was getting a dollar here, a dollar there, but most of the time he was just being ignored. The people there had heard his type of story again and again and they were not moved to give. It was very hard for him to keep smiling and say thank you for the small change that he was getting, but he managed to do it.

It was towards the end of his trip, and he had only collected a very small portion of the funds that he needed. An acquaintance sent him to an area with very wealthy people. This was his last chance. He

didn't know anyone in the neighborhood, so he just went door to door knocking, but not one person answered the door. Until, at last, at one house, the door finally opened, but the Rabbi was gripped with fear when he saw a large dog standing in front of him, barking loudly. He began to run, and then he heard a voice from inside the house, saying, "Don't be afraid; come in, Rabbi."



He walked into a large house which looked like a palace, and he saw the wealthy owner sitting with his feet up. "What could I do for you, Rabbi?" the wealthy man asked.

The Rabbi explained his dire situation. The wealthy man then took out a ten-dollar bill from his pocket, he gave it to his dog and told his dog to go give it to the Rabbi. It was bad enough he only got ten dollars, but to take it from the dog... the shame that he felt was too much.

Instead of becoming angry, he remembered the words of his Rabbi and politely thanked the man for his contribution. He then went even further to make that man feel good. Just a couple of hours before, he was learning a Gemara which said: " a person should not raise a bad dog in his house." So he told the wealthy man, "You have a good dog." "What do you mean?" the wealthy man asked.

He explained, "The Gemara says you shouldn't raise a bad dog, which implies there must be such a thing as a good dog. Your dog knows how to give tzedaka, so he must be a good one."

The wealthy man then asked the Rabbi for a favor. He said, "Please, could you go across the street and tell my neighbor what you just told me about my dog?" The Rabbi didn't want to do it, especially

after he only got $10 from this man, but again he overcame his inclination and he said, "Sure, no problem."

He went across the street and an older gentleman answered the door. The Rabbi gave him the message. Minutes later, that man was across the street, hugging the first man. It was the father-in-law of the wealthy man. He had been so upset that his son-in-law got a dog, he hadn't spoken to him in months, but when he heard what the Rabbi said about the dog, he had a change of heart.

The wealthy man was so grateful, he wrote out a check to this Rabbi for $18,000 and gave it to him for the wedding. At that moment, all the rejection that the Rabbi experienced the past week didn't matter anymore. The Rabbi got what he needed.

`Hashem prepared him, right before the visit, with the right words to say and put him in front of the right person. And just like that, his trip was a great success. We could all be helped. Continue hoping and praying to Hashem and b'ezrat Hashem, we should all be helped with our needs.

Loving Kindness

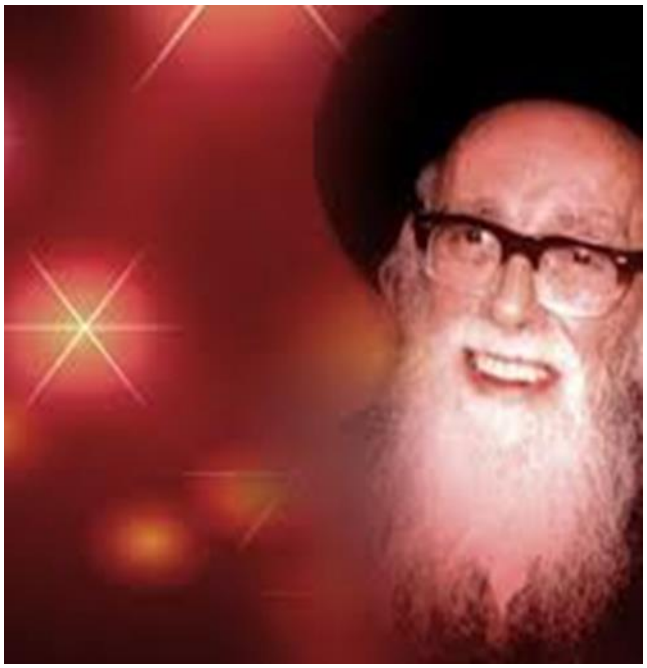
There is a Tanna D'bei Elyahu that the **Chofetz Chaim** brings down in Perek 15:13. נָחִיתָ בְחַסְדְּךָ עַם־זוּ גָּאָלְתָּ "***With Your loving kindness You led the people You redeemed."***

When Klal Yisrael were in Mitzrayim, they all gathered together and sat together because they were one unit. They made a decision and pact together that they would do Gemillas chasadim to each other and keep the Bris of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. They would retain the language and their dress code. They realised they were in slavery yet decided to do something about it. And realised that if they display Chessed to one another, then hopefully Hashem will reciprocate and shower them with Chessed and mercy in return. Hopefully to lighten the *Shibbud* or to free us.



It says in Yerushalmi Sanhedrin Perek 11 . *If we see that the zechus of the Avos and Imahos are falling away, and we are suffering, then go and cleave to middas Chessed. Because the mountains will move and the hills will fall down. When it comes to the point where Klal Yisrael are suffering, we know that there is one thing that we are going to have to do at the end of time-* ***Chessed*** *. This will enable us to have the Geulah Sh'laimo.*

L'Maaseh



When Yeshivas Kol Torah was looking to hire a new rosh yeshiva, they considered **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l** as a good candidate and offered him to come give a shiur and try out for the job. At the time, R' Shlomo Zalman was trying to finish up a new sefer he wanted to publish and was tempted not to, but in the end, accepted the opportunity because he felt it was far more important to teach talmidim directly than to publish a sefer to be read by the masses.

During the try-out shiur, someone posed a question, which caused him to stop and them say 'I made a mistake'. Later, when his wife asked him how it went, he answered 'not so well' because someone had asked a question which he wasn't able to answer. Then he

confided that he had immediately thought of three good answers but held back from saying them because he had felt that the question was still better than any of these answers. Instead, he 'admitted defeat'. Several hours later a delegation from the yeshiva came to offer him the position, explaining that a talmid chacham who so values truth is the most fitting person to assume the role of heading the yeshiva.

Maaseh Emunim - Sparks of Emunah in the Darkness



The horrific days of the Holocaust were a serious test for the emunah of Am Yisrael. Yet, the dreadful conditions in the camps, the constant suffering and loss, alongside the clouds of smoke from the crematoria did not dull the glow of the emunah, which continued to throb in the hearts of tens of thousands of Yidden who endured the valley of death in those times. Sapped and grieving, one from a city, two from a family, with a long road full of obstacles ahead, the survivors of the furnaces departed from their homelands that had betrayed them. They set out to build new lives, with the memories of their former lives etched deep in their hearts.

For the first few decades after the war, they were busy rebuilding new lives and establishing families that would prove that the "eternity of Am Yisrael does not lie". The fiend who intended to annihilate the last remnant of Klal Yisrael no longer existed to witness the revival of the eternal nation. Only when they reached their older years, and their lives became more tranquil, did many of the survivors find time to put their memories into writing, to serve as an eternal commemoration for a generation that was nearly wiped out.

One of those survivors was Harav Yaakov Yisrael Krieger of Netanya. Towards the end of his life, he published his memoirs of the Holocaust, in which he shared this story. "There is one thing I am proud of today," he writes by way of preface. "That throughout all my years in the Holocaust, I did not forget my G-d for a moment, and I never questioned His actions." Rav Krieger drew his strong emunah and hope from a tefillah that he recited every day.

Each morning he huddled with the rest of the prisoners for the morning roll call – that with typical Nazi brutality sometimes lasted hours irrespective of the weather. During that time –without missing a day - he would murmur tefillas Shacharis quietly, which was always accompanied by tears that streamed from his eyes, which refused to lose hope. "Al tira," he would whisper to himself at the end of the tefillah, "don't be afraid, and be strong in the face of the difficulties. The day is not far off that you will merit to see the downfall of the evildoers, to make Aliyah to Eretz Yisrael and to join the builders of Yerushalayim."

Erev Shabbos in Birkenau: Like every day, towards evening, the prisoners received their daily slice of bread. Despite his hunger, Reb Yaakov Yisrael, did not hasten to eat his portion. On Friday night, he would make Kiddush on the half a slice and ate it as his Friday night seudah. He saved the second half to be able to make Kiddush on Shabbos morning. Saving a piece of bread in a place where hunger had absolute control was no easy feat. He had to hide the slice in his clothes, and to sleep with it on his person. In the morning he had to run with it to roll call, at which time he also davened, and only then could he make Kiddush and eat.

He relates: "One Shabbos, when I began to daven Shacharis, I realized that there was an elderly Jew beside me with a bitter expression on his face. Apparently he sensed that throughout the roll call I was murmuring throughout, and he wanted to express his

dissatisfaction at the scene, and he muttered loud enough for me to hear, 'Poor guy, so young and already talking to himself…'

"Because I was in the middle of davening, I could not answer him at that moment. When I finished the part of davening I was saying and could speak, I said to him, 'you are mistaken sir, I'm not speaking to myself. I'm speaking to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. I was davening to Him. It is Shabbos today!' "'What?' the man was stunned. 'It is Shabbos today and you davened?!'

He grabbed onto me with two hands and cried to me pleadingly, 'Dear Yid! Regretfully, when I was young, I grew distant from the ways of Hashem, and I haven't davened in twenty years. Please, I ask that if you continue davening, please daven a bit louder so I can say after you some of those holy words that I have already forgotten!'

"I slowly continued davening and raised my voice a bit. The man beside me tried to repeat each word that I uttered. I finished davening as the roll call came to an end. When I returned to my barracks, I noticed the man walking after me. When I reached my bunk, I took out the half a slice of bread for my pocket and made Kiddush. But this time, I broke it into two pieces. I ate one piece myself and gave the other half to my new friend.

"He refused to take it. He claimed that eating from my bread was like murder, and he could not agree. I pleaded with him that eating it was like drinking wine from Kiddush. Only after I persuaded him that this was my personal oneg Shabbos, that even in this horrible place I could host a Jew at my table, he agreed and ate with me.

"It was an unforgettable seudah. The giving infused me with new strength, physical and spiritual. Despite the meagre rations, despite the setting, I felt like I was sitting at a royal feast. I forgot everything around me and my soul rose high up. Those were moments of M'ein Olam Haba that will never return.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

14:16 וְאַתָּ֗ה הָרֵ֤ם אֶת־מַטְּךָ֙ וּנְטֵ֣ה אֶת־יָדְךָ֔ עַל־הַיָּ֖ם וּבְקָעֵ֑הוּ ***And you raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and split it***



Rabeinu Bechaya, The Chizkuni, The Kli Yakar and The Rosh, (be'sheim his father) say a pshat that Kriyas Yam Suf wasn't done with a stick. It was done with Moishe Rabeinu's hands alone. Hashem told Moishe Rabeinu **הָרֵ֤ם אֶת־מַטְּךָ֙** – Lift up your stick and split the sea before they journey. Why? because there were people coming along and saying that that *it is not Moishe Rabeinu's koach, strength or greatness, but it is the power of the supernatural stick, that has got the names of Ha'kodosh Baruch Hu on it. If any of us had it, we could do the same thing.*

The Riboino Shel Olam heard that this is what people were saying, so He told Moishe Rabeinu the following- **הָרֵ֤ם אֶת־מַטְּךָ֙** – ***separate*** the stick from yourself, put it down! He didn't tell Moishe to hit the sea with the stick but separate it, put it away and only use your hands. And this brought the realisation of **וַיַּֽאֲמִינ֖וּ בַּיהוָ֑ה וּבְמֹשֶׁ֖ה עַבְדּֽוֹ**: They recognised that it was Hashem's strength and His Navi- Moishe carrying out this wonderous act, and not the *supernatural stick*.

Says the Rosh, I found a support to my father's pshat from an amazing *medresh* in Tehilim 114:3 (**בְּצֵ֣את יִשְׂרָאֵ֣ל**) . The Posuk says, **הַיָּ֗ם רָ֭אָה וַיָּנֹ֑ס** ***The sea saw and fled.*** Then the Pasuk says **מַה־לְּךָ֣ הַ֭יָּם כִּ֣י תָנ֑וּס הַיַּרְדֵּ֥ן תִּסֹּ֗ב לְאָחֽוֹר** ***What frightens you, O sea, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn backward?*** Asks the Medrash Plioh, "what is the question, "why did you split", as it says in the Pasuk- because

the sea saw something. The question should be, not why, but "***what*** did it see?



The medresh brings a *mashul*. There was a king who had a minister who had become very ill. As he was recovering, he said to the king, "you have a beautiful orchard and private gardens. Therein are beautiful plants, flowers and fruit, with incredible sights and aromas. If I could only get access to these gardens, it will aid in my recovery. Please could I have access to this Pardes, to relax and spend some time there"?



So the king said , "no worries, however there is a problem, as I have got a security guard who has explicit instructions to bar entry to everyone except me. However, take my personal signet ring, which has my emblem on it, show it to the security guard, and tell him that I sent you with my permission, as a way to gain access. Please spend as much time there as you want.

So, the minister goes down to the gardens, and the guard refuses him entry. So, he shows him the ring. The Guard says, "I am really sorry, but although I know who you are, I have explicit instructions from the king to do my job, which is to bar anyone else entry. Maybe the ring is stolen or a forgery? Sorry, nothing doing".

The minister went back to the king, and told him everything that had transpired. The king said, "Not to worry, give me back the ring and

I will come back together with you and when the guard sees me with you, that will gain you entry. So, they walk down towards the gardens.

The guard sees the king himself returning with the minister. As soon as he sees this, he realises that he is in serious trouble for defying the command of the king. He starts to flee for his life. The king sees him running away and calls out to him, " Why are you fleeing? Come back, you have done nothing wrong. I gave you a command to ensure that no one else gains entry, and you are just doing your job to the letter. You were correct in questioning the validity and authenticity of the ring. However please note that that this man is my personal minister and from now on treat him as you would treat me. You must give him access to the gardens if he requests it".

Says the medresh, Moishe Rabeinu went to the *Sar Hayom* (Uzza Malach of the sea) and he commanded the sea to split. The sea said, "I am not splitting for you. My command from Hashem (**ששת ימי בראשית**) is to ebb and flow. I am not going to take instructions from a human being to dry out". So Moishe Rabeinu says, "But I have with me the Matte of Hakodosh Baruch Hu in my hand!" So the sea says, " That may be so, but maybe it is a forgery or stolen"?

So Moishe goes back to Hashem, who says, "Don't worry, **הָרֵם אֶת־מַטְּךָ** – put down your stick, and I will come with you". The Schechina Himself comes together with Moishe Rabeinu. As soon as the sea saw Hashem coming, it realised Oh! Oh! I am in deep trouble here, and it starts fleeing. So Hakodosh Baruch Hu call after the sea and says, **מַה־לְּךָ הַיָּם כִּי תָנוּס** " Why are you fleeing? Why are you frightened? Come back, you have done nothing wrong. I gave you a command **מששת ימי בראשית**, and you are just doing your job to the letter. You were correct in questioning the validity and authenticity of the staff. However please note that that this man is my personal minister and from now on treat him as you would treat me. You must listen to his command if he requests it, as though it was Me".

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה׳ "Then Moshe and Bnei Yisroel chose to sing this song to Hashem… " (Shmos 15:1)

Prior to World War ll, a group of German Jews were lucky to escape from Germany to England. However, in 1940, the British were afraid that German foreigners were spies who would join with the enemy when the Nazis invaded their country. As a result, the British government rounded up all the Germans and sent them out of England. Those Germans of military age, from 18 to 65, were sent by boat to a prison in Australia, which was then a British colony. The British filled a troopship, the HMS Dunera, with over 2,500 refugees, most of whom were Jewish.



There was a fear of the Nazi submarines that patrolled the waters. All identifying marks were removed from the ship. In addition, the captain and crew were instructed not to respond to any radio requests to identify themselves. On board the ship, the Jews were all very badly treated by their British guards. The guards also looted any valuables that they could find. When they finished searching the personal luggage of the Jewish prisoners, they threw much of it overboard.

Imagine how the Jews must have felt. They thought that after escaping Nazi Germany that they would be safe in England. Now they were being sent to prison and all their valuables were stolen from them. In addition, their suitcases were dumped overboard. Any extra clothes and personal mementos from home, went to the bottom of the ocean.

Life in Australia was very difficult. Eventually the prisoners were freed. Many stayed in Australia and made a life for themselves. The

refugees retained unpleasant memories of their voyage. Over 40 years later a diving-team off the coast of Europe found a German submarine that had been sunk. They recovered the captain's diary.

One entry was especially interesting. The captain wrote that they were trailing an English troopship that did not have any identifying markings on it. The Germans prepared their torpedoes to sink the ship. As they were doing so, they noticed suitcases and papers floating on the surface. They sent a diver to retrieve some of the items. When they found German writing on them, they determined that this was not a troop transport carrying British soldiers. Instead, it must have been transporting German prisoners of war. The order was given NOT to torpedo the ship in order that they not harm their German brethren.

Only now, 40 years after the fact, did the refugees understand why Hashem had orchestrated that all their belongings be thrown in the ocean. That saved their lives! (Rabbi Frand on the Parashah)

After the plagues were brought upon the Egyptians, the Jews were freed from Egypt. They miraculously crossed the Red Sea and saw the Egyptian army drown. At that point, the Jews sang a song of praise to Hashem. The first word of the song that Moshe started was "***az***", "then". The **Midrash** (Shmos 23:3) says that the word Moshe used was significant. Moshe told Hashem, "I know that I sinned before You with the word "***az***"... .Therefore I am now praising You with the same word."

When Moshe first approached Pharaoh he complained to Hashem that his visit had made matters worse for the Jews. After the Jews safely crossed the Red Sea, Moshe understood that his visit had actually helped bring salvation to the Jews. The Jews were supposed to be in Egypt for 400 years. Hashem was concerned lest they would never be able to make it out of Egypt. They had fallen to the 49th level of impurity, while in Egypt. Had they fallen one more level, they would have been so low that they would have never left Egypt.

To resolve that problem, Hashem caused Pharaoh to increase the workload so that 400 years of had work be crammed into 210 years. Now, at the Red Sea, Moshe understood that the increased suffering to the Jews because of Moshe's intervention, actually benefitted them and aided in their eventual freedom from Egypt. (based on Rabbi Frand on the Parasha 2)

We all have various difficulties in life. Our suffering may actually be the means to our ultimate salvation!

Short Vort – Rabbi Moishe Kormornick

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשֻׁבוּ וְיַחֲנוּ לִפְנֵי פִּי הַחִירֹת בֵּין מִגְדֹּל וּבֵין הַיָּם לִפְנֵי בַּעַל צְפֹן נִכְחוֹ תַּחֲנוּ עַל הַיָּם

"Speak to the Children of Israel and let them turn back and encamp in front of Pi HaChiros — between the Migdol and the sea — in front of Baal Tzefon; you shall encamp opposite it, by the sea." (14:2)

Throughout their journey in the desert, the Jewish People followed the Clouds of Glory. Yet, in this instance, Moshe is instructed to inform them where they are heading. Why specifically here was there a need to tell them their destination?

Rav Shteinman suggests that Moshe was not only instructed to tell them their destination, but more importantly, the reason why they were heading there. Specifically now because they began to head back towards Egypt which may have led to confusion and despair. Therefore, Moshe first explained the plan to them, which Rashi notes was in order to entice Pharaoh to chase after them.

Although they would have realized very soon that they were not returning to Egypt, we see from here Hashem's care for their feelings, even for the moment that led to their confusion.

The trait of avoiding unnecessary pain of others — even for a moment — was witnessed by the students of **Rav Boruch Ber**

Leibowitz when he was listening to a Rosh Yeshiva's discourse. In the middle, however, Rav Boruch Ber stood up, removed his hat, placed it on the shtender in front of him, and walked out of the room, only to reappear a few minutes later.



When he was later questioned by his students, Rav Boruch Ber explained, "The truth is that I needed to use the facilities. But I was concerned that if the Rosh Yeshiva saw me leave, he may have thought that I did not value what he said. And even though I would have returned a few minutes later, and my absence would have been understood, for those few minutes he may have been hurt. Therefore, I left my hat on the shtender knowing that the Rosh Yeshiva would understand that I was planning on returning and that I was not even planning on leaving the Yeshiva, for he knows that I would never walk in the street without my hat."

Although such a level of consideration seems a stringency in our responsibility to care for the feelings of others. After all, the effort required to avoid hurting others is difficult enough without having to worry about them being upset when we are not actually doing anything wrong. The Ramban writes that in fact this is precisely what Hashem wants from us at all times. And although it might be difficult, we should be excited and encouraged in the knowledge that Hashem rewards us for every moment of hard work we apply to ourselves.

If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman.

The Rabbi's Garden - R' Yitzchak Sakhai



Rabbanit Margalit, the wife of the renowned **HaRav Ovadia Yosef, zt"l** took care of all his needs with utmost devotion. While the Rav was entirely engrossed in his holy world of Torah, his wife and children happily nurtured that by taking care of all the mundane details of running the house.

This included the Rabbi's garden. The little balcony off the Rav's house had a little garden. This garden had different spices and plants growing. Every Shabbos when the Rav wanted to say the required hundred brachos, the Rav would go to the balcony and say different brachos on different plants, such as borei minei besamim and borei asvei besamim.



From time to time during his learning, the Rav would go again to the balcony and say more brachos. The Rabbanit always made sure that Rav Ovadia was not missing anything so that he could grow to be the person that he became.

The garden was included in her list of responsibilities. When the need arose, she would call a special gardener who would take care of

the garden, groom and nip it and make sure it was nice and beautiful so that Rav Ovadia would be able to say his hundred brachos.

After Rabbanit Margalit passed away, nobody called the gardener. After a few weeks, the plants started to wither and die. Rav Ovadia was not able to use the plants on the balcony to say his brachos on besamim. This caused a struggle for the Rav to say the brachos that he wanted to say on Shabbos. One afternoon, a man arrived at the Rav's home. Nobody knew who he was, so the Rav was surprised when he said, "I'm so sorry about your loss."

"Who are you?" The Rav queried.

"I'm the gardener who takes care of the little garden inside your balcony. I am so sorry. Please forgive me. I didn't know your wife passed away."

"It's okay," the Rav reassured him. "You don't have to be sorry."

"No, I didn't know," the gardener repeated, "That's why I haven't come to take care of your garden all this time."

Rav Ovadia asked, "How did you find out? What happened?"

He then shared his incredible story, "Last night, the Rabbanit came to me in a dream. She told me, 'The chacham is suffering because he needs to make his hundred blessings on Shabbat. He needs his garden. Where have you been?'"

"When I woke up, I asked around and I found out that the Rabbanit had passed away. I had no idea. She hadn't called me to take care of the garden – I'm really sorry." - With that, he approached the balcony and started grooming the garden as before.

This story teaches us several lessons. Firstly, we see the importance of saying a hundred brachos a day. We don't realize what a powerful holy impactful they have on our neshama.

Secondly, we see that people who pass away know exactly what is happening on this earth, especially what is happening with their family and the things that they cared about.

In addition, we learn that if a person was involved with mitzvos in their lifetime, then even after they pass away, they still get merit from the mitzvos that they were involved in when they were alive. That is a zechus for them, because they were the ones that started it and were involved in it.

So when you start a mitzvah, or other worthwhile venture, it is a great merit for you because even after 120 years, every time somebody gets involved in that organization or mitzvah that you helped start, you get merits accrued. You get zechus from that. You get elevated from it because you had a part in it.

Jewish Education Program -The Best Life Preserver



וַיַּסַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּם־סוּף וַיֵּצְאוּ אֶל־מִדְבַּר־שׁוּר וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת־יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר וְלֹא־מָצְאוּ מָיִם... וַיִּלֹּנוּ הָעָם עַל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר מַה־נִּשְׁתֶּה

"Moshe caused Israel to journey from the Sea of Reeds… They went for a three-day period in the Wilderness, but they didn't find water… The people complained…" - (Shmos 15:22-24)

Hashem just took the Jews out of Egypt with a multitude of miracles and split the Sea of Reeds (Red Sea). A mere few days after the greatest open miracles in the history of mankind, the Jews complained. How could that be?

After Hashem split the Red Sea, the Jews travelled in the desert. They were travelling for three days and couldn't find water. Imagine how thirsty they must have felt. Finally, when they did find water it tasted very bitter. How very frustrating. At that point they complained against Moshe and Hashem. The conditions were harsh, but instead of asking Hashem, without anger, to fulfill their needs, they complained.

The Da'as Zekanim brings a fascinating Midrash which has a unique understanding of these pesukim: The Jews were travelling for three days and couldn't find Torah (that is, they didn't learn Torah). The "water" that the Jews were lacking was "Torah" which is compared to water. Therefore, they rebelled against Hashem. As a result of this, an enactment was made that we should read from the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays. This way we wouldn't go for three days straight without learning Torah.

The Jews had just witnessed numerous miracles, had seen the splitting of the Red Sea, and were on the lofty level of singing to Hashem. Yet, a mere three days without learning Torah led to their rebelling against Hashem.

The Sefer HaChinuch writes that the essence of the Jewish People is the Torah. The entire world and the Jews were created solely for the sake of fulfilling the Torah. We were redeemed from Egypt in order to accept the Torah at Mount Sinai and to fulfil it. The greater our appreciation for Torah, the more we will study it.

When the Romans conquered the Land of Israel, they passed a law that the Jews couldn't learn Torah. The great Rabbi Akiva ignored this Roman law, despite the terrible punishment for those who were caught. Rabbi Akiva said that a Jew cannot survive without learning Torah just as a fish cannot survive out of water.

Of course, we all know the story of Hillel. One day he couldn't afford the small fee to enter the Beis Medrash, the study hall, to learn Torah. He thirsted so much to study the words of Hashem's Torah

that he climbed onto the roof and spent the entire day listening to the Torah lecture, with his ear pressed against the skylight. This occurred during a cold winter day!

We are in a constant battle, every moment of our lives, with the Yetzer HaRa, the evil inclination, who constantly tries to get us to sin. Our only defence against the Yetzer Hara is learning Hashem's Torah.

Learning Torah is our lifeline. It is also our only defence, enabling us to withstand all the tests that the Yetzer Hara sends us.

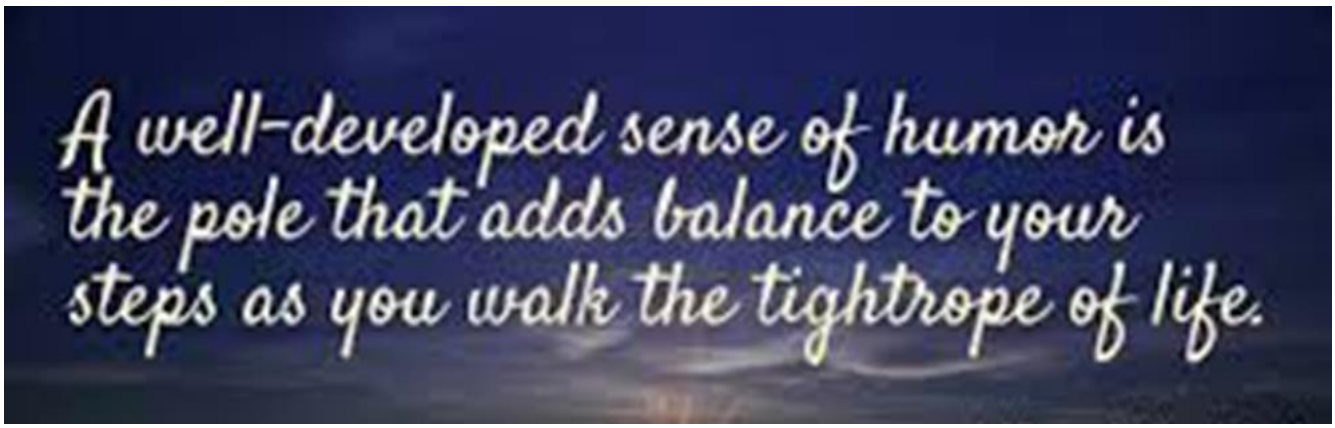
Revach L'Neshama – Rav Asher'le MiRiminov - How A Man Supports His Wife

One time a Chasid and his despondent wife came to Rav Asher'le MiRiminov. The wife claimed that her husband did not make a decent living because he was so worried about ona'a, accurate scales, and every other minute halacha. The wife complained that he had no right to be such a big tzaddik while his wife and children were starving. Rav Asher'le MiRiminov answered that the obligation of supporting one's wife is derived from the pasuk (Beshalach 16:16), "אִישׁ לַאֲשֶׁר בְּאָהֳלֹו תִּקָּחוּ ", each man should take Man back to his home. The *Man* in the midbar, said Rav Asher'le was acquired with pure righteousness without the slightest trace of impropriety. Similarly in a Kesuba it is written, "V'Afarnes Yaschi B'Kushta", I will support you honestly.

A man is not responsible to break or even slightly bend the laws of honesty and business ethics as the torah prescribes it, to support his wife. The extent of his effort and obligation is where the legal bounds are drawn. The rest is up to Hashem. (Iturei Torah)

Revach L'Neshama - Krias Yam Suf: Rav Shamshon Rephael Hirsch - Bnei Yisroel's Sense Of Humour

When Bnei Yisroel was pinned between the raging waters of the Yam Suf and the bloodthirsty army of Mitzrayim seeking revenge, they did not expect to survive the ordeal. They turned to Moshe and asked (Beshalach 14:11) **הֲמִבְּלִי אֵין־קְבָרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם** why did you take us out of Mitzrayim, was there a shortage of burial plots that you took us to the desert to die?



Rav Shamshon Rephael Hirsch says as follows. There was sharp irony in their words. Even at the moment of fear and total unsurpassable despair, the Torah points out Bnei Yisroel's positive character trait of being able to sustain a good sense of humor. This, says Rav Hirsch, is a trademark of the children of Yaakov who at even the darkest moment, can retain their clear thinking and intellectual capability.

Revach - Shidduch Advice From Krias Yam Suf

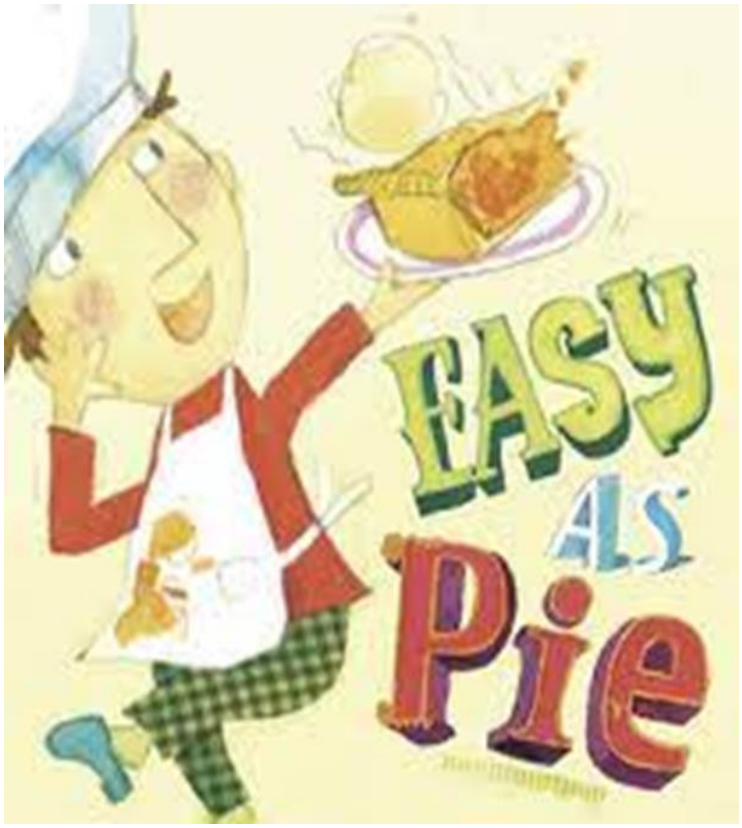
A father came to **Rav Yechezkel of Kuzhmir** to ask him advice about a Shidduch for his son. In their conversation it came out that the father was debating whether to proceed right away or to hold off a bit.

Rav Yechezkel told him that the gemara says (Sanhedrin 22a) Kasheh Zivugo Shel Adam K'Krias Yam Suf. That means that we can

compare Shiduchim to Krias Yam Suf. During Krias Yam Suf when the Bnei Yisroel were trapped and didn't know what to do, Hashem told Moshe, וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מַה־תִּצְעַק אֵלָי דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִסָּעוּ, tell Bnei Yisroel not to stand around and cry, tell them to keep moving.

There is your answer, said Rav Yechezkel, when it comes to Shidduchim don't stand around deliberating. Move forward!

Revach L'Neshama - Rav Simcha Bunim Of Peshischa - Marriage & Money, My Way Or The Highway?



Krias Yam Suf has gone done as the greatest Nes in the annals of history. Chazal tell us that two other things are as hard a feat to accomplish as Krias Yam Suf, shidduchim and parnasa. What is it about these two things that make it so difficult that we compare it to that history making event?

The Pninim Uparparaos Al HaTorah brings from Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa that when Bnei Yisroel was trapped with the sea in front of them and the bloodthirsty army of Mitzrayim behind them and nowhere to move on the right or the left they cried to Hashem to save them.

Out of all the plans and prayers they came up with, they never dreamed that the Yam Suf would open and provide them a safe passage. Hashem saved them in a way they didn't daven for. This was a very difficult feat. Similarly when it comes to shidduchim and parnasa we all map out plans to reach our goals, and we execute our

strategy as if we are in charge and it is our brilliant ideas that will bear fruit.

In this case since Hashem is not called in for any assistance, He theoretically should sit on the side-lines and let us fend for ourselves and see how far we get. Even if we daven for success, we are knocking on the wrong door. Nevertheless, Hashem in His rachmanus, brings the yeshua from where it is destined to come from, a place where we never dreamed it would.

Oy! If only we believed, if only we would ask for help and would not dictate how it should happen, we'd make Hashem's job so much easier.

If we davened for a yeshua without any preconceived notions, splitting the sea would be easy as pie!

Revach L'Neshama – Keeping Micha Out of Az Yashir

15:11 מִי־כָמֹכָה בָּאֵלִם ה׳ מִי כָּמֹכָה נֶאְדָּר בַּקֹּדֶשׁ נוֹרָא תְהִלֹּת עֹשֵׂה פֶלֶא

The words "Mi Chaamocha" are written twice in the pasuk. Why is the first written with a "Chaf" - מִי־כָמֹכָה and the 2nd with a "Kaf" - מִי כָמֹכָה?

The Rosh answers, since the 2nd time that it is written, it is preceded by the word Hashem. If the Torah would have written, "Mi Chamocha' - it would have read, "Hashem Micha ". Since Micha was the person who made the infamous "Pesel Michah" - an Avodah Zarah - the Torah did not want to write Hashem's name in association with him. The pasuk therefore switched the Chaf to a Kaf - now reading, 'Hashem Mi Kamocha".

" Do not punish without warning first." ~~ Talmud Sanhedrin

Revach L'Neshama – Rav Yehonoson Eibshitz - Five Out Of Six Brothers Survived

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם (Beshalach 13:18). Rashi offers two pshatim what this means. Either it means they went out of Mitzrayim armed and ready for war. Or it means that only one-fifth of the Bnei Yisroel went out of Mitzrayim with the others dying during Makas Choshech because they were not worthy of going out.

Rav Yehonoson Eibshitz offers another Pshat. He says that Chamushim means five out of six went out Mitzrayim. Where does he get this from? He explains that when in principle there should be no evil in the world. Everyone should be naturally bound to the word of Hashem. However, Hashem created a Teva, a natural ebb and flow otherwise known as bechira which give a person the leeway to choose evil if he wishes. This only applies to things Hashem created through Teva, but anything created L'Maala Min HaTeva through a Nes cannot do evil.

Therefore, since in Mitzrayim the women miraculously gave birth to six babies at a time, the one natural child can become a Rasha but the other five who were born through a Nes cannot. Therefore the one brother died while the other five, the Chamushim, safely left Mitzrayim.

Revach L'Neshama – Rav Isaac Sher - From Yam Suf To Mara, From Singing To Whining?

The spiritual experience on the Yam Suf was so great that Chazal tell us that a simple maidservant experienced nevua with greater clarity than the nevua of Yechezkel who saw the Maaseh Merkava. Yet after they left the Yam Suf just three days later they met up with their first major post Mitzrayim crisis; they were a thirsty nation with only bitter water to drink. And the complaining started...

The great Rosh Yeshiva of Slabodka, Rav Isaac Sher, in typical fashion explains that what appears to us as simple complaining was actually a small glimpse of their greatness. The Torah tells us that before reaching the bitter springs of Marah, they went three days without drinking. Why didn't they complain, how did they manage? Rav Sher explains that after experiencing such high levels of Ruchniyos, they had no interest in drinking. They were soaring high, beyond the simple needs of this world.

When they happened upon the water, they asked, "Mah Nishteh", why should we drink the bitter waters of gasmiyus, why can't we live like Malachim and drink only the sweet waters of Hashem? To this Hashem instructed them to throw a bitter tree into the water and it will become sweet.

The message was, says Rav Sher, man must be a man. He must live his life with nisyonos, with trials and tribulations with the goal of overcoming it. We must make the bitter sweet. This is something a Malach cannot do. This is what makes man special. The Midbar was learning experience from beginning to end. This was Bnei Yisroel's first lesson in life.

Revach L'Neshama - The Netziv - When You Are Down To Your Last Crumb

After Krias Yam Suf the Bnei Yisroel arrived in Mara and had no water to drink because the water there was bitter. Hashem told Moshe to throw in a bitter tree and the water became sweet. After this incident the pasuk recaps and says "Sham Sam Lo Chok UMishpat VSham Nisahu"; in Mara Hashem gave them mitzvos and tested them. Why was it so important to test them? **The Netziv** explains that the Torah is teaching us a valuable lesson for all generations about Bitachon and earning a living. Sometimes a person's finances come down to the last penny and it looks like he

will have nothing to eat. The future looks bleak and there is no help in sight. Even then a person must be confident in Hashem that he will provide a way to support him. Hashem is "Kol Yachol" and His salvation can be provided from the most unexpected sources.

Just like the bitter tree was the least expected solution to cure bitter water so too Hashem can bring your fortune from what appears to be the exact opposite, so don't ever lose hope. Hang tough, it is all just a test!

Revach L'Neshama - The Test of The Mann



When Bnei Yisroel complained that they would die of starvation in the Midbar, Hashem told Moshe that he would send Mann from the sky, "**למען אנסנו הילך בתורתי אם לא**", to test us if we will go with the Torah or not (Beshalach 16:4). Free food without effort! What kind of test is that?

Rav Moshe Shternbuch explains that people have an alibi for not toiling in Torah study; their time is busy trying to support their family. However, when they are blessed with financial success this excuse is no longer credible. The test of the Mun was the test of a life without excuses. With all our physical needs tended to would we the Bnei Yisroel learn Torah or not?

This test was not unique to the Dor HaMidbar. Each one of us on our own level face the same challenge. Whether we choose Torah as our career path or enter the working world, we still have down time. How do we spend it? The answer to this question and the way we respond to this challenge is what defines us as a person.

Revach L'Neshama - Rav Shimon Schwab - The Women Sing A Song Of Faith

Rav Shimon Schwab asks, why does the torah interrupt between the Shira of Moshe and the Shira of Miriam by recapping and telling us "Ki Va Sus Paroh..." that Paroh and his men drowned in the sea, don't we already know that?



He answers that we know that the women of that generation had more emuna then the men. "Bs'char Nashim Tzidkanios SheHayu BiOso HaDor Nigalu", they were redeemed in the merit of the righteous women. Similarly on the Yam Suf the women showed more emuna. Before the men sang Shira it says, **וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם**, the men were worried and said, just like we escaped on this side, maybe the Mitzrim escaped on the other side. Therefore Hashem washed the Mitzri bodies onto the shore for them to witness first hand. Only then "Az Yashir" did they begin to sing Shira.

Not so our Nashim Tzidkanios, the Torah tells us. "Ki Va Sus Paroh B'Richbo U'Parashav Bayam, VaYashev Hashem Aleihem Es Mai HaYam", as soon as waters came tumbling down on the Mitzrim in the Yam... **וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם**, even as the Bnei Yisroel were still walking through the Yam... "VaTikach Miriam HaNevia..." the women were already saying Shira. The women believed, and they were sure that Hashem had performed a great Nes without asking for the evidence.

Revach L'Neshama - Why Bread Needs To Be Fresh

Rav Shimshon Pincus points out an interesting phenomenon. Good bread is fresh bread. Once it gets old, even by a day, it becomes stale. Not so with cake or cookies. Why is that?

Bread is the main food that nourishes life. Cake and cookies are not. When it comes to life, it is refreshed by Hashem every moment of every day. The life given today must be put to use today. If we leave it over, so to say, and do not utilize it, we cannot use it tomorrow. Tomorrow is a new day, with its own gift of life granted from Hashem. Yesterday's unused life is wasted and gone forever.



Rav Avigdor Miller once said that killing time is like murder. Life is made up of minutes, hours, and days. Whatever time you kill is like killing a small part of life. It doesn't make a difference if it is at the end or in the middle.



Revach L'Neshama - The Long Arm Of Az Yashir

וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירְאוּ הָעָם אֶת־ה' וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ "The Bnei Yisroel saw the long arm that Hashem did in Mitzrayim" (Bishalach 14:31).

The Shnayim Mikra brings from the Lev Ari that this long arm refers to Bisya Bas Paroh whose arm stretched to grab Moshe's basket floating on the water. That is why it says Asher Asa Hashem "B'Mitzrayim" the long arm "in" Mitzrayim. When they saw Krias Yam Suf, they thought about this Nes of many years ago and they realized that this was Hashem's handiwork for his loyal servant, Moshe. **וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ**

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם" ***"And it came to pass when Pharaoh sent out the people."*** **(13:17)**

QUESTION: The *Gemara (Megillah* 10b) states that the word *"vayehi"* often denotes a time of distress. Leaving Egypt was indeed an event that the Jewish people eagerly anticipated. After slaving for many years, undoubtedly, they wanted to become free people. So why the use of *"vayehi"?*

ANSWER: Moshe pleaded with Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. He stubbornly refused till Hashem performed many miracles.

As strange as it may seem, there were still some Jews who thanked Pharaoh for *"beshalach Paroh et ha'am"* — permitting them to leave and sending them away. The Torah uses the expression *"vayehi"* to portray the sad situation that after all the sufferings under Pharaoh, some gave credit to Pharaoh for sending them away instead of praising and thanking Hashem. (**פניני התורה**)

Time is more valuable than money, because time is irreplaceable.

Vedibarta Bam

"ויסר את אפן מרכבתיו וינהגהו בכבדת" *"And He took off the wheel of their chariots, and He made them drive heavily."* (14:25)

QUESTION: Why does the *pasuk* say *"ofan"* — "wheel" — in the singular, although a chariot has two or four wheels?



ANSWER: Had Hashem removed all the wheels of their chariots, the horses could have exerted themselves and dragged the chariots on the ground. However, by removing only ***one*** wheel, Hashem caused their ride to be turbulent and agonizing with the chariots violently swaying from side to side. Thus, the riders were pummeled and pounded by the damaged chariots. (**שער בת רבים**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם" *"And it came to pass when Pharaoh sent out the people."* (13:17)

QUESTION: Why is the cantillation (*"trope"* printed above the Hebrew text) *revi'i munach* on the words *"vayehi beshalach"*?

ANSWER: Regrettably, there existed among the Jewish nation a group of wicked people uninterested in leaving Egypt. Had Hashem punished them publicly, the Egyptians would have thought that the suffering affected everyone, both the Jews and themselves. Therefore, during the plague of darkness, when the Egyptians were

unable to see anything and were literally tied to their places, these unworthy Jews died and were buried.

The Torah relates, **וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם**— "and *B'nei Yisrael* went up armed" (13:18). Rashi explains that the word "*chamushim*" alludes to the fact that only one fifth of the people left Egypt, while the other four fifths died.

Hence, the words **ויהי בשלח** have the cantillation of "*revi'i munach*" (which can be read as meaning "four remains") to indicate that four of the five portions remained, and only one fifth of the people left when Pharaoh sent them out. (**זר הצבי**)

Vedibarta Bam

***"ויגד למלך מצרים כי ברח העם ויהפך לבב פרעה ועבדיו" "And it was told to the King of Egypt that the people fled; Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart."* (14:5)**

QUESTION: The people did not ***run away***. Were they not asked to leave?

ANSWER: In *Parshat Beshalach* the term "*am*" — "people" — refers to the "*eirev rav,*" a mixed multitude of Egyptians who left Egypt together with the Jewish people, and the expression "*B'nei Yisrael*" refers to the members of the Jewish community.

When Pharaoh asked the Jewish people to leave Egypt, he sent along with them a contingency of his own Egyptians. He anticipated that this "fifth column" would assure the return of the Israelites to Egypt. Suddenly, word reached Pharaoh that ***"barach ha'am"*** — ***his own people*** whom he sent along with the Jewish people had fled.

Pharaoh now had a change of heart for permitting the Children of Israel to leave, because not only did he lose his slaves, but he also lost his own subjects who enriched his coffers with taxes. (**אור החיים**)

Originally, the Children of Israel were destined to be slaves for 400 years in Egypt, but were only there 210 years. The word "*barach*" (**ברח**) — "fled" — has the numerical value of 210. When the Egyptians began to complain to Pharaoh that "*barach ha'am*" — the Jews were there only 210 years — again his heart hardened and he regretted sending out the Jewish people prematurely. (**רבינו בחיי**)

Vedibarta Bam



ותקח מרים הנביאה אחות אהרן את התף בידה ***"Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aharon, took the tambourine in her hand."*** **(15:20)**

QUESTION: 1) Instead of saying **את התף** — "*the* tambourine" — indicating a specific one — could it not have just said **תף**— "a tambourine"? 2) Why does the Torah mention here that she was a prophetess?

ANSWER: Eighty years before *Kriat Yam Suf* — the splitting of the Red Sea — Pharaoh issued a decree to drown all the Jewish baby boys. At that time, Amram, apprehensive about being married and having children, divorced his wife, Yocheved. His daughter Miriam implored him to remarry Yocheved and also prophesied that her mother would give birth to a child who would take the Jewish people out of *galut*. Due to Miriam's insistence, he remarried Yocheved at a very happy wedding celebration in which Miriam and her younger brother, Aharon, danced and entertained (*Sotah* 12a). Throughout all the years Miriam cherished the tambourine she used at the wedding and carried it with her.

When Moshe crossed the sea with the Jewish people, the redemption from Egypt reached its fruition. Experiencing the fulfillment of her prophecy, Miriam joyously took out *the* wedding tambourine and called on everyone to rejoice.

Vedibarta Bam

ויאמרו איש אל אחיו מן הוא כי לא ידעו מה הוא ויאמר משה אלהם הוא הלחם אשר נתן ה' לאכלה *"They said one to another, 'It is mann,' for they did not know what is was. Moshe said to them, 'This is the bread G-d has given you to eat.'"* (16:15)

QUESTION: What more did they know about the *mann* after Moshe had spoken than they knew before?

ANSWER: When the Jews first saw the *mann,* they were in doubt as to what *berachah* to make over it. Bread requires *"hamotzei,"* and cake *"mezonot."*

The word *mann* (**מן**) means "food," and is also an acronym for *"Mah Nevareich?"* (**מה נברך**) — "What blessing should we recite?" Upon seeing the *mann*, they said one to another *"mann hu"* — "obviously it is food." However, *"Mah nevareich"* — "What blessing should we recite?" — *"ki lo yadu"* — "because they did not know" — "**מ'ה' הוא?**" — "is it **המוציא** or **מזונות?**"

Moshe said to them, *"Hu halechem"* — "It is bread which Hashem gave you from Heaven — and since it does not grow from the ground, you should make the blessing *'Hamotzi lechem min hashamayim'* — 'who brings forth bread from Heaven."(**בני יששכר**)

Tu Bishvat

What do they call Tu Bishvat in Chicago? - Chag L' Illinois!

V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem

Sefer Chareidim (73) writes that when one says *Az Yashir* each day, he should say it out loud and with great happiness— as if he had just left Mitzrayim.

The *Medrash* teaches that when Moshe led the *Bnei Yisrael* through the *Yam Suf* and they sang *shirah*, they were forgiven from all their *aveiros*. This is because if one experiences a miracle and sings praises to Hashem over it, he is forgiven for all of his sins.

R' Shimon bar Yochai instructed that *Az Yashir* should be said by everyone each day, with the same level of happiness as it was originally sung. Doing this will certainly bring about the same *segulah* of forgiveness for the one saying it.



V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem

The Torah tells us that just as Moshe led the *Bnei Yisroel* in singing *Az Yashir* in praise and thanks to Hashem, Miriam *ha'neviah*, the sister of Moshe and Aharon, led all the women in song, praising and thanking Hashem for His open miracles of taking them out of Mitzrayim and leading them through the *Yam Suf*. With drums and tambourines in hand, they rejoiced with singing and dancing.

The *Kli Yakar* says that the *pasuk* says that when the women sang *Az Yashir*, they responded after Miriam with *supim u'vim'cholos*, which is taken to mean that they responded after her with musical instruments and dances.

However, ***Rabbeinu Bachya*** demonstrates that the word *mecholos*, dances, is actually a contraction of two words: *mochel avonos*, forgiven of sins. This is evidence of the *Medrash* which says that singing *Shirah* over a miracle that occurred and giving heartfelt thanks through song, will enable one to have all his *aveiros* forgiven.



L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



In the days of Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg, there was a very cruel decree against the Jews of the city. Rav Shmelke decided to go with his *talmid* to Vienna to speak with the king, hoping to have the bad decree annulled. While travelling, they reached a river which they had to cross, but because winter was just ending, the water was filled with large chunks of ice. No boat could be hired to travel across because all the sailors were afraid of crashing into the ice. Rav Shmelke said that he had no time to waste and must get across the river. One boatman said that if the *Rav* wanted, he could use his rowboat, but he would have to go himself.



Rav Shmelke paid to use the boat, got in with his student, and to everyone's shock and surprise, he stood up in the shaky little boat. Onlookers could not believe that he would even attempt to cross the river, let alone stand up in the boat. Rav Shmelke started to sing *Az Yashir*, the song *Bnei Yisroel* sang after they crossed the *Yam Suf*. He sang one line at a time, with his student repeating after him. As they sang, an amazing thing happened— the boat started moving on its own, and quickly crossed the river, without even touching one chunk of ice!

No one could believe what they saw, and word spread quickly about the miracle that occurred. When Rav Shmelke reached the king, the king had heard about what happened on the river, and realized that he was dealing with a very special person. The king granted Rav Shmelke's request and annulled the decree against the Jews, allowing the Jews to live in safety.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

Rav Uri of Strelisk [*Chassidic leader and the foremost student of the famous Chassidic rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin.*



Rabbi Uri was famous for his style of prayer, full of fire, extraordinary fervour and enthusiasm. Tens of thousands of Jews visited his minyan, and joined him in prayer. His personnel style of prayer awakened them to do repentance and good deeds. Every day before going to pray Rabbi Uri would bid farewell to his household, in case his soul would leave his body while praying in his usual ecstatic style.

R' Uri taught his chassidic followers to work on their hearts and cancel any kind of lust for money. It is said that there were was not even one wealthy Jew among the Strelisk Chassidim, and R' Uri himself leaved in extreme poverty.] used to say that a person is like a tree. Just as one can't watch a tree grow since it happens over a long period of time, so it is with children that they can't be kept under constant supervision.

If one takes care of a tree properly by watering it, adding fertilizer, pruning, and weeding it, then the tree will grow by itself. It is the same with children. By giving them the proper atmosphere to grow in, with love, encouragement, and nurturing, children will grow and flourish as well.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

Parashas Beshalach and *Shabbos Shirah* always fall out near the holiday of Tu B'Shvat, the New Year of Trees. The *sefer Ziv HaMinhagim* gives a beautiful explanation of this connection.



If one looks at the trees today, they barely seem alive without leaves on them. It would seem more appropriate to celebrate Tu B'Shvat in the springtime when the trees are in full bloom.

The answer is that the trees only appear to be dead, but it is now when the sap begins to run within them. The leaves and fruits that the trees will produce in the spring and summer are all being prepared right now, in the cold winter. The trees teach us that even when something looks terribly bleak and like it has no future, one should not give up on it!

Similarly, one should not give up on himself when things look like that for him. There are periods in a person's life when the future looks

dreary and things appear miserable all around, but the salvation of Hashem comes in the blink of an eye! Hashem is "running the sap" so to speak, so that salvation may come.

It says in the *parshah* (*Shemos* 15:23) that the Jews could not drink the water in Marah because it was bitter. Hashem then showed Moshe a tree and told him to throw it into the water.

Why was a tree used? The symbolism is that the people felt hopeless and Hashem showed them a tree. The tree is the symbol that when all looks futile and bleak, desolate and destroyed, we see that the situation can turn around, and there can be renewal.

Throwing the tree into the water was meant as a message to the people not to give up and not to worry. Though things may look bleak now, the salvation of Hashem can be instantaneous!

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Rabbi Fischel Schachter told the story of a woman, a Holocaust survivor, who settled in America after the war and was married for twelve years without having children.

One day she was sitting in a doctor's office in Manhattan, and the doctor said to her, "Madame, please listen to me. I am saying this for your own benefit: give up. Medically speaking, there is nothing we can do for you to have children." The woman left the office and boarded the bus.

During the ride, she contemplated her life. She recalled the horrors she experienced as a young girl in Poland, when the family had a trap door beneath the dining room table and they would go and hide under the floor when the Nazis approached. She volunteered to be the one

to close the trap door and put the carpet over it, and then hide on top of a piece of furniture. She would sit there, all curled up, and listen in terror as the Nazis searched the house, smashing furniture as they went from room to room.

Time and time again, the family was saved. But finally, the Nazis noticed a soft spot on the floor, and they discovered the trap door. This young girl watched as the Nazis dragged her family away. She was the only one who survived the war.

Once she got to America, she desperately wanted to begin a family. And now, after twelve long years, her hopes were shattered. She said to herself, "I have no reason to get off this bus", and so she stayed on the bus, sitting there the rest of the day.

Finally, the driver informed her that he was driving the bus to the garage for the night, and she needed to disembark. She muttered, "I have nothing to live for".

The driver said to her, "Listen, lady, I've had a hard day. I don't know what your problem is, but you're not going to solve it by staying on this bus."

She got off the bus and said, "Master of the world, You were with me all along. You saved my life countless times. You brought me here. You let me start my life over, and so it is in Your hands. I have no right to give up. The bus driver is absolutely right. You didn't save my life for me to live on the Madison Avenue bus. I won't give up! I will continue serving You no matter what, my life is in Your hands!"

A year later, this woman had a child. That child grew up, got married, and has his own children and grandchildren. Rabbi Fischel Schachter added that he heard this story first-hand from the woman herself, whom he knew quite well. She was his mother!

Rabbi Schachter concluded by saying that there are times in our lives where our hopes are shattered, and everything we've been counting on will suddenly be lost. At such moments, we can easily fall

into despair and feel a sense of betrayal. But we must not give up! We should instead say, as his mother did, "Hashem, I don't have to understand, but everything in my life is in Your hands! I will try my hardest to succeed in the difficult test You have put me in!"

If we can do that and have *Emunah*, we open the doors to Hashem's salvation and blessings that would never have been available to us otherwise!

The Siddur Speaks & L'Maaseh



The Manchester *Rosh Yeshivah*, Rav Yehudah Zev Segal, *zt"l*, felt that spiritual refinement was the result of proper *Tefilah*. He said that the term *Avodas Ha'lev*, Service of the Heart, which is a reference to *Davening*, also had a deeper connotation. *Tefilah*, when approached properly, is a Service that *refines* the heart, as it draws one closer to Hashem, and deepens one's understanding of his purpose in life. One's efforts in *Tefilah* are based, to a large degree, in one's firm faith in the power of *Tefilah* to help in the most devastating situations, even when everything seems hopeless.

One time, tests indicated that a certain individual was stricken with a dreaded disease, *R"L*. However, a subsequent test at a later follow-up visit showed no sign of illness! Rav Segal explained, "The first test was not wrong. The disease was there, however, the power of prayer rescinded the decree!"

Another time, a *Yeshivah* student was diagnosed with a dreaded disease, *R"L*, and the doctors attempted to save his life through

surgery. Regrettably, the surgery was not successful in reversing the course of the disease, and the doctors soon despaired for his life.

The boy's father approached Rav Segal for a *Brachah*. Rav Segal, following the suggestion of the ***Chafetz Chaim***, told the father that if he would dedicate his son's life to Torah, the boy would have a complete recovery. Although the father had been planning for his son to pursue a secular career, he readily agreed to Rav Segal's suggestion.

That night as Rav Segal *Davened* the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Maariv*, he was heard saying, "Hashem! I promised him!" Rav Segal felt that his *Tefilah* had achieved success, and that was soon substantiated when the family went for a second opinion.

The second doctor felt that the patient's alarming weakness was due to him having been given the wrong medication. As soon as a new prescription was administered, the boy's condition improved, and today he is a healthy, outstanding *Talmid Chacham*, and has raised a beautiful family.

Due to Rav Segal's total devotion to *Tefilah*, he became an individual that people would turn to from far and wide to receive his *Brachah*. Even *goyim* sought his *Brachos*.

A surgeon who operated on Rav Segal asked that he be blessed with steady hands, so that he could continue his work for many years to come. Rav Segal was once hospitalized and a student of his was attending to his needs. This student happened to be in the corridor one day and noticed a gentile woman pacing nervously up and down the corridor, and he asked her what was bothering her. She replied that her four-year-old son had fallen from a tree and lay in a coma.

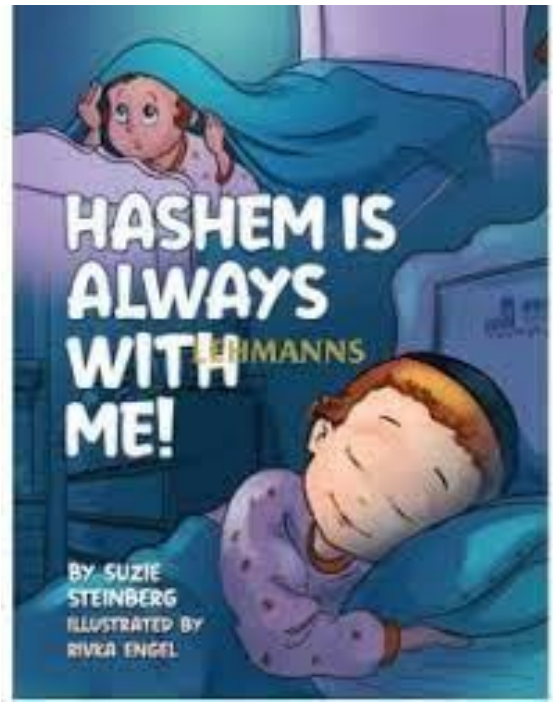
When the student related this to Rav Segal, Rav Segal was pained and said, "We say in *Ashrei*, **טוֹב־ה׳ לַכֹּל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו**, ***'Hashem is good to all, and His mercy is on all His works'***. It does not matter

if he is a gentile, and this is a child who is untainted by sin. Hashem is good to all."

He told the student to go back to the woman and ask for her son's name so he could *Daven* for him. He mentioned the boy's name and repeated the phrase, **וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו**, ***'Hashem's mercy is on all His works'***. Later, the woman joyfully informed this student of Rav Segal that her son had regained consciousness, and the doctors were hopeful for a complete recovery. She exclaimed, "It is all due to the Rabbi's prayers!"

When Rav Segal heard the news, he responded, **וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו**, "***Hashem has mercy on all His works!***"

The Siddur Speaks



Rav Simchah Bunim of Peshis'cha, *zt"l*, writes that we often think that *Davening* is connected to a specific time and place, and it is unquestionable that it is more propitious to *Daven* the specific *Tefilos* that are outlined by *Chazal*, and to do so in a proper *Shul*. Yet, the reality is that *Tefilah* is *not* bound by time or place. One may pour out his heart to *Hashem* with devotion and fervor whenever he chooses, wherever he is.

One is mistaken if he thinks that in order to *Daven* he must wrap himself in a *Tallis* and seclude himself. This is not so. Wherever a person might find himself, providing it is a clean place, he may pour out his heart to *Hashem* in *Tefilah*, because *Hashem* is always there, and He is always listening!

L'Maaseh

Rav Itzele Peterburger, *zt"l*, was the *Rav* of Petersburg, the capital of Russia, and he took that position on the advice and urging of **Rav Yisroel Salanter, *zt"l***.

One time the city hosted a convention of the *Gedolei HaDor*, and during the convention, the ***Bais HaLevi*, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *zt"l***, posed a very difficult question that was raised by his son **Rav Chaim, *zt"l*, the *Brisker Rav***.

A great *Torah* debate broke out among the *Gedolim* who were all trying to answer the question, each one with a deep and brilliant approach. At the end of the discussion, the *Bais HaLevi* gave two answers, one answer was his own, and the other answer was from his son Rav Chaim.

During this whole episode, Rav Itzele just sat there quietly, not contributing to the conversation. This made the *Bais HaLevi* wonder what kind of *Gadol* he really was and how he earned such a good reputation as being the *Talmid Chacham* that he was known to be.

Later, the *Bais HaLevi* went to look through a *Sefer* that was written by Rav Itzele, to see for himself the level of learning that Rav Itzele was really on. When he reached a certain page, he was amazed at what he saw. Printed right before him was the exact question that he had posed to the group of *Rabbanim*, along with both answers to the question— his answer and Rav Chaim's!

The *Bais HaLevi* then understood that Rav Itzele was not just a tremendous *Talmid Chacham*, but an extremely humble individual who had mastered the *Middah* of remaining silent!

Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



Why didn't Moshe inform the people of the double portion of *Mann* that would fall for them on Shabbos? ***Rashbam*** answers (16:23), by causing the people to be surprised and curious about this change, this would lead to a greater appreciation for Shabbos.

A great way to be able to educate people is through ways of piquing their curiosity, which leads to their interaction and inquiring about it, which develops into a thirst to understand.

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt"l*, would always leave his home to go to *Shul* fifteen minutes before *Davening* started in order to get there early, even though it was just a two-minute walk.

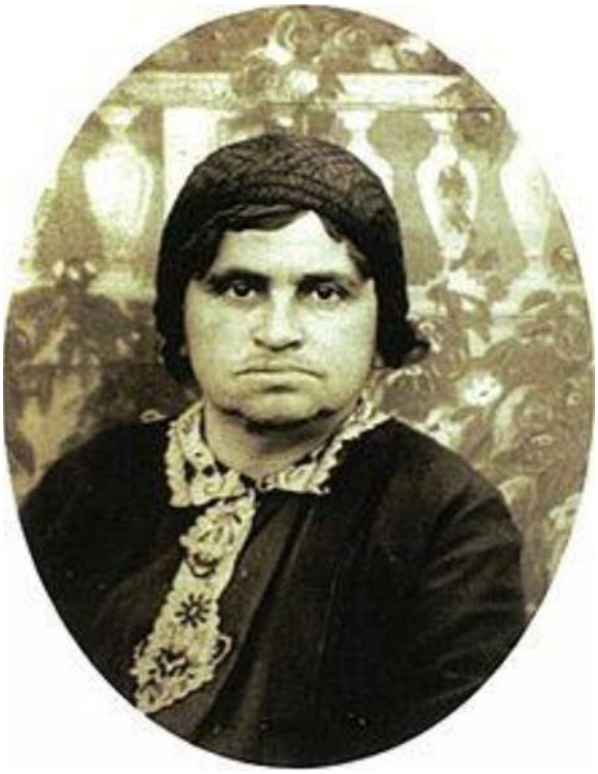
When asked by a family member why he allowed so much time for the walk, Rav Shlomo Zalman replied, "If you had a meeting with one of the most important people in the world, you wouldn't take any chances on being late. You would make absolutely certain that you would be there on time. All the more so when I am not meeting just anybody. I'm meeting *Hashem*, the Creator of the world! I don't want to take any chances on being late to my meeting with the *Ribbono Shel Olam*!"

SHABBOS STORIES FOR BESHALLACH



The Person Who Did the Most for the Jewish People

Rav Yechezkel Sarna, O"BM, was at a gathering of Rabbis, many of whom were grandchildren of the previous generation's leaders. He stood up and said, "Many of you probably think your grandfathers did most for the Jewish people in the past century. Well, you are all wrong. The one who did the most never even studied a page of the Talmud."



The Rabbis found these words offensive and protested, but Rav Sarna continued. "I will say even say more. When I tell you the name, you will agree that this person accomplished the most:

Sarah Schneirer, the founder of the Bais Yaakov school system for girls, did more for Jews than did any Torah scholar." The Rabbis looked at each other sheepishly and agreed. Indeed, without Sarah Schneirer and the Bais Yaakov movement, the face of Torah Judaism would have disappeared.

When Moshe came to Pharaoh asking for a three-day "leave of absence" for the Jewish people, Pharaoh did not want the women to go (Shemos 10:11): "Let the men go now and you will serve Hashem..."

Some commentators explain that Pharaoh knew that the nation could not survive spiritually without the women's help.

There are unfortunately some people who don't show enough gratitude to their wives (or mothers) who make it possible for them to peacefully attend Minyanim, learn Torah, and be involved in other community needs and projects.

The job of the woman is not as glamorous as a man's, which sometimes leaves them feeling empty inside. However, it is a man's job to acknowledge the incredible self-sacrifice and dedication that women display on a regular basis.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky's Gemach



Rav Chaim Kanievsky ran a lending Gemach in his home for many years. Not long ago, Rav Chaim asked his son to take over. As Rav Chaim was handing over all the documents and information, Rav Chaim shared an important piece of information with his son.

He said, "The Arizal tells us that if someone lends another person money and the money is not paid back, then both of them — the borrower and the lender — are forced to return to this world so that the borrower can repay his loan. The reason the lender has to return," explained Rav Chaim, "is because he is also responsible since he did not forgive the debt."

Rav Chaim handed his son a list of names and said, "These names are the people who borrowed money from the Gemach and have never

repaid the loan. They haven't paid until now, and chances are that it may never happen.

"I would like to forgive their debts, but this money belongs to Tzedakah, and I'm not able to do that. Therefore, I am giving you money from my own savings," and handed him an amount of money. He said, "Please take this money and pay off their debts to the Gemach, so that neither I, nor they, have to return to this world to deal with this matter again in the future!"



Hashem Helps Us to Find The Good in Seemingly Bad Occurrences By Rabbi Reuven Semah

The following story, told by Rabbi Yitzchok Hisiger, teaches us how to think. The Skulener Rebbe's oldest son, Rav Yeshaya Yaakov Portugal, Rav of Khal Meor Hagolah in Montreal, told the following story about an acquaintance of his, Reb Boruch.

A large crystal chandelier in Reb Boruch's home became dislodged and crashed onto the dining room table. Hearing a loud bang, Reb Boruch's parents, who were in an adjacent room, ran to see what had happened. They were shocked to discover that the chandelier had landed on their infant grandchild, who was lying in an infant seat on the table.

With great trepidation, they moved aside the fallen debris in a bid to get to the baby. They discovered that miraculously, despite the force of the fall and the shards of glass strewn all around, the baby was unharmed, without a scratch.

The joy of the elated grandparents knew no bounds. They hugged and kissed the baby and ran to inform Reb Boruch of the miracle. The family later made a seudat hodaah (a meal of thanks) to express their gratitude to Hashem for what occurred.

Rav Portugal remarked, "Look at the kindness of Hashem. For whatever reason, Heaven had decreed that Reb Boruch's expensive crystal chandelier had to break, but this monetary loss would have caused great heartache to Reb Borcuh and his family.

Thus, it was orchestrated for their infant baby to be on the table underneath the chandelier at that very moment and for the baby to emerge untouched, safe and sound. In this fashion, not only would Reb Boruch and his family not be distressed over their loss, but they would be full of happiness and would actually make a seudah in celebration for their baby's safe deliverance from danger.

It's how we interpret the things that happen to us that makes all the difference.

One's Attitude Can Gain a Person a Beautiful Gan Eden

Rav Eliyahu Lopian, of blessed memory, was once walking down a street in Israel that was being paved by a couple of workers. He stopped one of the workers and asked him what he was doing. The man looked at the Rav incredulously and said, "I'm paving the road."

Rav Lopian asked him, "Well, why are you paving?"

"You gotta make money," came the response. "Without money, no one can survive." Rav Lopian thanked the man for his time and continued down the street, spotting another worker, a Yemenite, bedecked in full garb, with long peyos, and a heavy Yemenite accent.

"Why are you paving?" Rav Lopian asked. The man replied, "I'm doing a Chesed. It's better for people to walk on even ground as opposed to hiking down the street balancing on differently leveled stones."

Rav Lopian continued to his Yeshiva where he posed a riddle to his students. How is it possible for two people to do the same action and only one of them gets Gan Eden for it? He then proceeded to tell them his encounter with the two fellows.

Comment: *We can get a reward for even the menial actions we do if we have in mind holy intentions. We can think, "I'm going to sleep so I can be energized in the morning to serve Hashem and help others," or, "I'm working out to fulfil the injunction to be healthy" (Devarim 4:9). It's amazing that everything we do can be a Mitzvah!*



The Power of Tefillin

The following amazing true story illustrates the power of tefillin to awaken in Jew the love between him and his Creator.

As the Eretz Yisroel-bound El Al plane lifted off the tarmac of New York's JFK International Airport, Shalom realized suddenly that he had left his tefillin in the trunk of his car. In his mind's eye, Shalom could see the tefillin in the trunk of his Chevrolet.

Shalom thought back to his bar mitzvah fourteen years earlier and remembered the pride emanating from his father when he had presented the tefillin to Shalom. His father, Yehuda, had always been very careful to fulfil the mitzvah of tefillin properly and made an extraordinary efforts to obtain the best possible pair for his son.

The parshiyos of Shalom's tefillin were written by a G-d fearing sofer who was an expert in all the laws pertaining to tefillin. The batim containing the parchments were also formed by a G-d-fearing expert, one who used all the finest materials. His grandmother had embroidered a beautiful velvet bag lovingly to protect them.

And now Shalom had inadvertently left them in the trunk of his car for the next ten days while he vacationed in Eretz Yisroel. This, too, is for the best, he thought to himself.

The ten days in Eretz Yisroel flew by, and Shalom had to return to the United States. When he went to retrieve his car from the long-term parking lot at JFK International Airport, Shalom discovered that his car had suffered a break-in. He checked the trunk quickly. His tefillin were gone. Stolen.

Shalom went to the police station and filed a report of the theft, giving the desk sergeant the details of how to contact him should his tefillin ever show up. Then he got into his car and drove himself home to Philadelphia.

Shalom went to his mother's house for his first Shabbos back from Eretz Yisroel. When he told her about his tefillin, she offered him the use of his father's (who had passed away.) "I'm lending these to you until your nephew Yehuda will be a bar mitzvah in twelve years. It's important to me that, since he is named after Daddy, of blessed memory, he should wear these tefillin. "Guard them with your life," she told him. Twelve years would be plenty of time for Shalom to get himself a new pair of tefillin.

Six years passed. Shalom came home from work one day and heard a message on his answering machine from the New York City police department. They left a phone number and a request that he contact them as soon as possible. When he reached them later that evening, the sergeant told Shalom that a religious object of his had been turned in. "Please come as soon as possible to reclaim your stolen goods."

The next morning Shalom hopped into his car, and drove up to New York. After presenting his identification to the police officer at the front desk, Shalom was ushered into an office. The officer introduced himself as Howard and proceeded to tell the following story.

"Three days ago, an elderly Russian gentleman presented himself at the precinct, placed your tefillin bag on the table and told the following story. "I own a pawn shop a few blocks away," he began.

“About an hour ago a man came into my shop and wanted to pawn these.” He pointed to the tefillin lying on the table. “I'm not religious myself, but I recognized immediately that these were phylacteries. Jews call them tefillin and wear them during the morning prayers.

“ I told the man to forget pawning the tefillin, as I was willing to buy them from him. I paid him cash and took the tefillin. My hands began to tremble and shake. I don't know what came over me. Since these tefillin had obviously been stolen, I locked up my shop and came here, to the police station, to see if I could perhaps help return them to their owner. The embroidery says Shalom son of Yehuda Goldberg. Is their any record of this theft?” Asked the Russian pawn shop owner.

"I picked up the tefillin," continued the police officer Howard, "to see what they were. The strangest thing happened when I held them in my hands. I felt a hot flash and began sweating profusely. My hands were trembling and shaking. Why would a Jewish object cause such a reaction in me, a Gentile? I locked up the tefillin in my desk, planning to investigate their background the next day.

That night I couldn't shake the memory of my hands trembling and shaking. I wondered again why a Jewish object should make such an impression on a non-Jew. Disturbed, I told my mom the story, asking her what she thought of the matter. She didn't seem surprised at all.

“Howard, when I was a teenager I rebelled and left home to marry your Dad,” she told me. "I never told you that my parents were Jewish, did I? Well, by Jewish law, since I am Jewish, so are my children, Howard, maybe the tefillin had such an impact on you because you yourself are Jewish!”

Shalom, the owner of the tefillin, was sitting on the edge of his chair by now. "I've often felt like something was missing in my life," the police officer Howard continued. " Apparently, my Jewish soul was

hungering for some spiritual nourishment. I am going to start investigating my heritage. Can we keep in touch?" Shalom agreed.

The story doesn't end there. When he arrived back in Philadelphia, Shalom brought the tefillin to Rabbi Shreiber, his soifer, to have them checked. Who knows where the tefillin had been during the past six years and whether or not the letters on the parchments were still intact? Shalom told Rabbi Shreiber the entire story as Rabbi Shreiber opened up the outer boxes.

Rabbi Shreiber checked the parchment and began to cry.

"Why are you crying?" Shalom asked.

"These tefillin are as kosher as the day they were made," Rabbi Shreiber declared. "I would like to buy them from you, if I may."

"I'm sorry," said Shalom, "but these tefillin are even more precious to me now. They are my own personal reminder of how Hashem runs the world."

Steady Hands - From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles

An elderly Jew with a large black Yarmulke once appeared at the Chabad counter in Ben Gurion Airport in Israel. When he was asked if he would like a cup of coffee gratis, he answered that he would, but only if it was full to the brim.

The perplexed chasidim standing behind the counter did as he said; they filled the cup, with his constant encouragement, to the point that the slightest quiver would cause it to spill. Then to their amazement the old fellow lifted the cup without spilling a drop and drank it. When he finished he smiled proudly and said, "I did that to show you how great your Rebbe is!"

"I'm not a Chabad chasid," he explained "My name is Rabbi Baker and years ago I was the Rabbi of a large shul in New York.City. We had a mikva for women and everything. But then, like so many shuls

in the U.S.A, the older people either died or moved away and the neighbourhood filled with gentiles.

The board of directors of the shul began hinting that they would like to sell out and make a nice profit, but I strongly opposed it.

"First of all, it is forbidden to sell a Synagogue and, not only that, men kept coming to Shul and people kept using the mikva. Furthermore, an interesting thing was happening. The person that was in charge of the mikva told me that almost every evening the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shneerson**, would call up, ask how he was feeling and encourage his work.

"This continued for several months. Then, one evening while I was in the middle teaching a class in Talmud in the shul, he burst into the room and shouted almost hysterically that someone had put a large lock on the mikva door.

"I understood that it must have been the directors trying to discourage people from coming but I didn't know what to do. I am not the strongest of people and I held myself to be an honourable Rabbi, certainly not one to go fighting battles.

"Well, I don't know how I did it but I ran to my car, somehow found a metal saw ran to the lock and began sawing away in public. A bunch of people even stopped to look but I didn't care. About a half hour later the door was open and the people were able to enter.

"The next day the mikva attendant told me that the Rebbe called her the previous night after the incident, and when she told him what I had done, he said, 'Blessed be the hands that sawed off that lock.'

"That is what I wanted to show you," the elderly Rabbi concluded. "Today I am over ninety one years old, yet you see that my hands are steady as a youth's. Clearly it is because of the Rebbe's blessing!"

Improving the Taste of Manna - Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

וְטַעְמוֹ כְּצַפִּיחָת בִּדְבָשׁ **"*And [the Manna] tasted like honey*"** (16:31)

The Manna tasted like whatever a person wanted it to taste like. If he thought about meat, it had a meat taste; if he had dairy in mind, it had a dairy taste.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab z"l once visited the **Chofetz Chayim** in 1930 and heard him ask the following question: "What if a person had nothing in mind when he ate the Manna? What would it taste like?" The **Chofetz Chayim** answered, "If a person had nothing in mind, then the Manna would taste like nothing."

He went on to explain that the Manna is symbolic of everything spiritual; whatever we put into spiritual things determines what the taste of the outcome will be. If a person learns Torah or does misvot with enthusiasm, then his enjoyment and fulfillment will be apparent.

However, if a person does it as if it is a chore, with no feeling, then it will be dull and tasteless. Just as we plan a vacation or something exciting with feeling and enthusiasm, so too we should approach our spiritual involvement. Then we will have a sweet taste in everything we do.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

In a letter, **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** wrote the powerful words of the *sefer Seder HaYom* regarding the *brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*: "Recite the *brachah* with *Kavanah*— focus, intent, and devotion, and say it word for word, and the result will be that one will not become sick his entire life and he will not need doctors and medication. Therefore, one must say the *brachah* with complete and full cognizance of Hashem, the Healer of all mankind and our wondrous Creator!"

Dvar Torah Questions and Answers on Tu B'Shevat

באחד בשבט ראש השנה לאילן כדברי בית שמאי. בית הלל אומרים בחמשה עשר בו ***The first day of Shevat is the New Year for the tree, according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel says it is on the 15th of Shevat. (Rosh Hashanah 2a)***



Question: The Torah states, **כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה**—"Man is like the tree of the field" (Devarim 20:19). The Yidden have often been compared to different trees. What lessons can man learn from trees? **Answer:** Trees teach us the following:

1) A tree is planted by first putting a seed in the ground. Afterwards, it is necessary to frequently water the ground and remove the weeds. In every Jew, Hashem planted a divine seed—his soul. It is man's obligation to water it with Torah study, and protect it by weeding out bad influences.

2) A healthy tree continues to grow and grow. A healthy Jew must continuously grow spiritually. This is accomplished through studying Torah and performing mitzvot.

3) To ensure that a young tree will grow straight, it is tied to two supports, one on each side. To ensure that a young child grows beautifully, the parents must always be at his side and constantly supervise him.

4) The strength of the tree depends on how well it is rooted in the ground. The root of the Jew is his *emunah*.

5) The beauty of a tree is the fruit it produces. Mitzvos and *maasim tovim*, are man's fruits.

באחד בשבט ראש השנה לאילן כדברי בית שמאי. בית הלל אומרים בחמשה עשר בו ***(Rosh Hashanah 2a)***



Question: All the different New Years discussed in the Mishnah are mentioned in the plural. Why is this New Year mentioned in the singular, "for the *tree* (**לאילן**)," instead of "for the *trees* (**לאילנות**)"?

Answer: The Torah commands that on the Yom Tov of Sukkot we take a *peri eitz hadar*—"a beautiful fruit of a tree" (Vayikra 23:40). Our sages say that this refers to the *esrog*—the citron. People spend lavishly to purchase a beautiful *esrog* in order to fulfill the mitzvah in an exceptional way.

The Mishnah tells us that Tu B'Shevat is the New Year for the tree, and by using a singular term it informs us that we should pray particularly *la'ilan*—"for *the* tree"—namely the *esrog* tree, which is very important to us. On this day, one should beseech Hashem that He grant us a beautiful *esrog* with which to perform the Torah's commandment. (**בני יששכר**)

The word *ilan* (**אילן**)—"tree"—has the numerical value of 91, which is also the numerical value of **א-ד-נ-י** plus **י-ה-ו-ה** . This emphasizes the fact that the trees of the field are not the work of man, but that of The Riboino Shel Olam. (**נטעי גבריאל**)

Special Fruit From Reb Yitzchak Isaac of Ziditchov

Every year on Tu B'shevat, the table of the Admor **Rebbe Yitzchak Isaac of Ziditchov, z'tl** would be surrounded by many chassidim and guests, and the Rebbe would distribute fruits to everybody present.

One year, more visitors arrived than usual, and even the huge amount of fruit which had been prepared was not enough to be distributed to everyone surrounding the table.

The Rebbe looked up and discerned what had happened. He then said, "Is it fruit that you want? Come close and I'll tell you where you can find them. 'These are the precepts whose fruits a person enjoys in this world, but whose principal remains intact for him in Olam Haba…and Talmud Torah is equal to all of them.' Go and occupy yourselves with Torah, and you will find numerous fruits without any crowding, besides for the principal which will remain for you in Olam Haba. (Chayim Sheyash Bahem)

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

QUESTION: What is the reason for the custom to put out food for the birds on *Erev Shabbos Shirah?*

ANSWER: On *Shabbos Shirah,* when we read about the manna that Hashem provided for the Jewish people, it is customary to put out food for the birds on *Erev Shabbos* as a reward for the *Kiddush Hashem* they brought about.(ר' מאיר מפרימישלאן זצ"ל)

Alternatively, the ***Maharal* of Prague** would instruct the teachers of young children to gather their students in the *shul* yard on *Shabbat Shira* and relate to them the story of *Kriat Yam Suf* — the splitting of the sea. They were also to tell the children that at that time Hashem performed a miracle and trees with beautiful fruit grew in the sea (see *Midrash* Rabbah 22:1). When the Jews

sang the *Shirah,* the birds sang and danced. The Jewish children picked fruits from the trees and fed the birds. To commemorate this event, we put out food for the birds *Erev Shabbat Shirah.*

The teachers would give *kasha* (buckwheat) to throw to the birds. And afterward the *Maharal* would bless the children and also the parents that they should merit to see their children embark on Torah, marriage and good deeds. (**לקוטי שיחות**)

Some have the custom to feed *wheat* to the birds on *Shabbat Shirah.* (**מגן אברהם וספר תוספת שבת מר' רפאל ז"ל מייזליש**)

It is the custom of *Chabad* to eat *kasha* on *Shabbat Shirah.*

This custom is based on the *pasuk: "Hasam gevuleich shalom cheilev chitim yasbi'eich"* — "He has made peace within your borders; He satiated you with the finest of wheat" (Psalms 147:14). Thus, on *Shabbat Shirah,* when we read that Hashem emancipated the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage and prepared them to be in their own geographical boundaries and also the boundaries of Torah, it is customary to eat wheat (buckwheat).

The word *"beshalach"* (**בשלח**) is an acronym for the words "**בַּשבת שַׁירה לַאכל חַטים**" — "On *Shabbat Shirah* to eat wheat (buckwheat)." (**עוללות אפרים**)

Vedibarta Bam - Shabbos Shirah

***ויהי ביום השביעי יצאו מן העם ללקט ולא מצאו "On Shabbat some people went out to pick manna and they did not find any."* (16:27)**

QUESTION: The word *"matza'u"* — "find" — is used in regard to finding a lost object. Since no manna was lost, should not the text read, *"velo hayah"* — "and there wasn't any"?

ANSWER: Moshe told the Jews that on Friday there would be a double portion of manna, one for Friday, and one for *Shabbos* when no manna would be delivered. Datan and Aviram, the infamous

troublemakers, thought this would be a good opportunity to "prove" to the people Moshe's dishonesty. Friday evening they secretly distributed manna in the field and invited people to come with them *Shabbos* morning to collect it. The birds, upon hearing this evil plan, quickly ate it up. Consequently, when Datan, Aviram, and their followers came out to the fields, they did not *find* any manna.(**ר' מאיר מפרימישלא זצ"ל**)

Beneath the Surface By R' Shmuel Winzelberg

ויקראו בית ישראל את שמו מן והוא כזרע גד לבן וטעמו כצפיחת בדבש The House of Israel called it Manna, and it was like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like a wafer fried in honey. *(16:31)*



The question arises, the Holy *Torah* tells us that the taste of *Manna* was like a wafer fried in honey, honey cake. However, *Chazal* have described (*Brachos* 57b) the sweetness of honey as being 1/60 of *Manna*. Thus, *Manna* was sixty times sweeter than honey, yet, from the *Posuk* it was like a wafer fried in honey.Which was sweeter?

The *Vilna Gaon* explains that everything fits perfectly. When the *Posuk* states **וטעמו – *'its taste'***, it refers to imparting flavour. How much is needed to impart flavour? One-sixtieth. One-sixtieth of the *Manna* was like a wafer fried in honey as the *Manna* itself was sixty times sweeter.

If one placed a portion of *Manna* into another food until there is sixty times more of the other food, one would still taste the *Manna*! (***Yechi Reuven – Rav Reuven Korelenshtein***)

Rabbi Tzvi Sytner- The Chinese Bamboo Tree



In the Far East, there's a tree called the Chinese bamboo tree. Now, when this tree is first planted, nothing happens for the first year. There's absolutely no sign of growth. And the same is for the first four years. No growth. Nothing at all. But in the fifth year, something incredible happens.

The tree shoots up in just six weeks. And in fact, a Chinese bamboo tree can grow up to 90 feet. You can practically watch the tree grow. That's how fast it goes from nothing to something. So what took five years? Why was there no movement for so long? The reason is that for four years, the tree was spreading incredibly deep roots all the way down so that it could sustain its growth in the future.

Tu B'Shvat is right around the corner. And it is the holiday which celebrates the new year for trees. Now, I don't know about you, but if I had to pick a time of year to celebrate our trees, I would pick it the spring. Why is it middle of the cold winter?

Our Sages tell us why. Even though in the middle of the winter everything seems dead, the trees are bare and the frost is all over, the nutrients are making their way into the roots, preparing it for the spring. It's just like the bamboo tree, where beneath the surface, deep down, real growth is occurring. Perhaps we celebrate Tu B'shvat now too in order to teach us that even though things seem so lifeless, so depressed and so hopeless, we can't give up hope or faith, because it is growth during the darkest, coldest moments that allow us to flourish in the future.

This may also be why Tu B'Shvat falls out around the time Parshas Beshalach is read. It's a Parsha in which we remember the Splitting of the Sea and how the Jewish people broke out in song with musical

instruments as they crossed the sea. Think about it: musical instruments in the middle of the desert. Where in the world are there musical instruments in the middle of the desert? Chazal tell us that during the intense slavery of the Jewish people, in the midst of their suffering, the Jewish women believed in their hearts that the day would come when they would once again be free and they would even be celebrating. They didn't give up hope that Hashem would save them. Instead, they kept instruments for that big day. And when that day came, they broke out in song with their instruments.

Can you imagine? Could you imagine while still in Egypt, while in the middle of a painful, horrific suffering, while still living with all the unknowns, they planned for celebration? This is the lesson of Tu B'Shvat and it's a powerful lesson for life.

Sometimes, we painfully work hard, and we wait for years without any signs of progress. Waiting to meet our spouse, waiting for our businesses to take off, waiting for our health, to get through a hard time, to get better. But our waiting may not be for nothing … because that day will come when suddenly everything changes. How do I know? Because if Hashem can create the world, then He can create change in your world. We must keep our hope alive. Yes, it is possible to be living in a world of challenge, but to still have a hopeful vision. It's possible to imagine all the things that you're going to do when you're healthy, even while you're ill. It's possible to dream of that day when you'll have joy in your life, even if you feel sad right now. It's possible to envision your beautiful marriage even while you're currently single because everything can change. Hashem can do anything.

Tu B'Shvat lends us a view of what is beneath the surface; it provides for us a vision that Hashem can make everything you hope for in life into a reality. Because He can.

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיּוֹשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרָיִם וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מֵת עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּם

Imagine the scene. The Jewish people have finally left Egypt amidst wondrous miracles. The ten plagues brought Pharaoh and the Mitzriyim to their knees. They actually begged the Jews to go. And then, after 210 years of slave labour, Hashem set them free. But suddenly, they arrive at the raging Yam Suf. They cannot proceed. They see the entire Egyptian army behind them. There are animals on both sides waiting to pounce, and above them, they see the angel of Esav looking to destroy them. They were completely trapped.

Imagine the sheer terror of knowing that there is no way out. They felt doomed. This somehow feels familiar. Look at the world we live in today. Our governments have turned into kindergartens. People are losing their businesses. Millions are sick with all kinds of viruses and flus. Airports are opening and closing and people do not know whom they can trust. The level of morality is low, anti-Semitism is high. We feel like our enemies are coming up behind us, we are surrounded by all kinds of animals dressed up as humans, and the only alternative is to jump into the ocean!

Yes, the world we live in is a scary place but don't we realize that Hashem is setting us up! These are not just random occurrences to make us anxious and walk around talking about how this world is such a crazy place. There is a Supervisor in this world who knows exactly what He is doing. He has it all under control. He is setting the stage for us, His beloved people, to cry out to Him and say, "We have no one else to turn to but You, Our Father in Heaven!"

If this is what happened at the Yam Suf, then this is Hashem talking to us today. This applies to us now as much as it did 3334 years ago when Hashem split the sea for Am Yisroel. We, too, are in a desperate situation and there's nothing we can do.

We must know that all we need to do is cry out to Hashem. Pour out our hearts to Him. Tell Him we trust Him; we need Him; we are completely lost without Him. And tell Him that you believe that He can do anything.

Chazal tell us that it was in the merit of the great Jewish women who believed in Hashem, that the geulah in Mitzrayim took place. May we all be zoche to be the same way in these difficult times.

A Penetrating Analysis of the haftorah by R' Zvi Hirsch Hoffman

וַתָּשַׁר דְּבוֹרָה וּבָרָק בֶּן־אֲבִינֹעַם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר ***"Now Devorah and Barak the son of Avinoam sang on that day, saying"***

The Haftorah this week details how the great prophetess, Devorah, and her husband Barak ben Avinoam, sang a "Shirah," a song of praise to Hashem celebrating the stunning victory of Bnei Yisroel over the powerful Canaanite General, Sisra. This song of praise was similar in scope to the song of praise Klal Yisroel sang to Hashem at the Yam Suf upon their miraculous salvation from Egypt. They were both songs; however, by the Shiras Hayam, the Torah employs the words **אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה**, 15:1, whereas by Devorah's song, the Name of Hashem is missing. What is the difference between the two songs?

R' Meir Simcha of Dvinsk zt"l (Meshech Chochma) explains that singing praise to Hashem is no simple matter and must be done properly. One needs to clear his mind and devote his attention to appropriately sing Hashem's praises. After Krias Yam Suf, when the Jewish Nation enjoyed a tremendous salvation from Hashem, they were able to fully focus upon the good that Hashem did for them and praise Him.

However, in the aftermath of the battle against Sisra, Barak chose to berate those who did not join Bnei Yisroel. He "spoiled the

moment" by lashing out in anger, saying, "curse you bitterly, because you came not to the aid of Hashem."

While his point was clear and his intent was admirable, the profound ability to stay focused is not a gift, but a necessity. Because his focus was directed elsewhere, Hashem did not wish to "attach" his name to the battle, and subsequent victory.

Torah Tavlin

R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer zt"l (Ksav Sofer) would say: "When the people complained that they had no water in Marah, Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu a tree and Moshe threw the tree into the water. Even though the tree's bark was very bitter, the water became sweetened. The Medrash explains that Hashem uses bitter to sweeten bitter. The wood of the tree that sweetened the water was also bitter, but the end result was sweet and drinkable water.

So it is with human nature. When a person in a depressed and bitter mood sees someone even worse off than him, he realizes that his life is really not as bad as he thought!"

תפילת ספר פרי עץ הדר לאומרה בט״ו בשבט

יהי רצון שבכח סגלת אכילת הפירות...אשר המה תלוים בם להשפיע עליהן שפע רצון ברכה ונדבה וכו׳

A fascinating story about how one can become enriched from following the minhag to eat fruit on Tu B'Shvat, was told by an Israeli Jew after a trip he took to France. The man would often fly on business to various cities, and on one occasion, he found himself in Paris in mid-February. He went to daven in a nearby synagogue and it was there that he learned that that very day was Tu B'Shvat. He had a flight back to Israel to catch later in the day, so he quickly

hurried out to the local fruit market and purchased some fruit to take along on his flight.

The fruit seller was a religious Jew and when he noticed the man picking up some of the most exotic and expensive items, he felt compelled to ask. "Tell me, sir, why are you buying so much fruit - and such an exotic selection, just to take back to Israel? Aren't there many exotic fruits in the Holy Land?"

The man replied, "Why, today is Tu B'Shvat and this is a custom that my family adheres to year after year." The owner of the fruit market smiled and said, "That is a fine custom, indeed. My family follows it as well.

Allow me to tell you a story that took place many years ago with my own ancestor." He brought the man into a back room and rummaged around until he found a certain gadget which he held up in his hand. "Do you see this? This fruit press is how my grandfather became rich!"

The traveling Jew knew that a great story was forthcoming and so he waited with anticipation. "Many years ago, my grandfather was once traveling on business much like you, and he found himself in Moscow on the day of Tu B'Shvat. He, too, wished to buy some fruit for the holiday so he went out and found a local fruit seller.

In Moscow, it was quite cold and most of the fruit hadn't even ripened yet but this did not deter my grandfather and he bought a sizable amount of fruit. The merchant was surprised that someone would spend so much money on unripened fruit and couldn't help but inquire about it.

My grandfather told him almost the exact words that you just told me. But that merchant wasn't Jewish and could not understand how a person can spend his money on an old custom that had no bearing on his life - especially since the fruit he was buying was barely edible!



The Russian merchant picked up a tool - it was this fruit presser to be exact - and showed it to my grandfather. 'Do you want to know what I do with my money?' he asked, and lowered his voice surreptitiously. In the next motion, he began to unscrew the bottom of the handle and pulled off the adjoining piece. Then, he poured a handful of gold coins into his hand. 'I hide all my money in this machine. It contains my life savings. But I know it's safe here and it won't be wasted on silly things - or unripened fruit!'"

The Parisian fruit seller gazed at the fruit press in his hand fondly and continued to relate his story. "My grandfather always remembered that merchant and the lesson he learned on that day. A Jew uses his money for mitzvos - but what does an old Muscovite use his money for? I will tell you." He smiled again as he recalled his grandfather.

"A number of years went by and my grandfather was in Moscow again on business, at the same time of year. He decided to go back to the same shop and buy some more fruit. But this time, as he approached, he saw a crowd of people hanging around and a buzz of activity. He asked someone what was happening and was told that the old Russian merchant had passed on and his two sons were in the process of liquidating the shop. Now is the time for bargains, he was told.

So my grandfather pushed to the front where he saw two younger men selling everything in their father's store. 'I am looking for a small fruit press.' he asked the younger men. 'Do you perhaps have one that I can buy?' 'A fruit press?' The son looked around and saw an old rusty press on the table. 'Here, do you want this? It's old and worthless and I have no use for it. Take it for free!' My grandfather smiled inwardly and happily accepted the press. When he got back to his lodgings, he opened it up and found more than just a handful of gold coins! He found a veritable treasure! He took it home and became a very wealthy man."

Pointing to the ancient fruit press, the Parisian market owner concluded, "It has been an accepted custom in our family to indulge in exotic fruit on Tu B'Shvat, for it was this very minhag that made our family rich in the first place!"

Short Story Of The Week With Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Rav Sholom Schwadron, ZT"L, told over a wondrous story about a blessing from the **Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L**, and the pure deep Emunah displayed by the recipient of the Bracha. A young Rabbi in America became a Jewish Chaplain in a hospital. One day he was called to the ICU for a young Jewish man who had been in a terrible car accident. The doctors told the Chaplain to call the man's family because he didn't have long to live. A sister arrived and said that they had an older father who lived in a retirement home.

The Rabbi went to pick up the father and brought him to say goodbye to his son. The father looked at his son who was hooked up to numerous machines, yet he seemed quite calm! The doctor told the father that the situation was dire, as these were his son's final hours. The father turned to the Rabbi and asked to be driven home.

On the way home the Rabbi couldn't contain himself and asked the elder father for an explanation. The father replied: "I come from

Radin, city of the Chofetz Chaim. When he printed the Mishna Berura he wanted to see how people would react to his Sefer. So, he gathered a group of working men and began learning Mishna Brurah with us. My participation in the shiur must have pleased him, as he gave me a double blessing. He said that I would live a long life, and that none of my children would die in my lifetime. Thus, I am certain that I have more years to live, and that therefore my son will recover. For he will not die as long as I am alive!"

Once the Rabbi heard the father's amazing explanation, he also went home and didn't return to the hospital until the next day. The following day when he checked on the patient, the doctors told him that they had been certain that he would die overnight but he didn't, and in the morning, he had even opened his eyes. They couldn't understand what had happened!

Two weeks later, the patient got out of bed, and a short while later was given a clean bill of health and released from the hospital.

Rav Schwadron used to say that the fact that the Chofetz Chaim's blessings were so powerful was not news. It was the pure conviction and clear faith that this father had in the words of the Chofetz Chaim, and his inherent ability to remain calm and unshaken while staring at his dear son's imminent death, that was really special!

Comment: After Klal Yisroel were miraculously saved, and were about to begin their Song to Hashem, the Torah (Shemos 14:31) says that "They believed in Hashem and in Moshe His servant." The Jewish People reached a supremely high level of Emuna which is known as "Emuna Peshuta", pure and clear faith. The Ibn Ezra (ibid.) explains that after witnessing this wondrous miracle, our ancestors now had a crystal-clear faith in the truth of Hashem, in Moshe who was Hashem's servant, and in the fact that Moshe would only do that which Hashem commanded.

Saying Of The Week With Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"When it's your task to do your job, spend time on it, otherwise spend time learning Torah."

Hashem told Moshe Rebbeinu to save a jug of Mann for later generations. Rashi (Shemos 16:32) brings down that this was to teach an important lesson to the Jews of Yirmiyahu's generation. Yirmiyahu (Yirmiyahu 2:31) asked them why they don't learn Torah, to which they responded they must work for their sustenance. He showed them the Mann and said Hashem has his ways to support even if one doesn't work.

In other words, they should not feel that their work is the only means for them to support their family. One should put invest proper hishtadlus (effort) which the Torah requires, but must realize that ultimately, Hashem provides his livelihood, and one should spend time learning Hashem's Torah.

ט״ו בשבט

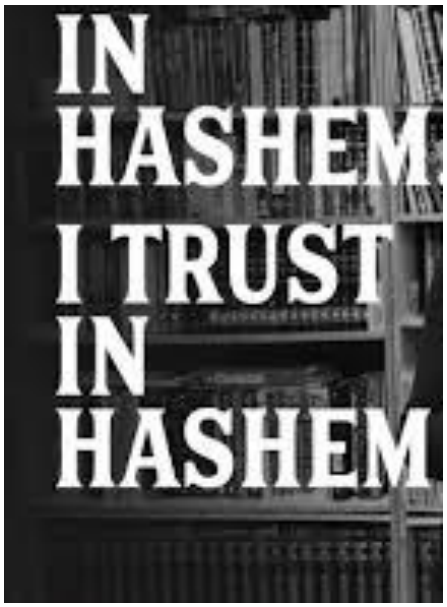
What is our **עבודה** supposed to be on **ט״ו בשבט** ?

A: Our **מנהגים** on **ט״ו בשבט** are actually relatively recent compared to other **ימים טובים**. The **משנה** says that **ט״ו בשבט** is the **ראש השנה לאילנות** and therefore besides for the Kabbalistic concepts which surround the day, it's also a time to appreciate the amazing beauty and taste of fruit which **ה'** in His infinite **חסד** creates for our enjoyment.

It's also a day to specifically appreciate the beauty and goodness of **ארץ ישראל** which is why many have the **מנהג** to especially eat from the **שבעת המינים** on **ט״ו בשבט.**

Rabbi Shmuel Kamenetzky, - Fear and Faith

וַיַּ֣רְא יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אֶת־הַיָּ֤ד הַגְּדֹלָה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֣ה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַ֔יִם וַיִּירְא֥וּ הָעָ֖ם אֶת־ה׳ וַיַּאֲמִ֣ינוּ בַּה׳ וּבְמֹשֶׁ֖ה עַבְדּֽוֹ **"*When the Yisroel saw the wondrous power which Hashem had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared Hashem; they had faith in Hashem and His servant Moshe*** (14:31).



This is the first time that the Torah mentions that the Jews believed in Hashem.

They went through the atrocities of slavery in Egypt, and the miraculous plagues and punishment – witnessing the downfall of the strongest nation on Earth, but they did not truly believe - until they lived through the miracles of the sea splitting and their miraculous passage. - Why is that?

A chosid of **Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk** was known for his attempts to show his piety, albeit sometimes exaggerated and unwarranted. One succos, he approached his rebbe, "Every night of succos," he began, "As I entered the succah, I actually saw the Ushpizin in my succah!" The Kotzker Rebbe did not miss a beat, "True. But the rest of the Jews are on a higher level than you. They all believe that the Ushpizin come – even without seeing them!"

The Kotzker Rebbe explains: One can see miracles, and experience supernatural events. But as explained many times in these pages, without the proper mindset, it's all theory. Although experiencing miracles may boost one's theoretical belief, but without an honest and thorough fear of Heaven, they will not change you.

Now, at the Yam Suf, is the first time that the Jews feared Heaven, as it says, "The people feared Hashem." Only when one has true "yiras shomayim"- fear of Heaven, can he be a true believer.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport - Righteous And Strong

Rashi writes (Ex. 17:9) that for the battle against Amalek, Moshe instructed Yehoshua to select soldiers who were both strong and who possessed a fear of sin. How was Yehoshua able to discern who was truly righteous, and why did he need strong soldiers when G-d conducted the battle for them in a miraculous fashion?

Rabbi Yisroel Shenker cites the Talmud (Yoma 75a), which teaches that the more righteous a person was, the closer the Manna fell to his home. For the true tzaddikim, the Manna felt on their doorsteps.

As Yehoshua's primary criterion for selecting soldiers was their piety, he could have simply observed where a potential fighter's Manna fell. However, the Talmud adds that the Manna also fell at the doorsteps of the sick and the elderly independent of their spiritual levels in order to save them the exertion of having to travel to collect their Manna. As such, Yehoshua additionally insisted that the soldiers be strong, not because this trait was inherently necessary, but merely to demonstrate that the reason that their Manna fell at their doorsteps was because of their righteousness and not because they were weak and ill.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Az Yashir

How fortunate are we to get a taste of kriyas yam suf every day by saying Az Yashir. This tefillah fills our hearts with *emunah* for the entire day.

The Beis Ahron zy"a teaches that the history of the world and all future events are hinted at in the words of *Az Yashir*. Furthermore, one can acquire all his needs – spiritual and material – by saying *Az Yashir* with all his heart.

The *Zohar* (*Bo* 40:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy when Yidden say *Az Yashir*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* and tells them, 'Come and listen to the story and praises of My children. They are happy that I redeemed them."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (51:17, quoting a *Zohar*) writes, "Say *Az Yashir* joyously and imagine that you are crossing the sea today. When one says it with joy, all his sins are atoned."

Bittersweet

The Torah tells us that after travelling for three days, the nation arrived at a place called Marah. The water there was bitter and undrinkable. The nation complained, "What will we drink?" The Torah states:

ויצעק אל ה' ויורהו ה' עץ וישלך אל המים וימתקו המים 15:25 ***"Moshe called out to Hashem, and Hashem showed him a tree. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet."***

We would assume that it was a sweet tree that treated the bitter water. However, Targum Yonoson (and other sources from Chazal) write that it was a bitter tree. A miracle occurred: A bitter tree sweetened bitter water.

This teaches us the pattern that repeatedly happens in life. When you think something is bitter, it is actually for your good, sweetening your life.

The *pasuk* states (15:23): **ולא יכלו לשתת מים ממרה על כן קרא שמה מרה כי מרים הם** , "They could not drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter; therefore, they named [the place] Marah." The place was named Marah for the bitter water.

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir *zt'l* asks that the place should be called **מתוקה -** sweet, to commemorate the miracle that the waters turned sweet.

He answers that it is called **מרה** – bitter, because we want to remember that a bitter tree healed the bitter waters. We must not forget that when we suffer a painful moment in life, it is, in fact, sweetening our life.

We will share some examples:

There's an orphanage in Eretz Yisrael called Beis HaPleitos, run by Reb Chaim Elazar Rosenfeld *Shlita*. A few years ago (year **תשע"ה**), a girl from the orphanage became a *kallah,* and Reb Chaim Elazar Rosenfeld asked a wealthy person from *chutz le'aratz* to help finance the *chasunah*.

The wealthy man offered to send a suitcase filled with brand-new clothing for the *kallah*. It wasn't what Reb Chaim Elazar had in mind. The clothing might not be the right size or style. Sending money would be much more practical. But the wealthy man was very excited about sending this gift, so Reb Chaim Elazar accepted it.

A week later, the donor called Reb Chaim Elazar and said, "I sent the suitcase on tonight's flight to Eretz Yisrael. A taxi will bring it to Har Nof. Can you pick it up from there?"

He gave Reb Chaim Elazar the taxi's phone number. Reb Chaim Elazar called someone he knows from Har Nof (whose wife works at Beis HaPleitos) to pick up the suitcase the following day, and he gave him the telephone number.

This *yungerman* from Har Nof called the taxi and gave him the address where he would be: at the Bnei Torah minyan in Har Nof.

This *yungerman* is of the very organized type, any change in the schedule is very hard on him. It was important for him to daven in the Bnei Torah minyan, where he davens every day.

According to his calculations, the taxi with the suitcase would arrive before Shacharis, and his day could continue planned. However, the taxi driver misunderstood the address and stood waiting outside another beis medresh. The yungerman had no choice but to go there

to pick up the suitcase. That meant he would miss his usual minyan where he davens every day.

As he left the Bnei Torah beis medresh, he called Reb Chaim Elazar to tell him about his disappointment. He said, "Thanks to you, my day is ruined." He didn't try to conceal his anger and disappointment. He even said, "You killed my day!" because he wouldn't have *yishuv hadaas* all day due to this schedule change.



Later that day, everyone in the Jewish world heard of what happened at the Bnei Torah minyan that morning. Arab terrorists attacked; it was one of the worst terror attacks of recent history.

Video footage of the beis medresh shows this *yungerman* leaving the beis medresh before the massacre began. He is seen speaking on his phone, waving his arms in anger. He was telling Reb Chaim Elazar, "You killed my day."

Little did he know that Reb Chaim Elazar gave "life" to that day and all other days of his life.

We learn two lessons from this story:

(1) *Chesed* always pays off. This *yungerman* went to do a *chesed*, to pick up a suitcase of clothing for an orphaned *kallah*, which saved his life. (2) When you think something is negative, it is for your good. Missing Shacharis seemed tragic to this *yungerman*. It seemed bitter. But that's what saved his life.

The following story happened this year, in Beit Shemesh, erev Shabbos Lech Lecha:



A bachur came to the apartment building where he lives, and there was a bag of garbage near the central doorway. "It's the messy neighbour again," he thought to himself, bitterly. Cleanliness meant a lot to this *bachur*, and disorder ruins his peace of mind. So, he knocked at the neighbour's door and asked them to remove the garbage bag and throw it in the bin.

The neighbour replied that he came down the stairs with two heavy garbage bags. He didn't have the strength to carry both bags to the bin, so he left one bag at the entrance. "When I have strength, I'll go down and throw out the other one," he promised. The *bachur* wasn't pleased, but he managed to control his anger.

A few hours later, the bag was still there, at the doorway. The bachur needed to fix a window in his apartment. To do so, he had to stand on the outside side of the fence around his porch and lean over towards the window.

Without much space to put his feet, he lost his balance and fell one and a half stories down, breaking his arm. He fell headfirst, but his head wasn't injured because he fell onto a *garbage bag*. (There was a stone under the garbage bag, with a sharp edge. Were it not for the offensive garbage bag, the damage could have been immeasurable, *r'l*)

This is another indication that those matters you think are bad are for the good. He felt that the bag of garbage in the doorway was a bad thing, but it was there to save his life.

Wall of Anger

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם֙ חוֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְׂמֹאלָם Then the children of Israel came into the midst of the sea on dry land, and the waters were to them as a wall from their right and from their left. 14:22

וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם֙ חֹמָה מִימִינָם וּמִשְׂמֹאלָם But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the water was to them like a wall from their right and from their left. 14:29

Question: Why does it say in the first pasuk the word **חומה** with a **ו** and in the other psuk it says the word **חמה** without a **ו**?

Answer: **The Gra** says there were two groups of Bnei Yisroel that jumped into the water. The first group jumped into the water believing with true emunah and bitachon in Hashem. They were moser nefesh because they didn't know if they were going to survive and that's why it says **חומה** with a **ו**.

The other group of Bnai Yisroel went in after the first group because they saw the first group survived. They weren't moser nefesh at all. They just followed the first group because they saw Hashem perform a miracle and save the first group and thought that would happen with them. The reason it says **חמה** without a **ו** is because the word **חמה** means anger. By the second group not having emunah in Hashem and simply following the first group into the water, this caused Hashem to be angry.

The takeaway is that we must work on our emunah. Hashem wants us to put our faith in Him. Hashem gives us opportunities to strengthen our emunah every single day and we need to rise to the occasion. There are times when it is hard to do this. Those are the times we need to make more of an effort to really work on our emunah and bitachon in Hashem!

The Way of Emunah - Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

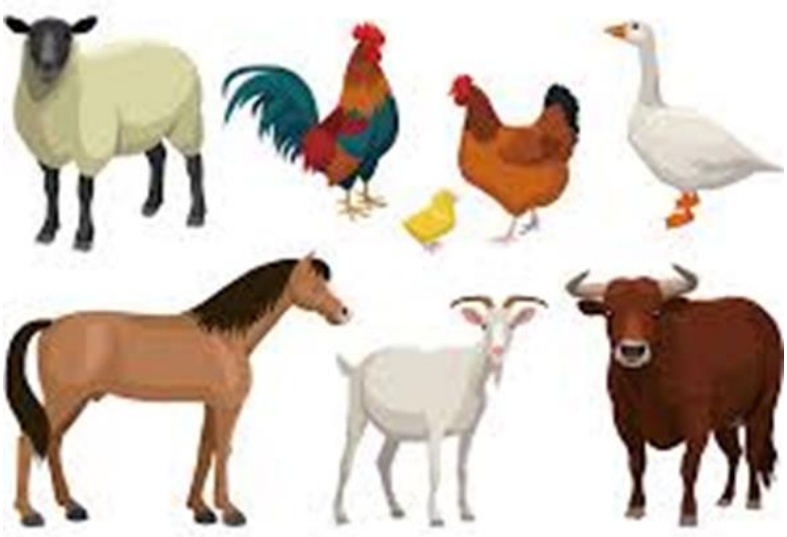
וַיַּסֵּב אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הָעָם דֶּרֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּר יַם־סוּף וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם ***And Hashem led the nation by way of the desert to the Yam Suf, and the children of Yisroel were armed when they went up out of Egypt.*** (13:18)

The Power of Simchah Breaks Barriers:

Sefer Divrei Yisroel notes that the letters of word **וַחֲמֻשִׁים**, armed, can be rearranged to spell "v'sameichim", and they were happy. This hints to the fact that a person can leave all of his problems through the power of simcha, just like the Jews left Egypt with joy.

If so, why does the verse say "v'chamushim", rather than explicitly saying "v'sameichim"? This is because the word "chamushim" also hints to the fact that they had left the 50 (chamishim) levels of impurity. Thus, they were joyous because they were leaving this place of tumah, not because of the gold and silver they had acquired from the Egyptians.

One Who is Happy With His Lot



It is related that a poor man once came to **Rav Meir of Permishlan zy"a** and complained that he lived in a tiny house that was way too small for his family, but he didn't have any money to extend his home.

Rav Meir told him, "Bring your cow into your house." The man did as he was told, but this just made the house even more crowded. He returned to Rav Meir and complained again about his lack of living space, and Rav Meir told him

to also bring his chickens into his house. He did this as well, which made the house even more cramped.

Now the house was not only crowded but it was also very noisy, as the chickens clucked all day and drove the man crazy. He returned to Rav Meir yet again and bemoaned his plight. Rav Meir's response was to tell him to also bring his goats into the house. Of course, this made the house unbearably crowded and there was barely any room to move at all.

He came back to Rav Meir once more and told him that he couldn't tolerate the situation any longer. Finally, Rav Meir told him to take the cow, chickens and goats out of the house. The next time the man came to Rav Meir, he told him that he now sees that he actually has a very big house.

This story teaches us that a person who is satisfied with what he has and does not desire anything else will be happy. He won't need to be sent any form of suffering that needs to be removed before he can see that he should have been happy the entire time. But if someone is unhappy with his lot, Hashem has to make him uncomfortable and then remove the cause of his discomfort before he can see that he should have been happy all along.

Finding The Good in Every Situation

Sefer Shefa Chaim relates a story about a tzadik who was very poor and suffered through many troubles in his life. He was so impoverished that he didn't even have bread to eat. This tzadik once went several days without eating. He was extremely hungry, but he had no food to break his long fast.

As he became overcome with weakness, he began to sing praises to Hashem. He said, "I don't know why I merited so much kindness from Hashem. There are many people who are sick and have no appetite at all. Their wives prepare lavish meals for them, but they have no

desire to eat because they are so sick. But I am healthy, and I could even eat dry black bread and be satisfied with that.

The fact that I am hungry shows that I have an appetite to eat, and this is a great kindness from Hashem."

אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֶרְדֹּף אַשִּׂיג אֲחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תִּמְלָאֵמוֹ נַפְשִׁי ***The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will share the booty; my desire will be filled…*** (15:9)

He Wanted to Make Them Abandon Their Good Ways

Rav Yehoshua of Belz zy"a asks how Pharaoh was so sure that he would overtake the Jews and take their spoils?

He answers that it is probable that Pharaoh knew the secret that Klal Yisroel was redeemed in the merit of three things – not changing their names, not changing their mode of dress and not changing their language. He wanted to convince them to abandon their good ways and, in this way, he knew he could beat them.

He explains the verse to be saying that Pharaoh planned on overtaking them by being אֲחַלֵּק שָׁלָל (dividing the booty). The word שָׁלָל can be an acronym of "shem (names), lashon (language), and levush (clothing)."

Pharaoh wanted to convince them to give up these three things, and he knew that if he could do this, he would be able to overtake the nation. However, he was unable to do this, and Hashem protected the nation and destroyed Pharaoh and his army.

The Brisker Rav, zt"l says that someone whose Bitachon is so strong that he takes pleasure and delight in it, will merit salvation in all the areas that they need.

✸ Segulas and salvations for Tu B'Shvat ✸



Everyone should know that Tu B'Shvat is a great and wonderful time for salvation, as many Kabbalists and holy Tzaddikim have written. Therefore, it is very important that everyone shares this message so that others can benefit as well.

1. It is very important to have a table with as many fruits as possible. Eat as many fruits as possible, both regular and dry (just be careful that they are kosher and free of worms). Adding different types of fruits, adds blessing and abundance.

2. A rare segula for longevity! **The holy Tzaddik from Parshisha ZT"L** said that whoever eats an etrog on Tu B'Shvat, he is guaranteed longevity (no matter if it is an etrog that was made into jam or a dried one).

3. The Kabbalists wrote that Tu B'Shvat is a time capable of finding one's soul mate. That is why it is very important for those who are looking for a relationship, to say at night or during the day, the entire chapter 7 in Bamidbar, and then to ask that in the merit of Tu B'Shvat and the holy leaders of each tribe, you will get married soon.

4. A great segula to say, to receive a salvation, that can be said tonight or tomorrow day. One should try to say *Nishmas Kol Chai* it can be found in your siddur in the shabbos prayers.

5. The greatest of all segulas. Take your free time and be alone with the Creator of the world on this holy day and give thanks for all that you have. Then just pour out your heart before our Heavenly Father

in your language in your own words and beg Him to fill in and fill all your shortcomings!

For this is what the Kabbalists wrote, that on Tu'Bshvat, the gates of heaven are opened! - In the words of **Divrei Yicheskel ZT"L** - Tu B'Shvat is capable of healing the mind and body and one can attain salvation and nachas. The gematris of the words **שלח רפואה שלמה לכל עמך**- ***"Send complete healing to all the people of Your nation"*** has the same numerical value as **חמשה עשר בשבט**- The 15th of Shevat!

It is therefore worthwhile for everyone to take advantage of the precious time of this great day. And ask the Creator of the world, that from this day, good and sweet fruits, will come from you. Meaning, that you will get married and have children. Let there be contentment from the children. May you have an abundant livelihood and be able to help others. May you be healthy and happy. May you be blessed to draw near to G-d and be blessed with love and joy and not out of torment G-d forbid. That you should be strong in knowing, that there is Divine Supervision. And that should merit to have a light that will illuminate others, you will be happy, you will help others and you will bring forth sweet fruit.

Turn the letters of **חמשה עשר** to **שער שמחה ...** May the gates of happiness open wide and fill your life with fruitfulness in every way. Enjoy each fruit.. colour.. feel.. smell.

May you have a Tu B'Shvat that is happy, bright and full of salvation for all the people of Israel from Rabbi Raphael Avitan 💥

"A person who takes a walk of 100 feet and a person who walks 2,000 miles have one major thing in common. They both need to take a first step before they take a second step." —Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

Why Eat Carob on 15 Shevat? By Baruch S. Davidson



The custom of eating carob (Bokser in Yidish) on Tu B'shvat, the New Year for Trees, is not cited in the Talmud or in the Code of Jewish Law, yet it is common in many communities. Our sages teach that the customs of the Jewish people are also Torah and have profound reasons congruent with Torah teachings and laws.

As it turns out, eating carob has an intrinsic connection both to Tu B'Shevat and to customs in general. But first, a word about the halachic significance of Tu B'Shevat, and what makes it the New Year for Trees:

Let's say you are a farmer in the Land of Israel and you have an orchard. Once a year, you must give a certain amount of fruit as tithes—for the Kohanim, for the poor, or for eating in Jerusalem (depending on the year in a seven year cycle). The question arises: When is the cut-off date that divides between one year's crop and the next? The answer is fairly simple: It is the day when most of the rainy season in the Land of Israel has passed. That is the 15th day of Shevat, known commonly as Tu B'Shevat ("Tu" is one way of saying fifteen).

Now another problem arises: There are certain trees—such as the carob tree—that can begin to bud before Tu B'Shevat, but will not be harvested until much later, well after Tu B'Shevat. Would their tithing follow the rules of the tree-year in which they bud, or the

tree-year in which they are harvested? This question is addressed in the Talmud:

The rabbis taught: A tree whose fruits were in bud before the fifteenth of Shevat must be tithed as the produce of the past year, but if they bud after that, they are tithed during the coming year. Said Rabbi Nechemia: This applies to trees whose fruit ripen and are harvested over an extended period of time. But in the case of a tree whose crop is harvested all at once—such as the date-palm, olive tree, or carob tree—although their fruits may begun to bud before the fifteenth of Shevat, they are tithed with the produce of the coming year.

The Talmud concludes that "The custom of the masses follows Rabbi Nechemia with regard to carobs." This law was decided not by a vote of the sages, but simply by the custom of the Jewish people.

Throughout this entire discussion there is only one law that is decided by the custom of the people—the custom regarding carob trees. In order to commemorate Tu B'Shevat, the custom evolved that we should do something to note a custom mentioned in the Talmud—at least in an indirect way—by eating carobs!

Another unique thing about the carob tree is that the Talmud tells us that it takes 70 years to mature and bear fruit. By eating carob on Tu B'Shevat, we are also highlighting the importance of patiently investing in the future even when it is a long and arduous process with no immediate gains, for the fruits of our labours will be harvested by generations to come.

Carobs are also special in that they were the food of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who famously subsided an entire week on a single *kav* of carobs. The Talmud describes Rabbi Chanina as one who was accustomed to miracles. Thus, eating carobs serves to evoke his memory and express our hope for miracles from G-d.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn – Project Mesorah



Tu Bishvat is personally very special to me, as it is my birthday. Tu Bishvat is the Rosh Hashana for trees , as we are told in the first Mishna in Rosh Hashana.

The meforshim say, that Tu Bishvat is a time that we should sometimes think about the trees with reference to men, women children and all of mankind, as the Pasuk (Devorim 20:19) says– **כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה** - that a person is like a tree.

What does this mean? In drush, we have a rule, that we all come from roots, and hopefully, we will all bear fruits, referring to children, grandchildren etc.

I want to tell you a story about **Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Zidichov** (1805–1873). He was a great Rebbe, and he once said that the true fruits of a person are not necessarily the type that one eats on Tu Bishvat, but the true fruits are the deeds of a person.

Every morning when we say **אֵלּוּ דְבָרִים שֶׁאָדָם אוֹכֵל פֵּרוֹתֵיהֶם בָּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה וְהַקֶּרֶן קַיֶּמֶת לָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם וּגְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים וְהַשְׁכָּמַת בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ שַׁחֲרִית וְעַרְבִית וְהַכְנָסַת אוֹרְחִים וּבִקּוּר חוֹלִים וְהַכְנָסַת כַּלָּה וּלְוָיַת הַמֵּת וְעִיּוּן תְּפִלָּה וַהֲבָאַת שָׁלוֹם בֵּין אָדָם לַחֲבֵרוֹ וּבֵין אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה כְּנֶגֶד כֻּלָּם** we have to think about these things. These are the true fruits of mankind.

Rabbi Moishe Weinberger from Aish Kodesh said that we think that the fruits grow from the sap and the roots, but really what the fruits grow from more than anything else is the sunshine and the air. No tree can grow without these. However these things are not visible.

Hashem is also not visible, but He is the One who really gives us life and nurturing. And therefore, on Tu Bishvat, we should try to become closer to Hashem.

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

Chizuk – Inspiration

On an ordinary day in 2009, the telephone rang in the office of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim in Queens, New York. The caller was an official of the state government in Albany ("Caller") who asked to speak with the Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Henoch Leibowitz ZT'L.**

The Caller wanted to relay to the Rosh Yeshiva the following story and was saddened to discover that the Rosh Yeshiva was no longer alive.



The Caller had just come from a meeting of government officials in Albany. A bill was proposed that was not completely ethical and there was some debate as to whether it should be passed into law. The Governor of New York, David Paterson, stated unequivocally that the bill was unacceptable because it did not pass the "Rabbi Leibowitz Smell Test" and he voted it down. Of course, the Caller had never heard of such a thing, so he asked the Governor to explain what he meant.

The Governor explained that in the 1980s, the New York State government offered a grant to schools for the installation of high

efficiency light fixtures. The Yeshiva was eligible for the grant and Rabbi Avraham Ginsburg, the Yeshiva's Executive Director, applied for the funding after receiving professional estimates that put the cost at around $75,000. The grant in that amount was approved. Subsequently, Rabbi Ginsburg was resourceful enough to find a professional who was willing to do the same job for a lower price - $60,000. It seemed that the Yeshiva would be able to pocket the difference, which was desperately needed due to the Yeshiva's precarious financial position at the time.

"We cannot keep the extra money under any circumstances," Rav Henoch insisted. "It must be returned to the government." "I do not feel that I can do that in good conscience," Rabbi Ginsburg objected. "The Yeshiva is struggling. How can I give up such a large sum of money?

The government already made the allocation and it was only because of my careful research that we are able to get the light fixtures for a lower price." The Rosh Yeshiva was adamant, "The allocation was given to us for the light fixtures only and not meant for anything else."

The Rosh Yeshiva called the government office where a newly hired young clerk answered the phone. The Rosh Yeshiva explained the situation and asked for instructions on how to return the extra money to the state. "I am not sure how to do that," the clerk admitted but promised to call him back.

Later, the clerk called the Rosh Yeshiva and said that no one had ever asked to return part of a grant before, and there was no protocol in place for taking the money back. Therefore, the clerk directed the Rosh Yeshiva to keep the extra money.

"I do not feel comfortable keeping this money," the Rosh Yeshiva said. "Please find a way for me to return it."

The clerk promised to call back again, but when he spoke to the Rosh Yeshiva a second time he had nothing further to report. "I checked again and there is no way for us to take this money back. Please just keep it for your school." Rav Henoch would not be dissuaded, "I am going to write a check to your office in the amount of the extra funds and send it back to you."

That clerk was a young man named David Paterson, who years later would become the Governor of New York. The Caller concluded his story by saying that the Governor was still awed by his dealings with the Rosh Yeshiva decades later.

The Governor concluded his story and said that the Rosh Yeshiva, "is the most honest person in the state of New York and in my view, is the gold standard of personal integrity. I measure everything I do against whether it would pass his rigorous standards of integrity – and that is what I meant by passing the "Rabbi Leibowitz Smell Test". (**Yated Ne'eman**)

A Short Message from Rebbetzin Tehila Jaeger

Rav Moshe Shapiro zt"l insightfully explains that in light of the miraculous splitting of the Red Sea, the common term used to describe the Jewish people, or Hebrews – (Ivrim) – **עברים** takes on new meaning. It can be read as a contraction of two words **עבר ים** – " – Cross the sea."

The spectacular event of Kriat Yam Suf was not only experienced by the Jewish people but defines them. We are a nation whose natural existence extends to the supernatural. We are a people who live above and beyond the confines of nature. Never have we been or ever will be locked into statistics and prognosis. We defy all odds and indomitably surge forward as an inextinguishable nation guided by the omnipotent hand of Hashem.



"When we serve Hashem according to our nature, Hashem leads us according to the rules of nature. But when we go beyond our nature, Hashem reciprocates and performs miracles for us beyond the limitations of nature. When the Jewish nation were at the seashore, they served Hashem with mesirus nefesh, beyond their nature, making them worthy of kriyas yam suf." ~ Rebbe Michel of Zlotcher.

Sparks Of Shabbos

וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו מָן הוּא כִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ מַה־הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם הוּא הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן ה׳ לָכֶם לְאָכְלָה 16:15



When the Jews wandered in the desert, they collected a portion of mahn every day. Since it wasn't accurate to say "ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretz" on bread which isn't a product of the ground, some explain that it was replaced by "ha'motzi lechem min ha'shomayim" instead.

Still, some contend that no beracha was made and the **Bnei Yissaschar** explains that this was because ordinarily a beracha is said in order to separate the parts of foods which emanate kedusha from the waste, but since the mahn was completely absorbed into the body, it was completely kadosh and no beracha was necessary.

He conjectures that on Shabbos, a beracha was in fact recited; since eating on Shabbos is a mitzva, one would be required to say a beracha just as he would with any mitzva he performs.

Arm Yourself With Tefillah

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches us that prayer is a Jew's main weapon. - Just like a soldier without his weapon is incomplete, so too is a Jew without prayer. ~ R' Shalom Arush

The Narrow Place - Rabbi Shraga Simmons

Parshat Beshalach tells how the Jewish people have left Egypt and are heading out into the desert, when suddenly they find Pharaoh and his troops chasing after them. The Jews become frightened and declare: "We'd rather be slaves in Egypt!"



This is a shocking statement, given that the Jewish people had endured for 210 years of back-breaking labour and slavery. How could that situation possibly be preferable to the freedom they now enjoyed?

The answer is that slavery has one great advantage: Comfort. In Egypt, the Jews were provided with all their basic needs, like food and shelter, and they didn't have to make any decisions about how to spend their day or what to accomplish.

It's interesting that in Hebrew the word for Egypt *"Mitzrayim"* is similar to *"Maitzar"* which means a narrow place. On one level, the Jews preferred a confined environment, rather than the broad responsibility that accompanies freedom. Sometimes it's the smallest box which makes us feel the most secure. Indeed, all transition can be scary - whether getting married, starting a new job, or moving to a new city.

Ultimately, it's that "comfort" that we have to fight against - or we'll never move forward in life. So if you're struggling with a decision, ask yourself: What's the **worst thing** that can possibly happen? And in 10 years from now, will I regret not having made that decision?

In this parsha, the Sea finally splits, and the Jews walk through to freedom. At which point they break out in joyous celebration - not just because they'd beaten the Egyptians, but even more, because they'd conquered their **own** paralyzing fear.

Our Eternal Relationship with Egypt- Rabbi Sender Haber

Several weeks ago we were saved by coming down to Egypt. In this week's Parsha we finally leave. At the Yam Suf Hashem promised that we would not see the Egyptians again.



In Parshas Shoftim Hashem ruled that a king should not have too many horses because they would lead us back to Mitzrayim. But in Devarim 28:68 we are told that if we misbehave Hashem will put us into ships and send us back. - The truth is that we have a long history with Egypt:

Halacha

This Halacha not to return to Egypt is mentioned in Rambam but not in Shulchan Aruch. It seems that many have returned over the years.

There are several approaches to the reasons for the prohibition and the leniencies that were applied.

Approach One: Depravity of Egypt

The Egyptians were apparently less moral than any other country. They practised deification of the Pharaohs and the Nile. It was not

a good place for Jews to hang out. This is the approach of the Ramban. Based on this approach we have two important leniencies:

1) Only prolonged residence is an issue. The Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin Ch. 10) rules that it is permitted to descend to Egypt temporarily. The Aderes adds that if one went temporarily, they remain afterward, even permanently.

2) Egypt may be more moral than it once was. Sancheriv mixed everyone up when he conquered so the people of Egypt are no longer the same people. Further, Rabbeinu Bachyei writes that even if they are the same people, they may have changed. They may be more moral now. The third generation of Egyptians is allowed to enter the Jewish nation. They do have the potential to change.

This approach is not totally satisfying. The prohibition to return is mentioned even after the days of Sancheirev and Rabbi Kapach claims that historically the Rambam settled permanently without any duress and even before he got the job with the sultan.

Approach Two: No Moving Backwards

The Yereim explains that only a specific route was prohibited. G-d took us out of Egypt and we are not supposed to return. It is never a good idea to move backwards. As a matter of fact, just leaving Israel is an Issue. The prohibition on going to Egypt is just an extension of that rule.

Based on this it could be understood why the Rambam left Alexandria for El Kahir, which was not part of the original Egyptian kingdom which we left, but it does not explain everything.

Approach Three: National Pride

We need to proud of our nation as Israel. We can't get too proud of Egypt, even if they are somewhat decent. This appears to be the approach of the Ritva that the prohibition only applies when there is a Jewish monarch and that all of the verses focus on the monarch. Even the Rambam records this law in the Laws of Kings. In a similar

vein, others write that the mitzvah only applies if all of the Jews return to Egypt.

The Ritva and Rav Hirsch explain that it is up to us to choose a good country. Egypt is a bad one. The Korban Ha'eidah writes that settling in Egypt is a sign that one does not expect Moshiach.

Based on this, the Aruch Hashulchan writes that in times that Egypt isn't doing well and there is no pride in being there, the halacha does not apply.

This approach is satisfactory but not very well sourced.

Approach Four: The Arizal

There is an idea in Jewish thought that can give us context to the mitzvah and even to its detractors.

In Jewish thought it is a given that we are influenced by our surroundings both positively and negatively. The Chassidim say that Babi Yar was the site of the battle between Kayin and Hevel. Any place we go has positive and negative vibes. We generally understand this as influence and nurture, but the Zohar actually sees it as Klipos and a real impurity that exists in a specific location and does not go away.

Mitzrayim can be pronounced 'Metzarim' or boundaries. Constricted boundaries are not conducive to spiritual growth.

However, within those Metzarim, there exist Nitzotzos, sparks of holiness that remain and must be redeemed. Like a Jew who has never heard a word of Torah, these holy sparks are waiting to be used in the proper way.

That's what we deal with daily. We find holiness and purpose in the world around us. That is why we went down to Egypt to begin with. Yosef brought G-d to Egypt. Yosef found Asnas in Egypt, and ultimately Yosef let Egypt support the holiest nation.

The Arizal writes that we did such a good job that there were no sparks left in Egypt. We had to get out of there quick and there was no reason to go back.

What an important lesson! Sometimes we go somewhere in life and we grow and accomplish. That doesn't mean that we need to go back. We haven't become impervious to harm! We don't need to run back into a burning house when there are no more victims and we don't need to put our children through all the trials that we experienced.

That is the Mitzvah not to go back. Never. Not just to Egypt, but anywhere harmful should not be returned to.

But what if we do go back? The Jewish people did at the time of Gedaliah and they were assimilated there. The Karaites were there. Many Jews ended up there. So the sparks are back. And we need to return to elevate those sparks. Halachically, there was a population shift. Egypt is not the same place it was.

Of course we can't go back to stay there because we must be proud of our own country and we must hope for Moshiach, but we have a mission in Egypt and we may go back to fulfil our role.

Perhaps this was the thinking of the Rambam, of Rav Ovadiah Yosef, and of so many others. There is halachic and mystical basis for returning, but only for the purpose of getting our act together and going to Israel. Those who forgot their mission were criticized and punished.

Egypt will never be our home. We can do good stuff there. But we need to be really careful. And when we go, we need to leave and not come back. Preferably we should be headed for Israel.

Self-respect is the fruit of discipline; the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself.

שמואל זנוויל כהנא Shmuel Zanvil Kahana Zt'l (Chief Rabbi of Persian Jewry) - The Song of The Birds

אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת "Then Moshe and the children of Israel will sing..." (15:1-18)

The Shabbos on which we read the Song of the Sea is known as "Shabbat Shira", and it is customary to scatter crumbs to the birds on this day. But what, in fact, is the connection between the birds and Shabbat Shira?

Chazal say that when King David saw in his vision that the Temple was about to be destroyed, he gave his poems, the one hundred and fifty chapters of the Psalms he had written, to the birds.

In Hebrew letters one hundred and fifty is **קן** - A nest. Dovid Hamelech placed his psalms in the **nest** and ordered the birds to fly and sing his psalms all over the world.

On Shabbat Shira we throw crumbs to the birds so that they will come and sing to us the songs of Zion, and bring us the hope that indeed, redemption is near for all our brothers wherever they are.

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez

כָּל־הַמַּחֲלָה אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי בְמִצְרַיִם לֹא־אָשִׂים עָלֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפְאֶךָ ***'All the plagues that I placed in Mitzrayim, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem your healer.'***

The Pasuk says in Yashayahu 19:22 וְנָגַף ה' אֶת־מִצְרַיִם נָגֹף וְרָפֹא '***Hashem will plague Mitzrayim, plague and heal***.'

The Zohar tells us in parshas Bo (ח"ב לו) in the name of Rebbi Chizkiya – 'Hashem plagued Mitzrayim, and healed the Yidden. We are taught that while Mitzrayim was being struck with Makkos – The Yidden were being healed.'

The Ben Ish Chai explains as follows: For Mitzrayim, each plague was a **מחלה** - an affliction. However, for the Yidden , it became **חמלה** – merciful!

The plagues called **נגף** in the Pasuk in Yeshaya, turned into **גפן**– an expression of bracha/goodness. The Medrash (**מכילתא פ'ו**) tells us that each one of the 10 makkos consisted of 5 plagues together! This means that there were a total of 50 makkos.

גפן is the gematriah of **חמלה** plus 50 (Makkos)!

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez

וְשָׁם שְׁתֵּים עֶשְׂרֵה עֵינֹת מַיִם וְשִׁבְעִים תְּמָרִים '***There were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms***….' (15:27)



The Ramban brings down a Medrash that these 12 springs (which correspond to the 12 shevatim) and these 70 date-palms (which correspond to the 70 **זקנים**) were specially created by Hashem during the six days of creation for this moment. Each shevet would now have water to drink and also shade **for** the **זקנים** to sit under.

But why the **תמר** tree? What did the **תְּמָרִים** symbolise?

So, **Harav Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l** explains based on a Gemara in Mesechta Pesachim 87b and a Yerushalmi in Ta'anis 5 that **תְּמָרִים** – dates are satisfying, and very sweet. They enable Talmidei Chachamim to study Torah peacefully and train the tongue to become accustomed to "true sweetness!"

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez אָז יָשִׁיר... בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם (15:1-19)

The Shirah begins with the word אָז and ends with the word הַיָּם . This is the same gematria as מַחֲיֶה , and alludes to the fact that our lives were saved through the miracle of Kri'as Yam Suf.

This is why we conclude the praises of Pesukei D'zimra before the Shirah every morning with the words וְאַתָּה מְחַיֶּה אֶת־כֻּלָּם



We remind ourselves before we begin the parsha of the Shirah each day, that it is Hashem, who with His great rachamim, saved us from Mitzrayim, and kept us alive as we passed through the Yam Suf.

And interestingly, between the first word אָז and the last word הַיָּם in the Shirah, there are 196 words. This is the same gematria as ים סוף ! [אהל תורה]



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

A chimney sweep can always pick a fight with others. After all, he is blacker than black and has nothing to lose!

However, no one dares start up with him – win or lose, anyone who tries would become sullied in the process…- Saying of Chassidim.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה

Rabbi Avraham Gurvitz Shlita said over from his shver **Rabbi Leib Lopian Zt'l** who heard this from the **Telzer Rav Zt'l**.

If you look at the parsha preceding the Shirah, there are a phenomenal number of miracles that take place there.

14:22 וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבָּשָׁה וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה

14:29 וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָלְכוּ בַיַּבָּשָׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם וְהַמַּיִם לָהֶם חוֹמָה

There were mosaic floors, and separate compartments. There was running fresh water. The seabed became flat to enable easy walking. Etc etc etc.



But we don't see anywhere along the description of all these miracles, that the Yidden said Shirah until right at the end.

So, when do they sing Shirah? **וַיַּרְא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה׳ בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּירְאוּ הָעָם אֶת־ה׳ וַיַּאֲמִינוּ בַּה׳ וּבְמֹשֶׁה עַבְדּוֹ**

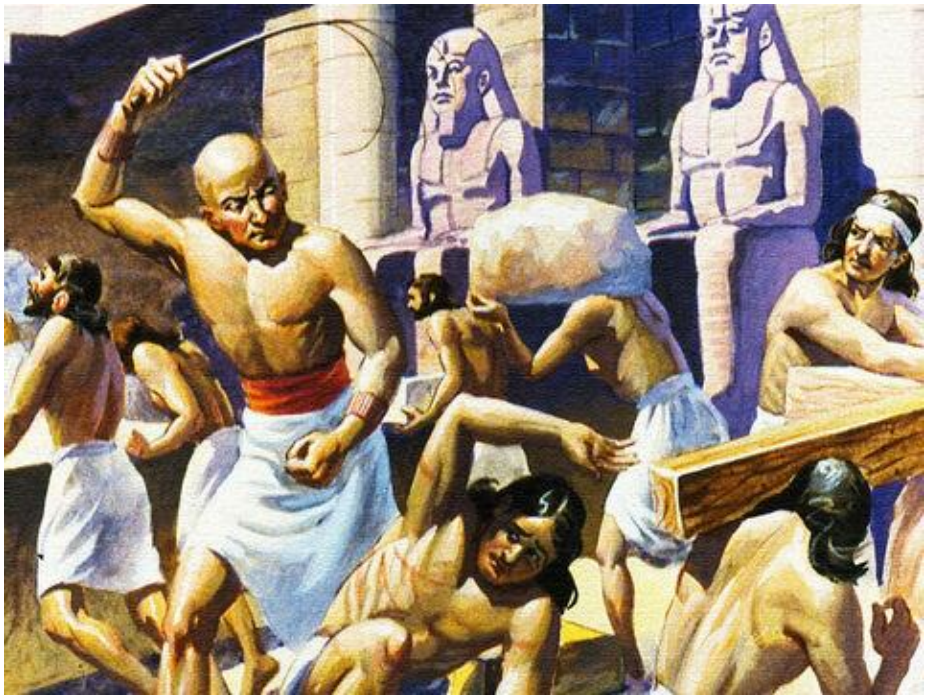
When it came to when they had Emunah – that's when they sang Shirah! When they saw the Yad Hashem with such strength, that is when they had full Emunah in Hashem, and that's when they sang Shirah.

From then on, there would be no doubts to having Emunah, and having full belief in Hashem. Whatever they were going through in their lives, they would always understand and appreciate, with a clarity of mind, that it is all the Yad Hashem.

This is why it is in the future tense - **אָז יָשִׁיר** – The Emunah is on-going.

B'ezras Hashem, we should also be zoche to have this same clarity of mind and Emunah in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, so that we should be able to continuously be able to sing Shiros to Hashem.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה



Rabeinu Bechaya says **וַיֻּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם** '***It was reported to Pharaoh that the people had fled***.' (14:5)

The gematria of **בָּרַח** is 210. Pharaoh says, **מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂינוּ כִּי־שִׁלַּחְנוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעָבְדֵנוּ** "Hey, they have only done 210 years! They have more time to do." So Pharaoh continues - **אָרִיק חַרְבִּי** - '***I will draw my sword, My scabbard has been emptied***.' (15:9)

חרב is the gematria of 210! – Only 210 years have been completed. **תְּמַלְּאֵמוֹ נַפְשִׁי** – 'I want to refill my soul.' – The gematria of **נפש** is 430! Pharaoh wanted to get the Yidden back to complete the 430 years of slavery!

One of the sincerest forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld Zt'l, (1848-1932) makes a calculation: How many brachos are said in Shemoneh Esrei throughout the entire week?

There are 3 Shemoneh Esreis a weekday, plus 2 Chazaras Hashatz each day. This equals 5x19 brachos per weekday (95) times 6 days a week (= 570).

Add to this the 3 Shemoneh Esreis of Shabbos – Shacharis, Mussaf and Mincha and the Chazaras Hashatz (6x7 brachos = 42). Add the Shemoneh Esrei of Maariv.(7) This comes to a total of 7 x 7, (49). - 570 + 49 = 619 brachos per week.



If you add the bracha of ***Magen Avos*** (Fri night), you get 620. This is the gematria of **כתר**!

In Nusach Sefard, this is what we say - **כֶּתֶר יִתְּנוּ לְךָ, ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מַלְאָכִים הַמּוֹנֵי מַעְלָה. עִם עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל קְבוּצֵי מַטָּה** '***A crown is given to You Hashem, our G-d by the angels on high and by Your people who assemble below.***'

On Shabbos, we bring The Riboino Shel Olam this **crown (620)**, which includes all these Brachos from the whole week!!

In Ashkenaz, when we say - (**קְדֻשָּׁ**) **כְּסוּד שִׂיחַ שִׂרְפֵי** – The Roshei Teivos are gematria 620! **The Vilna Gaon** says that this is also the **כתר** that we give to The Riboino Shel Olam!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

The Mann

זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה׳ לִקְטוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ עֹמֶר לַגֻּלְגֹּלֶת מִסְפַּר נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אִישׁ לַאֲשֶׁר בְּאָהֳלֹו תִּקָּחוּ (16:16). Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe Rabeinu to tell the people to collect an Omer for each person.

The Chasam Sofer says that עֹמֶר לַגֻּלְגֹּלֶת (Forty-three & a fifth eggs) was not a definite amount. It all depended on the size of a person. An adult would get the full shiur, and a child would get a smaller amount.



The Pasuk says אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ - '***Gather of it each one according to his eating capacity***.' However דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם did not listen, and kept some back for the next day. וְלֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹתִרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וַיָּרֻם תּוֹלָעִים וַיִּבְאַשׁ וַיִּקְצֹף עֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה 'But [some] men did not obey Moses and left over [some] of it until morning, and it bred worms and became putrid, and Moses became angry with them.' (16:20)

After this episode, the pasukim continue:- וַיִּלְקְטוּ אֹתוֹ בַבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר אִישׁ כְּפִי אָכְלוֹ 'They gathered it morning by morning, each one according to his eating capacity.'

Why does the Torah first say אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ and then change the wording to אִישׁ כְּפִי אָכְלוֹ? (כְּפִי is in the future ie. According to what a person will require in the future.)

The Malbim says that they were punished instantly. - **וַיִּלְקְטוּ** - **כְּפִי אָכְלָם** collected every morning. But they only received **דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם** – the same amount each day, as they ate on that first day! On the first day, they decided to only eat half an Omer, in order to leave over for the next day, as they did not have Emunah in Hashem.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם

The Pasuk says **דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָשֻׁבוּ וְיַחֲנוּ לִפְנֵי פִּי הַחִירֹת** '***Speak to the children of Israel, and let them turn back and encamp in front of Pi hahiroth***.' (14:2)

וְאָמַר פַּרְעֹה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל '***And Pharaoh will say to the children of Israel***.' – Pharoah is stuck in his palace, and the Yidden have fled, and **נְבֻכִים הֵם בָּאָרֶץ** – they are trapped in the land.

So who is Pharaoh talking to?



Rashi explains that **לִפְנֵי** means – '***concerning the children of Israel***.' He wasn't literally speaking to them face to face.

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin Zt'l says, that actually, there were two people that didn't believe in Moshe Rabeinu nor had Emunah in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. They stayed behind in Mitzrayim, and it was to these two people that Pharaoh was talking to - **דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם**!

וְאָמַר פַּרְעֹה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל '***And Pharaoh will say to דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם***.' – It's good that you stayed with me, because the rest of your folk are **נְבֻכִים הֵם בָּאָרֶץ** – they are trapped in the land.'

If this is true, then why didn't they die during **מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת**?

Says Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin from a Medrash, that **דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם** were amongst the group of Yidden who were the **שוטרי ישראל** – the taskmasters! When the Egyptians came and said that the Jews haven't made enough bricks, now go and beat them up, the Jewish taskmasters replied, "You can beat us, but we'll never hit our fellow Yid."

The other 70 Shotrim, (together with Eldad and Meidad) received Ruach Hakodesh as a reward. **דָּתָן וַאֲבִירָם** were not zoche to Ruach Hakodesh, as they lacked Emunah. However, because they had **מסירות נפש**, they were rewarded richly, by having long lives.

They were alive at the time of Yetzias Mitzrayim. They saw and ate the Mann. They were present at Kriyas Yam Suf. They were alive to experience Matan Torah at Har Sinai.



Worthy of Kriyas Yam Suf

About Kriyas Yam Suf, Chazal tell us that, keviyachol, it was hard for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to perform this miracle for the Yidden.

The Rashbam (Pesachim 118.) explains that the splitting of the sea was an incredibly great miracle. It wasn't hard in a literal sense because nothing is too difficult for Hashem. There isn't a thing that Hashem can't do. The expression of "hard," **קשין**, is used merely to express the magnitude of the miracle of kriyas Yam Suf. The Jewish nation wasn't noticeably different from the Mitzrim. It wasn't clear they should be saved. So what saved them? How was midas hadin silenced, and why was the Jewish nation saved with miracles?

We will write three explanations:

(1) **The Or HaChaim** writes that it was in the merit of their readiness to go into the sea because they trusted in Hashem's salvation.

(2) **The Pele Yoetz** writes that their extreme caution with chametz caused Hashem to have compassion on them and to split the sea for them.

(3) **The Meshech Chachmah** explains that their chumros to maintain their Jewish identity made them worthy.

The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz *zt'l* referred to Shvi'i shel Pesach (the day we read the Shirah) as Rosh Hashanah for *mesirus nefesh*."

The same applies to Shabbos *Shirah*. - The Chozeh writes that every year, on Shvi'i Shel Pesach and Shabbos Shirah Hashem sends bounty and a lot of compassion to the Jewish nation.

Joy on Shabbos Shirah



After maariv on Shabbos Shirah, **Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zt'l** repeated a question he heard from **Reb Yitzchak Vorka zt'l**.

Reb Yitzchak Vorka asked, "Why is this Shabbos called Shabbos Shirah? We generally don't name the Shabbos after what we read in the Torah. Last week's Shabbos (parashas Bo) isn't called 'Shabbos Yetzias Mitzrayim,' and next week's Shabbos (parashas Yisro) isn't called 'Shabbos Matan Torah.' Why then is this Shabbos called Shabbos Shirah?"

Rebbe Bunim answered that it is because the Shirah is written in the sefer Torah **לבינה על גבי אריח**. [Az Yashir is written in the sefer Torah in a song format, with large spaces after each phrase.]

Then Rebbe Bunim said with hislahavus, "***Every Yid must be very happy on this Shabbos***!"

The Ramasayim Tzofim zt'l (Tana d'bei Eliyahu Zuta 16) offers the following explanation: It is based on the **Shlah Hakadosh**, who says that the ink of a sefer Torah represents the neshamos, the good deeds, the emunah, and the daas of the Jewish nation. The white of a sefer Torah represents the physical bodies of Bnei Yisrael.

He explains that when we read about yetzias Mitzrayim in the Torah, the typical Yid doesn't experience the joy of yetzias Mitzrayim, and when we read about matan Torah, the average Yid doesn't experience the incredible joy of matan Torah. Tzaddikim do experience the joy, however, the average Yid doesn't. This is why we don't call last Shabbos "Shabbos Yetzias Mitzrayim" and next Shabbos "Shabbos Matan Torah."

However, when we read Az Yashir, every Yid can experience the joy of kriyas Yam Suf. There are many white spaces between the stanzas, which means that the bodies of Bnei Yisrael also experience it. The human mind and heart experience the joy of kriyas Yam Suf. It can therefore be called Shabbos Shirah. It is a joy that everyone can experience. - This is why Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa urged every Yid to be happy on this Shabbos. This is a joy that everyone can relate to.

The Ramasayim Tzofim concludes, "With my own eyes, I saw how Rebbe Bunim zt'l would dance at kabbalas Shabbos of Shabbos Shirah, and he wouldn't do so on other Shabbosim."

This is because the joy of this Shabbos is very great, and even the simplest Yid can experience it!

Salvations on Shabbos Shirah



There is no space between parashas Vayigash and parashas Vayichi, which is why it is called a **פרשה סתומה** - a closed parashah. Rashi (47:28) writes, "Why is this parashah closed? Because when Yaakov Avinu was niftar, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish nation became closed from the tzaros… because they began to enslave them."

When there isn't much white in a sefer Torah, that is a sign of *tzaros*, and the heart and the mind close. This week, the abundance of white spaces (in the Shirah) demonstrates an open mind and happy spirit, freed from all tzaros. This occurs on Shabbos Shirah because with kriyas Yam Suf come salvations for Bnei Yisrael, for the individual and the community.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* writes, "The *Az Yashir* contains everything in it: what was and will be. All redemptions are found in the *shirah*. If a person says it with all his heart, with *mesirus nefesh*, according to his level, all his spiritual and physical needs will be attained."

This occurs every day when we say Az Yashir with *kavanah*. Certainly, this happens on Shabbos Shirah when we say the Az Yashir or when we listen to it being read in the Sefer Torah.

We can merit many brachos and salvations on this Shabbos!

There's a Yiddish expression that people bless one another, "***Everything should go k'shirah***." The intention is, "Everything should work out well for you." - **The Imrei Emes zt'l** said that hinted is, "Everything should be good for you, as good as when we read the Shirah!"

The Shirah

The *Zohar* (*Bo* 40:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy when Yidden [say *Az Yashir*]. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* and tells them, 'Come and listen to the story and praises My children are saying. They are happy that I redeemed them."

The Rebbe Reb Shmelke of Nickelsberg *zt'l* hardly slept. (His mother said, "I have two children: One never says *kriyas Shema she'al hamitah*, and one never says *birchas hamazon*." She meant that her son Rebbe Shmelka hardly slept and her son **the Hafla'ah** barely ate.)

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* once hosted Rebbe Shmelka, and he wanted Rebbe Shmelke to sleep well because he believed that Rebbe Shmelke would serve Hashem better when his mind was well rested. Rebbe Shmelka agreed to Rebbe Elimelech's request.

In the morning, at the tefillah, Rebbe Shmelke reached very high levels, and the entire congregation became inspired together with him.

When they said Az Yashir, people were raising the hems of their clothing because they imagined themselves in the sea and didn't want their clothes to get wet!

After the tefillah, Rebbe Shmelka said to Rebbe Elimelech, "Sleep is very good, but who has time for it?" According to another version, he said, "Sleep is very good, but who can risk it?" (because you might sleep too long).

This story demonstrates that when we say Az Yashir, we should imagine ourselves crossing the Yam Suf.

We don't need to share the same opinions as others, but we need to be respectful.



וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אַל־יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר *'Moshe said to them, "No man may leave over from it until morning.'* (16:19)



Chazal (*Yoma* 76a) teach that enormous amounts of *manna* descended each day – more than the nation required for a day's sustenance. By midday, it was all gone. This was part of a Heavenly lesson to the people: Hashem provides for our daily needs – daily. To worry about tomorrow is a shortcoming in our *emunah* and *bitachon*, faith and trust, in Hashem.

This is the gold standard for which a Jew should aspire. The amount of *hishtadlus*, endeavouring, that one should expend is correlated with his level and trust in Hashem.

The *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*, did not go to doctors, understanding that Hashem is the ultimate Healer. He knew that his physical ailment was a Heavenly message concerning a spiritual deficiency. Thus, he introspected to see what he could improve.

We are not on that spiritual level; therefore, we turn to science as the *agent* by which Hashem heals our ailments. At the end of the day, however, we *know* that everything – both illness and its cure – comes from Hashem.

Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl, was the paradigm of a *baal bitachon*. Every word that issued forth from his mouth, every action that he took, represented his deep-rooted *bitachon*.

At the age of one hundred and four, his physician said to him, "The *Rav* lives by *neis*, miracle."

In his calm manner, *Rav* Shteinman replied, "You, too, live by miracle!"

He was once asked by a petitioner, "*Rebbe*, where do we see *nissim*, miracles, in our lives? When the Jews left Egypt, they could sense Hashem in every aspect of their lives. The Clouds of Glory, the Pillar of Fire, the well of Miriam that miraculously travelled with them, and more accompanied them.

Today, how are we to sense miracles in a realistic manner?

Rav Shteinman replied, "Today, too, we can experience miracles." The questioner sought a clear example of Heavenly intervention. "The mere fact that one is able to marry off his daughter is a miracle."

Rav Shteinman became filled with *regesh*, emotion, as he declared, "Look at the wondrous miracles of the Creator." He explained that, if one were to ask what is the greatest manifestation of Heavenly miracles in our generation, the answer would probably be: **the continued existence of *Klal Yisrael***. [Indeed, in his *Siddur*, the ***Yaavetz*** writes that *Klal Yisrael's* survival in *galus*, exile, is a miracle that supersedes even *Krias Yam Suf*, the Splitting of the Red Sea.] Yet, the *Rav* reiterated that the greatest miracle is the ability of an *avreich*, young Torah scholar, whose material bounty (if anything) barely suffices to feed his family, can marry off his daughter.

He added that the period in one's life in which a parent marries off his children is the twenty years between forty to sixty – the Hebrew letters *mem* and *samach*. We know that the letters on the *Luchos*, Tablets (*Aseres HaDibros*), were inscribed from both sides. This means that the inscription was engraved through and through. As

such, the words were clearly legible on each side. Although the letters were engraved all the way through, they could, nevertheless, be read from right to left on both sides.

Now, the Hebrew letters *samach* and *mem* are closed on all sides, such that nothing can hold them onto the stone. This was clearly a miracle.

Rav Shteinman commented – "In our time, the *samach* (sixty years old) and the *mem* (forty years old) hang by a miracle." (During these twenty years in which parents are marrying off their children – it is by Heavenly intervention!)



Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

If You Blink, You May Miss Seeing It!

Rabbi Yissocher Frand says that Parshas Beshalach usually falls out around the time of Tu Bishvat, the New Year for trees. Thus, there must be some parallel between the two.

Rabbi Frand quotes the Ziv HaMinhagim who gives a parallel. Why do we celebrate the Rosh Hashanah for trees during the winter months when the trees are dormant rather than in the spring when the trees are in full bloom?

The answer is that although the trees look dead, beneath the surface the sap is beginning to flow towards the branches. The beautiful leaves that will appear in the springtime are starting their growth in the dead of the winter.

Celebrating the New Year for trees now, teaches us not to give up hope when things seem bleak. Salvation can come speedily.

In this week's Parsha, the Jews had travelled in the desert for three days without finding water. When they arrived at Marah, they were very frustrated. They found water but it was undrinkable. Things appeared to be bleak. What could they drink?



Hashem showed Moshe a certain tree and told Moshe to throw the tree into the water. The bitter water turned sweet and became drinkable. In an instant, Hashem changed a bleak situation into a positive one. ***Hashem's salvation came in the blink of an eye***.

The Talmud (Pesachim 116B) quotes Rabban Gamliel who explains that we eat matzah at the Pesach seder to commemorate the matzah that baked on the back of the Jews as they left Egypt. The Torah (Shmos 12:39) states further, that the Jewish People had to leave quickly and had not prepared food for the journey ahead.

The Jewish People were about to go on a journey through the desert. Why didn't they prepare food for the trip? How could they possibly leave without preparing provisions for the way?

There are several different answers to this question. The Torah has such depth that there are different ways of understanding it. Even when different commentaries have different approaches to answer a question, the answers are not mutually exclusive. They are all accurate. **Rashi** says that this showed the Jews' absolute faith in Hashem to provide them with their needs. Hashem rewarded them for this beautiful show of faith by making them holy to Hashem.

HaRav Naftoli Tzvi Yehudah Berlin zt"l (in sefer Ha'emek Davar) has a different explanation. He says that the Jews purposely did not gather provisions for a long journey to make the Egyptians think that they were only leaving for a short time, to serve Hashem, and would soon return.

The Da'as Zekainim says that they had no time to prepare provisions because the Egyptians were trying to rush them out.

The Bekhor Shor says similarly. They should have prepared provisions since Moshe Rabbeinu had already told them that they

would be leaving Egypt after this plague. They thought they would have time to prepare, not realizing that they would be rushed out and would not have the time.

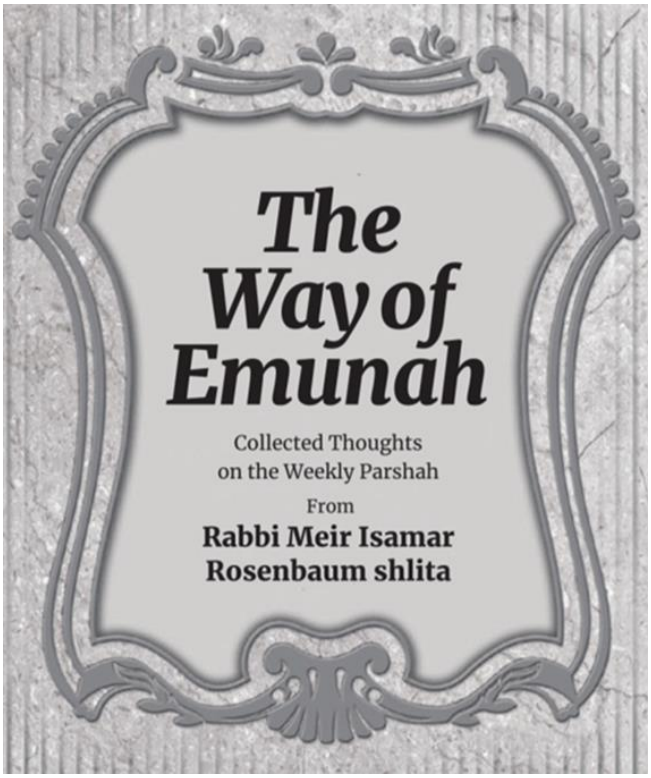
Rabbi Yissocher Frand offers a different insight. Moshe had told the Jews ahead of time that they would be leaving Egypt in the morning, after this last plague. Then why did they not prepare provisions for the long journey ahead?

Rabbi Frand posits that perhaps the Jews had given up hope of ever leaving Egypt. After each plague, they had expected to leave Egypt. They probably were all packed and ready to go. Yet they were disappointed, time and time again. Although Moshe had told them that they would be leaving the morning after the plague of the Firstborn, by then they could not get excited because they had experienced so many disappointments. When they were actually redeemed the next morning, it shocked them. They had to leave quickly without time to prepare. They failed to realize that Hashem's salvation can come as quick as the blink of an eye, so they were totally unprepared when it did occur.

A problem that seemed insurmountable can vanish in thin air, in an instant. Hashem can redeem us from national problems and personal problems in the blink of an eye!

Torah Temimah

When Hashem empowers world leaders and grants them success, they become arrogant, claiming all credit for their accomplishments. Jews however understand that their success comes from Hakadosh Boruch Hu and really view themselves as unworthy, a reaction which increases Hashem's love and dedication to us.



Emunah is a Higher Level Than Seeing

וַיַּ֣רְא יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל אֶת־הַיָּ֤ד הַגְּדֹלָה֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֣ה ה' בְּמִצְרַ֔יִם וַיִּירְא֥וּ הָעָ֖ם אֶת־ה' וַיַּאֲמִ֣ינוּ בַּה' וּבְמֹשֶׁ֖ה עַבְדּֽוֹ 'And Yisroel saw the great hand that Hashem used upon the Egyptians and the nation feared Hashem and they believed in Hashem...' (14:31)

Sefer Likutei Yehuda quotes his grandfather, the **Chidushei Harim zy"a** as explaining that the pasuk is teaching us that even though Klal Yisroel saw all of the miracles with their eyes, they still needed to have emunah. (The definition of emunah is believing in something even though you never saw it.) This is because one can reach greater level of understanding Hashem's greatness through emunah than through seeing things with one's eyes alone.

He adds that the **Bais Yisroel zy"a** would say that someone once told the **Kotzker Rebbe zy"a** about a certain person who was able to see the Ushpizin in his sukkah. The Rebbe replied, "I do not see them. But I have emunah that they are there. And emunah is a greater level than seeing!"

The Bais Yisroel would conclude by saying that this is the explanation of the pasuk. It first speaks about the simple people and says that they saw Hashem's great hand. They saw all of the miracles with their eyes and would not have believed had they not seen them.

The great people, however, had emunah even without seeing. Regarding them, it says that they believed in Hashem. They didn't look around to see anything. They just believed in Hashem without the need to see.

The Likutei Yehuda continues by relating that the Chidushei Harim once spoke about the great righteousness of the **Nodah B'Yehuda zt"l**. Amongst his words, he said that on the night of Pesach, when the door was opened in honour of Eliyahu Hanavi, after reciting Sh'foch Chamoscha, the Nodah B'Yehuda would get up and escort Eliyahu down the outside stairs.

He would say, "I don't actually see Eliyahu Hanavi in my house. But I believe completely that he goes to every Jewish home on the night of Pesach. Since I know he is here, I escort him out of the house."

The Chidushei Harim said, "Emunah like this is greater than seeing Eliyahu Hanavi!"

"Parshah Pshetl" - Y. Schechter



זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לִקְטוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ עֹמֶר לַגֻּלְגֹּלֶת מִסְפַּר נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם אֵישׁ לַאֲשֶׁר בְּאָהֳלוֹ תִּקָּחוּ *'This is the thing that Hashem has commanded: Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats – an Omer per person – according to the number of your people, everyone according to whomever is in his tent you shall take.'* (16:16)

רבינו יואל - In this Posuk, there is every letter of the **א-ב**. **The Mechilta** says that the Torah with its twenty-two letters was only given to those who were eating the Mon.

רוקח - This teaches us that all who are Mekayeim the twenty two letters of the Torah Hakdosha, will be Zoche to receive the Mon.

The Modzitzer Rebbe on Parshas B'Shalach by Rabbi Yair Hoffman for the S'fas Tamim Foundation

This week's parsha discusses that apogee of Hashem's Divine Providence to Klal Yisroel – the exodus from Mitzrayim. In regard to the actual sending out of the nation of Israel from Mitzrayim, the Yalkut Shimoni (Tehillim 819) cites Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Hoshiyah: Hashem took hold of the legs of Yaakov Avinu and placed them on the ocean. He said to him: Witness the miracles that I am performing for your descendants, as the verse states, **בְּצֵאת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם... מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלוֹק יַעֲקֹב**

There are three questions we may ask on this slightly perplexing Midrash. Why, in general, did Hashem do this? Why was Yaakov Avinu specifically singled out -over and above the other patriarchs? And why does the Midrash refer specifically to Yaakov Avinu's legs?

Yaakov, of course, is associated with the Midah of Emes – truth. **Rav Shaul Yedidya Elazar Taub**, (1886-1947 – 16th of Kislev) zatzal, better known as the Modzitzer Rebbe, an extraordinary Torah scholar and master composer of Chassidic melodies, whose music had soothed an entire generation of Holocaust survivors and more, explains (see Yisa Bracha Vayikra p. 106) that Klal Yisroel was redeemed in the merit of their ability to see and implement the trait of Emes – truth, as we say each and every day in our davening, "Emes miMitzrayim g'altanu – Truly [or truth] from Mitzrayim You have redeemed us.."

Why did Hashem take Yaakov Avinu specifically? So that the nation of Israel would know that the ge'ulah was on account of this trait, Yaakov Avinu's signature trait – acting in the manner of every day emes..

Why are Yaakov Avinu's legs specifically singled out? It was in order to allude to the fact that Sheker – ain lo raglayim – falsehood has no

legs to stand, it will eventually crumble like a house of cards. It is only truth – that truly stands.

With this understanding the Modzitzer Rebbe interpreted the words of the Hagaddah, "in each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he himself was redeemed from Mitzrayim" – in the following manner: This means that each one of us is obligated to look and see himself as he is, with all of his own character flaws as they did in Mitzrayim – that they know themselves the negative aspects of their own self-worth. This is also part of the Middah of Emes.

The Modzitzer Rebbe further points out that there is a song called "Yom LaYabasha" that is sung on two occasions – once on shvi'i shel pesach the day that we walked through the waters, and also during every Bris Milah. The song has a fascinating stanza: "Hitbata v'sarmis raglei vas anamis – You drowned in illusion the feet of the daughter of Mitzrayim, while with bells of Shulamis – the nation of Israel – you have beautified their sandals."

In other words, explains the Modzitzer Rebbe, "it is not just their legs in which the concept of truth exists – but even in their very dress (i.e. their sandals or shoes), truth permeates within them."

The Poor Man's Mistake

The Saba Kadisha of Radoshitz zy"a would say: "The worst thing about being poor is that a poor person genuinely believes that if he ever gets rich, he won't have to suffer any more and he will finally be able to be happy. The truth is, however, that neither poverty nor wealth can make a person happy. Rather, everything is up to Hashem."

Your Toolbox By R' Eliezer Zeytouneh



When I was a kid of 18, my friends and I used to drive to the local nursing home. There was a lady there called Linda A'H. She was paralysed – head to toe. She could only move her eyes and her lips. We used to go and visit her.

She used to call to me, "***Tenor, tenor****, sing for me." (* a type of classical male singing voice). In those days, I had a nice voice. I would sing for her, and she would cry. (I suppose my voice wasn't that good!). She would say, "Tenor – another song."

Now. Imagine I got shy, and stopped singing for Linda, and stopped going to visit her. When my time came and would go to Shamayim, the prosecuting angel would say to me, "Tenor, how come you wouldn't sing for Linda when she wanted and needed it so badly?"

Hashem gave you talents – there is a reason for that: There is something missing in the world, which needs to be filled **by you**! There are *trees* (*neshamos*) in the world that need to be planted and nurtured **by you**. There are downtrodden people that need to be smiled at – **by you**.

Open your toolbox, take a look at what tools you have, and start using them, because (**סנהדרין לז, א**) **כְּשֶׁהָעוֹלָם נִבְרָא בִּשְׁבִילִי** Hashem created the world in a certain way, for you to step up to the plate, and make it just a little bit more perfect.

Correction does much, but encouragement does more.

Short Story Of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

In the early 1980s, a series of tragedies hit the Jewish community of Far Rockaway, NY. Although there were several suggestions offered as to how the community should respond to the tragedies, they could not unite on one mutually acceptable idea.

A delegation was sent to the **Bluzhover Rebbe, ZT"L**, to seek his advice. The group representative began relating to the weak and frail Rebbe all the tragedies that had recently befallen their community. The concern and anguish on the face of the Rebbe was clear to all present. A few predetermined suggestions were presented; every morning each Jew should give 18 cents to tzedakah, or all should accept not to talk during *Chazaras Hashatz*.

The Rebbe rejected each suggestion: can you solve such a serious problem with 18 cents? Can you ensure that no one will talk? - An uncomfortable silence ensued. One attendee asked, "And what should we do?" Again silence. Then the Rebbe lifted his eyes skyward and said, "***We have a Father in Heaven, and when you beg from a Father, He responds***."

The Rebbe was asked, "Should we gather all the shuls together for a Yom Tefilla, a Day of Prayer?"

The Rebbe looked at the questioner with sharp eyes and said, "Don't make a circus. Sit in your regular place in Shul and talk to the Ribbono Shel Olam like you are talking to a Father. Pour out your heart to Him and He will answer.

Comment: Klal Yisroel stood at the edge of the Yam Suf (Red Sea), surrounded from all sides with the enemy charging straight towards them. They lifted their eyes skyward and cried out to Hashem. The Midrash (Shemos 21:5) asks why Hashem put them in such a tough predicament. The Midrash answers that Hashem wants to hear the cries and tefillos of those close to him. Then, He answers.

A Penetrating analysis of the Haftorah – R' Tzvi Hirsch Hoffman

וַתָּשַׁר דְּבוֹרָה וּבָרָק בֶּן־אֲבִינֹעַם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר *'Now Deborah and Barak the son of Avinoam sang on that day, saying.'* (Shoftim 5:1)



Shiras Devorah details the battle between the Jewish people (led by Barak ben Avinoam and the tribes of Naftali and Zevulun) and the army of the Canaanite General, Sisera.

The Jews were victorious, and Sisera - who was forced to flee the battlefield - sought shelter in the tent of Chever HaKeini. Weary and caught off-guard, Sisera fell asleep and Chever's wife, Yael, seized the moment and killed him with the peg of the tent.

Chazal (Sanhedrin 96b) note that despite his wickedness and cruelty, Sisera's descendants converted to Judaism and studied Torah in Yerushalayim. But what merit did Sisera have to deserve this?

R' Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l (Emes L'Yaakov) explains that Hashem works in mysterious ways and even though things may appear to be black and white to us mere mortals – in that we believe a person deserves punishment for an act he had committed - Hashem sometimes feel otherwise.

He explains that just as Chazal say that we are required to feel gratitude to the Egyptian people for allowing us to live in their midst

for 210 years even though we suffered greatly at their hands, so too we are supposed to have feelings of gratitude towards Sisera.

The reason is because despite his cruelty, Sisera managed to evoke deep feelings of teshuva amongst the Jewish people which ultimately brought us closer to Hashem. The Almighty then showed His gratitude to Sisera by giving his descendants a chance to enter the coveted folds of Klal Yisroel.



וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַה׳ כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם

After the Jewish people sang Shiras Hayam, the Torah tells us that the women, led by Miriam, also sang their own song.

The Me'am Lo'ez notes that in truth, Miriam and the women used musical instruments, whereas Moshe and the men did not. He explains that the instruments were intended to drown out the sound of their voices so the men would not hear.

The Chida, however, disagrees. He suggests that the men and women sang together and the men heard the women. However, because the Shechina rested on all of them at that time, there was no prohibition for the men to listen to the women singing.

The Vilna Gaon is quoted as suggesting that the reason the Torah uses the words " **וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם** " is because Miriam and the women did not sing at all. They intentionally refrained from singing because men are prohibited from hearing them.

The following story took place rather recently and was related by the renowned Maggid and Mashpia, **R' Elimelech Biderman shlit'a**.



In one of the larger cities in Poland, there exists a kosher restaurant which serves the many Yidden who come to daven at the Kivrei Tzaddikim. The non-Jewish cook who works in the kitchen, bustles about and prepares the kosher dishes. She enjoys cooking for the Jews who come to Poland and she is accustomed to the constant presence of R' Shimon, the restaurant's mashgiach.

As she ministers to the oversized pots of stew bubbling on the stove, she likes to hum some of her favourite Polish folk songs contentedly. R' Shimon, who travels from Eretz Yisroel to Poland several times a year to supervise the kitchen, would sit on a chair in the corner and take care of bills and inventory.

One day, the Polish cook was in the kitchen as usual when she suddenly froze. Abruptly, she stopped humming and stepped closer to where the mashgiach sat, slumped over in his chair. She waved her ladle at the still man, frantically yelling in an effort to rouse him. Seeing no reaction, she grabbed the phone off the countertop and shakily dialled the local emergency line. Medical personnel soon arrived and shooed the frantic woman aside. They tried to resuscitate the unconscious mashgiach, the Jewish man from Israel. But after nearly thirty minutes of unsuccessful CPR, they looked at each other and then at the tearful cook and admitted defeat.

They had tried their best to save R' Shimon's life, but to no avail. They would have to transfer him to a hospital to confirm his death.

In those tense moments, the cook's determination spilled beyond her cooking abilities as she tearfully begged the paramedics to continue trying to save the man's life. She described to them his life in Israel and his wife and children who were anxiously awaiting his return, hoping to encourage their efforts.

At first they hesitated, but eventually the first responders agreed to try CPR again. Unbelievably, after another few tries, a miracle happened! They got a heartbeat! R' Shimon's heart awoke, as though from a deep sleep, and began to beat on its own!

All of those present were in awe as the patient was transported to a local Polish hospital for further care. Eventually, R' Shimon was well enough to be transferred to Tel Hashomer Hospital in Israel, where he merited a full recovery.

It was only later that someone thought to ask the non-Jewish cook how she had discovered that R' Shimon was unconscious on that fateful day. After all, the cook and the mashgiach generally had little interaction, and she usually ignored the mashgiach's presence completely, immersed as she was in her work.

The cook, overcome with emotion at the memory of that day, revealed the true sequence of events. "I love to sing as I cook, letting the melody join the flavours of my mouth-watering dishes. But when R' Shimon comes to visit, I cannot sing."

She described the mashgiach's meticulousness in the halachos of Kol Isha, and how he would immediately quiet her songs with his soft "shushing" sounds. This would happen regularly – the cook couldn't help but start to sing, and R' Shimon quickly responded with "shhhh."

On the day R' Shimon collapsed, the cook had, as usual, begun humming to herself as she stirred her pots. It was only after a few moments, when she realized that her melody was going unnoticed and un-hushed.

Right away, she grew alarmed - and immediately went to check on the mashgiach. If she wouldn't have noticed him then, and only realized later what had happened, he would have had very little chance to survive. His stringency in the issur of Kol Isha ultimately saved his life!

Limuday Moshe – R' Moshe Harris - The Aliyah Of Shiras Hayom



In many kehillos the minhag is to stand during the aliyah of shiras hayom from "vayosha" until the end of the shirah (Sefer Ketzos HaShulchan 84, Badei HaShulchan 22).

One reason given is based on the idea that the Mishnah in Sotah (27b) says: the recital of the shirah by Moshe and Bnei Yisroel was comparable to the recital of hallel. The halachah is that hallel is to be said standing (Shulchan Aruch 422:7), because one is testifying to the fact that Hashem did miracles for us, and testimony must be said while standing. Therefore, the minhag is to stand during the shirah, and perhaps this is also the reason why some people stand for oz yoshir during pesukei d'zimra.

Another reason for standing during the shirah is based on the Zohar (Lech Lecha 81b) which says that Dovid HaMelech merited to be the ancestor of Moshiach because he stood up in order to say shirah, as it says in Tehillim (119:62): אָקוּם לְהוֹדוֹת לָךְ - ***I will arise to praise You***" (Siddur Tzelosa d'Avrohom, pg. 168).

On the other hand, there are those who do not have this minhag to stand during krias haTorah (Kaf HaChaim 494:30). In Orchos Rabbeinu (Vol. 1, pg. 120 #85) it's brought down, that although **Rav Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky** stood during the leining of the aseres hadibros, he remained seated during oz yoshir.

Additionally, there are those who argue that if one is sitting during leining, he should not get up for the shirah or the aseres hadibros.

This is based on a Gemara in Berachos (11b-12a) which says, that in the Beis HaMikdosh the aseres hadibros were read together with krias shema on a daily basis, and it was suggested to institute this outside the Beis HaMikdosh as well. However, it became necessary to abandon this plan due to the heretics who tried convincing the simple people that only the aseres hadibros are the truth, while the rest of the Torah is not, chas v'shalom. They reasoned that since it is only the aseres hadibros that are being read, it must be the only thing that Hashem said at Har Sinai.

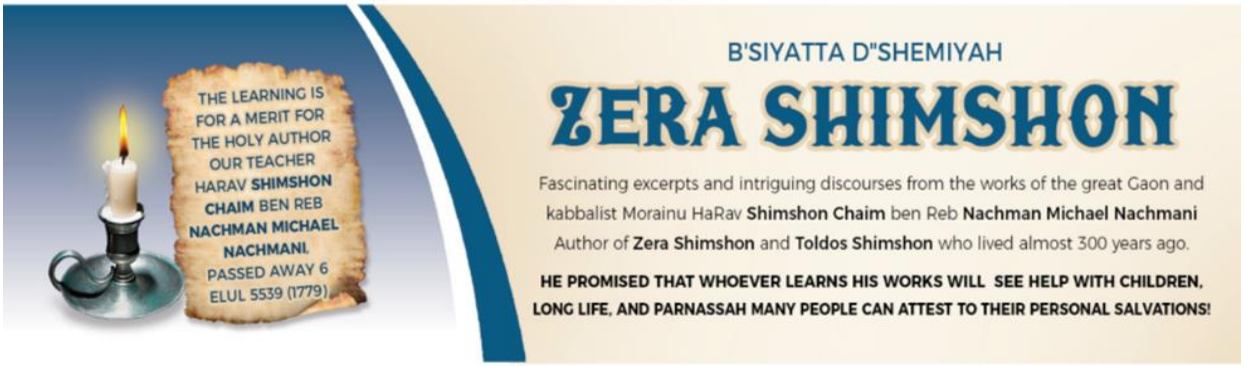
Based on this Gemara, some maintain that if we specifically stand up for the aseres hadibros or oz yoshir, this will lead people to claim that only these two parshiyos are Toras emes.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim 4:22) however, maintains that this is not a reason to abandon the minhag of standing while these parshiyos are read. The Gemara was speaking of a specific incident and we cannot extrapolate from there to create a new prohibition.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch (Teshuvos V'Hanhogas 1:144) suggests that if one wishes to be stringent and is concerned about the above argument, he should stand up a few pasukim before the shirah or aseres hadibros. In this way, he will not be standing up specifically for these two parshiyos and there can no longer be a claim that only these are emes.

R' Moshe Feinstein writes, that if one is accustomed to sit during the aseres hadibros or the shirah and he finds himself in a shul where the tzibbur stands, he must act in accordance with the local minhag.

"To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time."



The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

וְנַחְנוּ מָה ***What are we worth?*** (16:8)

These were Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon's words when the Jewish people complained to them.

The Gemara (Chullin 89a) says that the words that were used by Moshe and Aharon were greater than those used by Avraham Avinu. When Avraham Avinu wanted to express his lowliness to Hashem, he said (Bereishis 18:27), "I am dust and ashes". Moshe and Aharon expressed an even lower expression - "What are we worth?", implying that they are not even dust and ashes.

With this Gemara, the Zera Shimshon explains the Mishna in Avos (4:4) that teaches, **מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח** , a person should be very very humble. The Zera Shimshon is bothered by the double wording - ***very very*** - in the Mishna.

Based on the aforementioned Gemara, the Zera Shimshon explains that although one can be very humble, nevertheless, there is an additional level of humility. This is the kind expressed by Moshe and Aharon - what are we worth. This is what the Mishna refers to by using a double wording.

To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times, what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens." —Rabbi Menachem Mendel

Parsha Thoughts By Mordechai Sapoznick



Bnei Yisroel were grateful to Hashem after seeing the נִיסִים that were done for them at קְרִיעַת יַם סוּף and they decided to sing שִׁירָה to Hashem.

The main joy and appreciation of a person is in one's heart, so why did Bnei Yisroel want to sing to Hashem?

The Kedushas Levi answers that the joy and appreciation in someone's heart does not last very long. However, when someone sings, it causes the joy and appreciation to last much longer.

Bnei Yisroel wanted the joy and appreciation to last for a very long time and therefore sang שִׁירָה to Hashem. [פרשה פשעטיל]



When **Horav Boruch Ber Leibowitz** זצ"ל was a bochur in the Volozhin Yeshiva, he composed several niggunim. He decided to write them down in a notebook so that he would always remember them.

Many years later, whenever he had a wedding of a talmid or a friend, he would sing these niggunim to show his joy and appreciation to Hashem.

Michael Winner - dvartorah@frum.org

Prayers Also Need Action

Rav Shimshon Pincus Zt'l asks an interesting question. One that I never heard before.



When the Jewish nation was at the sea and the Egyptian army was bearing down on them, Moshe Rabeinu began to daven to Hashem, and Hashem replies, "Why are you crying out to me? Speak to the Children of Israel and tell them to go!"

Who is the first "to go"? Nachshon ben Aminadav. He walks into the sea and cries out "Deliver me Hashem, for the waters have reached my soul!" (the water had reached his nose). At that point, the sea split.

So, the obvious, but obviously not so obvious, question is: When Moshe davened, he was told to stop davening and move on. When Nachshon davened, his prayers were answered. What happened here?

The Zohar explains that when the nation was standing there, they needed a large amount of "chesed" from Hashem and at this point, prayer in itself, was not enough to save them.

To explain, and I'm guessing here, so I apologize if I'm wrong: it's like a person with no money in his bank account, begging the bank manager to loan him money to feed his family. The bank manager feels bad for the man, but he has rules to follow. He simply can't give the bank's money away to anybody, especially somebody who cannot keep a positive amount in.

The person explains that he has already spent time learning and researching about a certain business venture, and he explains it in detail to the manager. If he got the money from the bank, he could start the business and repay the bank in no time.

After hearing and seeing what the man proposes, he agrees to loan the money. So, why did he at first not agree and then in the end agree?

Because he saw that the person was not just "a talker," he was a man of action and he just needed to boost, to put things into motion.

So too with this week's parsha. When Moshe davened, davening wasn't enough. The Jewish people needed to show some initiative, and to show that they were willing to follow Hashem.

When Nachshon jumped in, **he showed that we were ready and we were willing**. We weren't just "talkers," but rather a nation that takes action.

There are many people who "talk the talk," but don't "walk the walk." And when they are in leadership positions, whether in business, religious, or familial, they only succeed in distancing themselves from their "flock." However, those who do "walk the walk" not only grow themselves, but they encourage others to follow in their footsteps.

It's very important for everyone to try to live up to the words that they espouse. Not only do they prove to themselves that they are people of growth, but they also naturally bring others with them.

"Time is of short duration and flies away swifter than the shades of evening. We are like the child who grasps a sunbeam in his hand, and when he opens it finds it empty, to his amazement, and all the brightness gone."

Parsha Potpourri by R' Ozer Alport

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲלֵהֶם אִישׁ אַל־יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר: וְלֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיּוֹתִרוּ אֲנָשִׁים מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר וַיָּרֻם תּוֹלָעִים וַיִּבְאַשׁ וַיִּקְצֹף עֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה (16:19-20)

Despite Moshe's clear order not to leave any man over from one day to the next, Rashi writes that Dasan and Aviram disobeyed his instructions. In the morning, their surplus man became infested with worms that created a terrible stench, and Moshe got angry at them. Since Moshe was the humblest person on the face of the earth (Bamidbar 12:3), his reaction was certainly not due to personal slight. What caused him to respond in this manner?

The Gemora (Yoma 76a) questions why Hashem did not provide an annual supply of man once a year and explains that receiving only a small ration of food each day increased the Jewish people's level of bitachon by making them constantly dependent on Him for their sustenance.



The Meshech Chochmah suggests that until this incident, the Jews were constantly tempted to preserve some of their man to ensure they would have food to eat the following day. Every Jew passed this test each day and followed Moshe's instructions to consume his entire portion of man, even though doing so meant waking up in the morning to an empty cupboard in the middle of a barren desert.

Once Dasan and Aviram defied Moshe's orders and kept some of their food to eat the next day, only to have it spoil, Moshe realized that the other Jews would no longer have their daily struggles.

From this point onward, they would know that they should eat their entire allotment of man each day because anything they attempted to save for the following day would become inedible and go to waste. As a result, their fulfilment of Moshe's command not to leave over any man would no longer be motivated by pure trust in Hashem to continue providing for them, but by a practical recognition that they would not gain anything by doing so.

It was the loss of this tremendous communal zechus and closeness to Hashem that Dasan and Aviram's defiance triggered that caused Moshe to get angry at them.

Bitter

וַיָּבֹאוּ מָרָתָה וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה כִּי מָרִים הֵם [The Israelites] came to Marah, but they could not drink waters from Marah because they were bitter... (15:23)

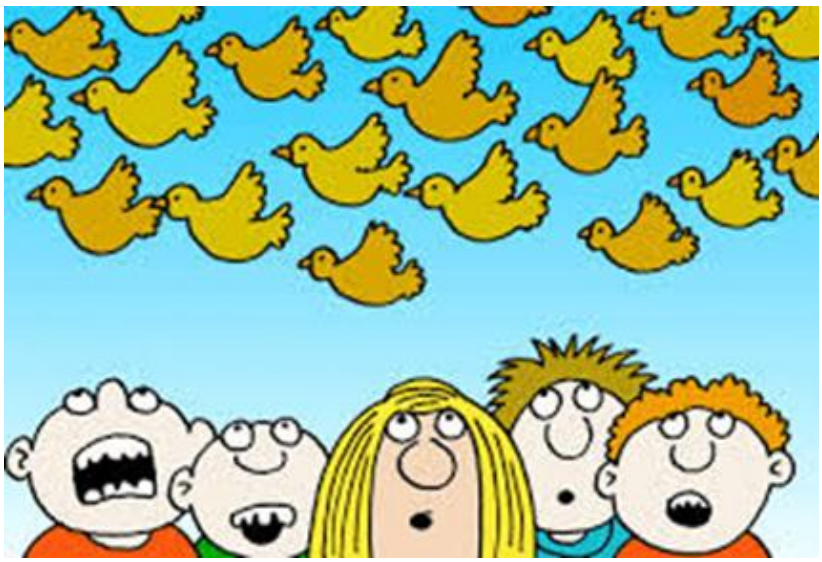


The Baal Shem Tov explained the word 'they' to refer to the Jews. They themselves were bitter – and so that is how the water tasted!

We experience life on the instrument of who we are. Many people struggle with their faith in Hashem. If they themselves would become people who were more faithful – whom others could trust and rely on – it would impact their ability to have faith and trust in Hashem.

Parsha Points to Ponder

The Gemora in Yoma (75a) teaches that the Manna tasted like whatever the person eating it desired, except for five tastes – cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic – that could not be found in the Manna. Other than by purchasing these items from traveling merchants, did the Jewish people in the wilderness have any other means of experiencing the tastes of these five foods?



The Rokeach writes that when the Jewish people ate the slav (quail) in the wilderness (Bamidbar 11:31-34), they were able to taste every food in the world except for the Leviathan, which is reserved for the righteous in the future. Thus, the five foods that that could not be tasted in the Manna could be experienced through the slav.

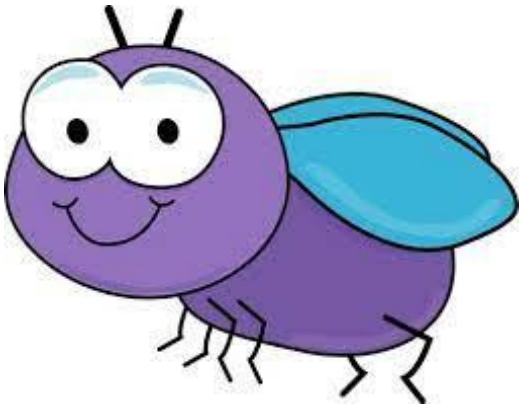
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In how many places is Miriam's name mentioned in Sefer Shemos?

Surprisingly, the only place Miriam's name is mentioned in Sefer Shemos is when the Torah records (15:20-21) that she led the women in song after the splitting of the Yam Suf.

In Parshas Shemos (1:15), she is referred to as Puah the midwife, and when she stood watch over Moshe's basket in the river (2:4), she is called **אחותו** - his sister. When Amram's children are listed in Parshas Vaeira (6:20), the Torah only mentions Moshe and Aharon but omits Miriam.
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Parshah Pearls - Compared to a Fly



כְּתֹב זֹאת- זִכָּרוֹן בַּסֵּפֶר וְשִׂים בְּאָזְנֵי- יְהוֹשֻׁעַ

'Write this as a memory in the Book and place it in the ears of Yehoshua'. (17:14)

The first letters of these four words spell **זבוב** a fly.

The Ba'al ha'Turim explains that this is because Amalek, like a fly, was forever running after the blood of Yisrael.

Interestingly, a fly is also one of the things to which Chazal compare the Yeitzer-ha'Ra.

Tu Bishvat - Harav Yosef Dov Pincus

What is *Tu Bishvat* all about?



There are different approaches to this day. The *Chassidim* tend to make a bigger deal out of *Tu Bishvat*, and some of the *Litvisch* downplay it and don't really understand what the big fuss is all about. As I said, there are different approaches to this day.

I want to share with you an approach to *Tu Bishvat* that we heard from our father **Harav Shimshon Pincus zt"l**. I think you will find it fitting, regardless of your personal orientation.

Let's start with a question:

When I eat an apple, do I eat it in order to make a *berachah*, or do I make a *berachah* in order to eat?

This is a tough question and it applies all year long. But it is even tougher on *Tu Bishvat* because the special *inyan* we do on this day is reciting blessings on fruit.

So let's first take a quick look at the subject of *berachos* in general. This will point us in the right direction.

When we recite a *berachah* we start with the word *baruch*. It means: You, *Hashem*, are the Source of all blessing. The Source of infinite plenty.

Just walk down the aisles of a supermarket and you see how much plenty there is. If you think about what is in front of your eyes, you will realize Who is involved here. What wealth and what *chesed* and what expansiveness! This gives us a little taste of the meaning of *baruch*. We say: *Hashem*, You are *baruch*, You are the source of all blessing, from You comes all the blessing in the world.

But we go further, and we say *Elokeinu*. You are our G-d, You provide for us, You care about us.

Now we come to the main point of the *berachah*. We say *Melech Ha'olam*. When we say that *Hashem* is "King" we are expressing that the world is His. His Will determines what happens in the world. And He has a plan for how the world is supposed to run.

This apple that I want to eat, where did it come from? It is a gift straight from *Hashem*. A gift! Yes, it is a "product of nature." But what is the purpose of "nature"? We say over this apple a blessing that has the words *Melech Ha'olam*. This expresses that the apple has a goal. The King has a goal for the world and what is in it.

So what is the goal of this apple? It's not there just to provide me with a little temporary enjoyment and sensory gratification. It

serves the grand plan of the King. Indeed, the King wants me to enjoy the apple, but for the purpose of realizing that I live in His world, that He gave me the apple and He wants me to have physical strength and health so I can learn His Torah and serve Him properly and thereby attain eternity.

When *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* grants me of His plenty, the goal is not just to eat and drink and breathe air and enjoy the sunshine and the beautiful world. He has a much broader plan for me, for His dear child. He sees His child as a *talmid chacham,* as an *oveid Hashem,* as someone big and great, as someone connected to the world of eternity.

Here we need to take our **ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו** and really address it to Him, thinking to ourselves: *Hashem,* the whole world with all its pleasures, all that You give me – I recognize that You are the King of the world. I know that You have a plan for Your world. And this plan doesn't always correspond to my personal wishes and desires, because my physical nature just wants to eat and drink and enjoy. This is a very narrow outlook. It doesn't take eternity into account. It doesn't even know what eternity means.

Now we come to *Tu Bishvat*. This is the beginning of the season when the fruit of the trees in *Eretz Yisrael* begins to develop. The natural world slumbers during the winter months, as if it were dead. When Pesach comes, which is in the spring, everything blossoms and comes back to life. The beginning of this renewed life is *Tu Bishvat*. This is when the fruit begins to develop. In *Eretz Yisrael* at this season we can see and sense that *Hashem's* beautiful world will soon reawaken to renewed life. The fruit will ripen. *Hashem's* world is a sweet world, a nourishing world, a beautiful world, and also has pleasant fragrances (over which we recite the blessing **הנותן ריח טוב בפירות**).

Then we start to see the new world of this year. This is the meaning of *Tu Bishvat* as **ראש השנה לאילנות**.

Our *avodah* is to know that all this beauty, all these fruits, which express the beauty of life, has two sides to it. On the one side, it is *Hashem's* world. He created it and He sustains it and He runs it **לה' הארץ ומלואה**. On the other side, He created the world for us and gave it to us - **והארץ נתן לבני אדם**. When we see the world only from this second perspective, we are liable to make the fatal mistake of thinking that the world is here for us to derive personal enjoyment, whether or not it accords with *Hashem's* Will.

Tu Bishvat is when we take this world, at the moment when it first starts awakening to life, and say a *berachah* over it. First of all, **ברוך אתה ה'**. To know where the apple came from, where the sweetness came from, Who gave it a pleasant taste and a pleasant fragrance and the ability to nourish.

Then comes the word **אלקינו** which means "our" G-d. We have a personal relationship with Him. He cares about us.

Then we come to **מלך העולם**. The whole purpose of it all is only to do *ratzon Hashem.*

These fine fruits – which so many people in the world think are there for their selfish, godless enjoyment – we relate them back up to the world's King.

בורא פרי העץ. You, *Hashem,* created this fruit! And within this fruit, besides the natural flavour and fragrance, this apple can give me energy with which to learn a *daf Gemara* and serve *Hashem!* This apple can enable me to do *mitzvos* and acts of *chesed.* This apple can provide the strength to bring blessing!

This is the *avodah* of *Tu Bishvat*. As soon as we encounter the world and interact with it and "create" things in it, we need to clarify to ourselves what every object in the world is supposed to be doing. Why is it here? This is the main *avodah* of saying a *berachah.*

When a person eats, he faces the question of why he is eating. This is not a question to be ignored. Maybe he is eating in order to draw

closer to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, to have the energy to learn Torah and serve Him, to connect to the world of eternity. However, eating can also be damaging to one's *neshamah.* If a person eats in order to maximize his physical enjoyment of this world, where is that leading him?

The *minhagim* of *Tu Bishvat* express that we need to clarify to ourselves how we relate to this world. Is the purpose of it all for *Melech Ha'olam?* Or…

When we get used to keeping this in mind, it transforms the world from darkness to light!

(Rav Pincus zt"l delivered this talk to a small, select group, so he allowed himself to employ some Kabbalistic terms, which he usually didn't do. I am not going to censor what he said:

In *Chassidus* and *Kabbalah* this is called uplifting the sparks of *kedushah.* This concept is far from what we think it means. According to *Kabbalah,* the simplest level of meaning is that *Melech Ha'olam* is the focus of it all, and this is the time to clarify the sparks of *kedushah* and thereby uplift them. I will explain what this means.

Hashem created the world. And the world is, by nature, darkness. Nevertheless, there are sparks of *kedushah* inside everything.

Let's say you have a slice of bread. It is part of the material world. But you can take this slice of bread and clarify to yourself that it actually has *kedushah* inside it. This "uplifts" the bread and returns it to *kedushah.* The *Zohar* says that the main way of doing this *avodah* of clarifying is by thought. It's not so much a matter of what you do as a matter of what you think.

You are eating the same slice of bread either way. What is it that clarifies the purpose and goal of your eating? It's what you are thinking at the time.)

May it be *Hashem's* Will that just as the trees are starting to flower today, so it should be with us. **כי האדם עץ השדה**. May we blossom and flourish in *avodas Hashem!*

Short Vort: Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

There are many sources which explain that the Jewish People were not worthy of being saved from Egypt. As a nation, their spiritual level was disastrously low; and even having left Egypt, the angels could not distinguish between the idol-worshipping Egyptians and the idol-worshipping Hebrew nation. If so, in what merit were the Jewish People redeemed?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that indeed the Jewish lacked merit — and they realized it. In Egypt, they saw their situation getting worse and worse — with the decrees becoming harsher by the day — and understood that they did not have the spiritual capability to turn things around. Therefore, the Medrash relates that in addition to taking steps towards coming closer to Hashem, they decided to make a covenant among themselves to perform kindness for each other. The question is, how would a covenant of kindness help their situation?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that although the Jewish People could not muster the spiritual wherewithal to fully repent their ways, and they thus could not acquire the necessary merit to gain their freedom, they understood that there *was* a way to gain Hashem's favour even when they did not deserve it — through committing to act kindly to each other!

Through this, explains the Chofetz Chaim, Hashem saw the acts of kindness that they were performing for each other and said — as it were — *If My creations can do things for each other when they themselves also require help, how much more so should I, Who am*

full of kindness and don't require any assistance, perform kindness to them!

And indeed, explains the Chofetz Chaim, this is exactly what happened!
From here we see an amazing thing. There are times when we lack the drive to do what we know we must. And because Hashem acts commensurately with us, we cannot expect to receive more than we deserve. However, when we go above and beyond for others, Hashem acts in the same way for us.

Chizuk In The Parsha

This week's *parsha* contains the most extraordinary event in the history of the world-**קריעת ים סוף**.

חז״ל tell us that a lowly maidservant, a **שפחה** , saw more at that moment than the greatest **נביאים** . Yet the **גמרא** in **פסחים קיח** says **קשין מזונותיו של אדם כקריעת ים סוף** - meaning a person's **פרנסה** is as "difficult" as **קריעת ים סוף**. What can this possibly mean?

The **אילה שלוחה זיע״א** explains with the following true anecdote concerning the Rebbe, **Reb Meilech of Lizensk זיע״א** who was staying overnight in a tavern. In the morning he heard the owner complain to his wife: how much longer must we eat this tough straw – **קשין** ; I long for the day we'll be able to eat soft pasta!

The Rebbe took a lesson of *mussar* from this statement. The word for straw, he said, is **קשין**, which is related to the word, **קשיא** , a question. The complaint was: how much longer must we question the ways of Hashem and how He provides for us. I long for the day we're on the **מדרגה** to accept His ways.

קריעת ים סוף was the answer to the **אידן** who did not question the ways of Hashem. In that moment of total desperation, when all seemed lost, they simply lifted their eyes heavenward and *davenned*.

In response, they were not just saved but shown in detail exactly how Hashem runs His world with perfect justice.

This helps explain the **גמרא** regarding **פרנסה**.

קשין מזונותיו , when a person struggles with questions regarding his **פרנסה** or other material needs, he needs to remember **קריעת ים סוף** , where the appropriate plan of action must involve davening to ""He Who provides for everyone in His goodness…"



Shabbos Shirah

We are approaching a very special time now. This Shabbos is Shabbos Shirah. The gemarah says that parnassa is as difficult as Krias Yam Suf (Pesachim 118a). Shidduchim are as difficult as Kriyas Yam Suf (Sotah 2a). Childbirth and several other things is as difficult as Krias Yam Suf.

The Rashbam explains the similarity between these hardships and the splitting of the sea: "These are things that we need to daven for – just like we did at the Yam Suf."

We must realise that Shabbos Shirah is a time to daven!

The Beis Avraham would tell bachurim who were waiting for their shidduchim and yungerleit who were struggling with parnassa to say the entire sefer Tehillim on Shabbos Shirah and on the 7th day of Pesach. Why? Because the sea split – all you need to do is cross it!



The Sar Shalom would repeat the famous Medrash – that at the time of Kriyas Yam Suf, all the waters in the world split. The Sar Shalom asks, 'We know that Hashem doesn't perform miracles for no reason. So, why did Hashem split the waters all over the world? What was the purpose of it?

He explains that we find in the Torah that 'water' can refer to tzaros(troubles). As it says **"הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי אֱלֹקִים כִּי בָאוּ מַיִם עַד־נָפֶשׁ *Save me Hashem for the waters have reached until my soul*."** (Tehilim 69:2)

He explains that at the time the Yam Suf split for the Yidden, all the waters in the world also split – all the tzaros and troubles were resolved!

When we re-live this, we can get rid of all our struggles and hardships! We can leave all our tzaros behind! And of course, the best preparation for Shabbos Shirah is the Shirah itself. Say the Shirah with great concentration!

The Sefer Chareidim says as follows: We know that for physical sickness there are difficult treatments which can be very painful and are often very expensive. But there are also 'natural' remedies which are not expensive and aren't so painful either.

The same is when someone has a 'spiritual sickness.' One way to cure it is through much fasting, which can be painful and physically demanding. Then there are 'natural remedies' that can be done without much pain, to cure the 'disease.'

The Sefer Chareidim lists some of these remedies: The third one he mentions is – "To say Shiras Hayam with great happiness, as if he himself has just left Mitzrayim!"

"Through that, all of his sins are forgiven!" – He doesn't need the fasting! How does this happen?

He brings the Medrash Yalkut Shimoni 254 that says, **וַיַּסַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת־ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּם־סוּף** ' *Moshe led the Yidden from the Yam Suf…*' (15:22) What/Where did he lead them away from?

He led them away from their aveiros. Their aveiros were forgiven by singing the Shirah to Hashem!

The Medrash continues: "Anyone who experiences a miracle and sings Shirah to Hashem for it, is forgiven for all his aveiros!"

Now, the Chareidim explains a **Zohar** at the beginning of the Shirah - אָז יָשִׁיר־מֹשֶׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַה' "***Then they sang this Shirah to Hashem, וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר and they said, saying over***.." (15:1) What does the Pasuk mean by **וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר**?

Rav Shimon bar Yochai explains that the term **לֵאמֹר** usually means that it should be repeated throughout the generations. But the Zohar explains that Yidden, in all generations – should say the Shirah in "Exactly the same way it was said then!"

If so, the Chareidim concludes, that just like then, all their sins were forgiven – So too now, if we say the Shirah with simcha, we will be cleansed of our aveiros- completely!

Bitachon is the belief that no matter what may happen, Hashem is always there to provide, protect, and guide. – Rabbi Avigdor Miller [Stories to Inspire]

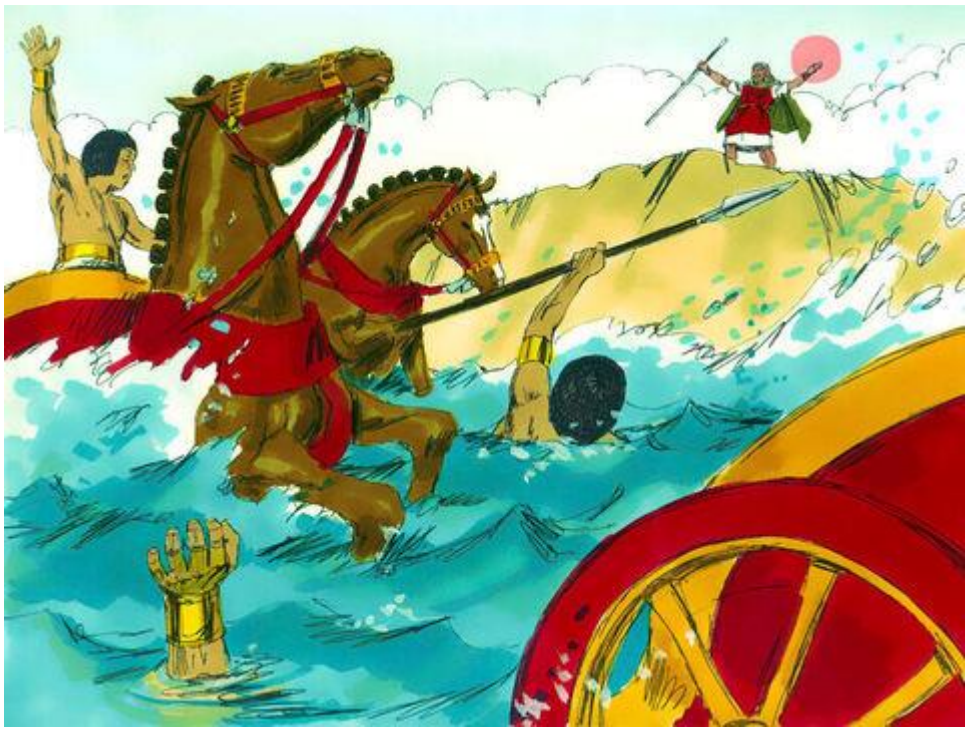
Who Gave You The Right To Sing? – R' Eli Mansour

The Pasuk says that when Moshe Rabeinu sang Shirah, they began with the words אָשִׁירָה לַה׳ כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם ***'I will sing to Hashem, for very exalted is He; a horse and its rider He cast into the sea.'*** (15:1)

The woman started their Shirah in a similar way - וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַה׳ כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם ***'And Miriam called out to them, Sing to Hashem, for very exalted is He; a horse and its rider He cast into the sea.'*** (15:21)

Why is it, that they both chose the same introductory words?

I saw a beautiful explanation in a sefer called **Maaseh Hashem** by **Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi**.(1512-1585) [Rav of Cairo, Egypt and later Cyprus]



He explains that there is a Gemara that says, "Hashem's creations were drowning in the sea. What gives the Jewish people the right to sing at this time of destruction - at all? They may be the Egyptian enemy, but they are still My creations? Now is not the time to sing. Their demise was not a cause for jubilation."

On seeing the drowning Egyptians the angels were about to break into song when Hashem silenced them declaring, "How dare you sing for joy when My creatures are dying" (Talmud, Megillah 10b and

Sanhedrin 39b). But if Hashem stopped the angels from singing, why were our ancestors allowed?

The Talmud also teaches that our personal elation should never make us forget the misfortunes afflicting others (Berachot 31a).

So before Moshe Rabeinu can sing Shirah, he must justify why he's allowed to sing at all. אָשִׁירָה לַה׳ - '***I will sing to Hashem.***' Why? Because כִּי־גָאֹה גָּאָה ***for very exalted is he*** – Not Hashem, but Pharaoh!

Pharaoh was גָּאֹה גָּאָה- – the one who was arrogant, haughty and exalted himself even above Hashem!! He was the one who exclaimed מִי ה׳ אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁמַע בְּקֹלוֹ... לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת ה׳ - who is Hashem?! (5:2)

Pharaoh was the one who practically blasphemed G-d. So, do you know why we're going to sing? Because he deserved it! We have every right to revel and relish in their demise and sing Shirah!

The Gemara says, that not only must you obliterate idolatry, but all the accessories as well. And therefore, not only does Pharaoh deserve to drown, but also סוּס וְרֹכְבוֹ, who were accessories to Pharaoh.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn - You Will Make It

The Gemara (Erchin 15a) tells us something remarkable.

When the Jewish people crossed the Red Sea, we assume that they entered on one side and exited on the other side and the Egyptians pursued them from behind. But in learning the Gemara, that is not what happened. The Jews didn't enter on one side and leave on the other.

Tosfos, in fact, includes a picture demonstrating this. The Jews entered and exited the Yam Suf in a semi-circle. They entered on

one side and existed on the same side, miles away from their starting point.

Now, if this is the case, then we realize something extraordinary. The Gemara tells us that all the Shevatim, tribes, were lined up side by side as they walked through the Yam Suf. The tribe that was therefore walking on the innermost side of the circle had the shortest distance to traverse from their starting point to end point. Conversely, the tribe that walked on the most outer side of the circle had the furthest distance to travel from their starting point to end point.

Every tribe had a different route in which they traveled. No two tribes walked the same distance. To each, their own. Some had it shorter, some had it longer.

Rav Chaim Sanzer, the Divrei Chaim, extracted from this Gemara a marvelous insight, and one that is very important and encouraging. The Gemara (Sotah 2a) tells that shidduchim, matching a man and woman for marriage, is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea. Insights abound in explanation of this Gemara. In light of the above, we have a new way of understanding the correlation between shidduchim and Krias Yam Suf.

For some boys and girls, the process of shidduchim is akin to a short walk, like the tribe that had the least distance to travel from one side of the Sea to the other side. For others, the process of shidduchim takes longer. And yet for others, even longer. However, for all of them, they all made it. Everyone reached the other side.

If you or your loved one is in the process of shidduchim and it is taking time, do not be worried. The process is like that of moving through the Yam Suf. For some it is a shorter process, and for others it is longer, but everyone will make it across.

We should all gain chizuk from this. You too will make it.



***Q** Tu B'Shvat is Rosh Hashanah for trees. For what are trees judged? If it's for the fruit they produced in the past year, do they have a choice to make good fruit or bad fruit? And…*

A My friend, before you go further, I want to explain. The trees are not judged on the Rosh Hashanah for trees. Trees are not judged. So don't worry about that.

The most you can say is that men are judged as far as trees are concerned and even that is not true – men are not judged on Chamisha Asar B'Shvat even as far as the trees are concerned. As I told you, it's only a rosh hashanah as far as gauging the age of a tree; we calculate the age of a tree by the fifteenth of the month of Shvat. So leave out the element of judging and there won't be any problem. It's only a matter of measuring years and the year has to start from a certain official date.

There's a technical reason, a botanical reason, why the official Rosh Hashanah of trees is Chamishah Asar b'Shvat. That's all. Only that **we** are expected to make use of the day as an opportunity for judging **ourselves**. In that sense it's a day of judgement; we ourselves can look at it that way.

So let's say Chamisha Asar B'Shvat just passed today; you have to judge yourself: "How could I let such a day go by?! Why didn't I put on my table a red apple and a golden orange and sit for a few minutes and look at them."

The apple is saying, "Look what Hakadosh Baruch Hu is giving to you! I'm a demonstration of His wisdom, of His plan and purpose, of His kindliness! Did you ever see such a thing manufactured by human

beings? Such a luscious package of food! It's a drink too! And it's cunningly put together in cells so that when you slit the apple, the juice doesn't spill out. The juice is imprisoned in thousands of little cells."



Of course, if you prefer apple juice, put it in a juicer and in one minute it's a drink. An apple is a drink really, but it's a drink imprisoned in cells. And inside, it's so wonderfully sugary. It's delicious. Not too sweet and not to sour! - The enjoyment in the apple is exactly suited to you, exactly suited to your taste buds. And so that apple is talking to you; the apple is criticizing you: "How is it you forget about me? You let the day pass on Chamisha Asar B'Shvat without paying attention to me?"

And the orange too opens a big mouth and it talks to us: "Look at my golden skin! Why is it that I am so beautiful on the outside of the skin and underneath the skin, there's no color at all? Doesn't that teach you something? Don't you see that the color is purposeful? "And I'm covered with a skin-wax wrapper too. You see that?

The purpose of the wax is to keep it waterproof and airproof and also to prevent little insects from chewing through it. And also to let you know how good it is, to give it a shine to give you a desire to eat it."

Now all these things seem to us commonplace, and we have no guilty feeling that we're not making use of them in the way the Creator expects us to do. So yes, in that sense Chamisha Asar B'Shvat can be considered a day of judgement.

Q How should we celebrate Chamishah Asar B'Shevat?

A There was a minhag in Yerushalayim – I don't know if they do it today but in the olden days the Chachamim came together the night of Chamishah Asar B'Shvat and they ate peiros; great men used to come together to eat fruit.

Now, the Gemara (44a) says that Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish used to go out – it doesn't say when – they used to go out to Genosar and eat peiros Genosar. And they ate so much until they almost fainted from overeating. Reish Lakish ate so much that he became wild – he was eating peiros; maybe it was grapes or something – and finally Rabi Yochanan had to ask the nasi to send policemen to take Reish Lakish home. And Rabbi Yochanan ate so much that his forehead was slippery that even a fly couldn't stand on his forehead. It slipped off his forehead.

Now you're talking about great men! And so you must say that the Gemara is telling us something here.



You have to know that peiros, fruits, is one of the wonderful creations of emunah. וְנֶחְמָד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂכִּיל – *'Fruit is most desirable because it gives wisdom.'* (Bereishis 3:6).

Looking at a beautiful orange, a beautiful apple; why is the color so beautiful? Is it an accident? It wasn't beautiful when the fruit was still green, when it was sour and unripe. Only when it became fit to eat then it turned a beautiful yellow color or a beautiful red color.

Doesn't that show something? When it's ready, it wants to attract your attention. It means that fruit is a demonstration of the

chessed Hashem. Tosfos explains in (Brachos 37a) that it means that Hashem made many different creatures and supplied them with all of their needs. But in addition to whatever they need He also gave mankind luxuries – besides for the things they need, He gave them more things just for the purpose of giving us pleasure.

And what are the luxuries? Tosfos says, apples for example. You could get along without apples. Apples are like a dessert; it's chessed.

Now all food is chessed. A piece of bread is also chessed. But apples are an added chessed. Hashem is not merely satisfied that you shouldn't be hungry. - Let's say a guest comes to your house. You give him a big plate of bread, a pile of bread, a mountain of bread. No. Give him something else with the bread, some butter maybe; whatever it is, something else you have to give, not just bread.

Let's say you give him a meal but since you have a good heart after the meal you give him some dessert too. That shows you're a real ba'al chessed. And so Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us fruit too.

So when you pass a fruit stand, don't walk by like a horse walks by. Take a look! Those delectable fruits are resplendent testimonies to the niflaos haBorei, the wonders of Hashem.

A fruit is a miracle. Every fruit has a skin around it that protects it and keeps it fresh for some time. And inside when you finish eating the delicious content of the fruits, inside there is a coupon that entitles you to another package; the seeds. It's like eating a box of cereal and when you get down to the bottom of the box, there's a coupon there entitling you to another free box.

Seeds! Ay yai yai! Niflaos haBorei! What a seed has in it! There are tremendous secrets in a seed. A seed has within it 100,000 details, all the blueprints for a new apple tree. It's the chromosomes of the seed, telling it how to make another apple tree; how to produce leaves, and how to produce sap and bark and flowers – all kinds of

flowers – and how to produce more apples. More apples with more seeds inside them. - All of these plans are in the blueprint of the seed! - And so there's color and taste for chessed, and there's chochma too. That's how to look at the fruit.

Now, rabbosai, you should know I'm just spending a minute or two. If you sit and look at an apple or an orange for fifteen minutes, you won't be the same person anymore. I guarantee you. Look at the apple for fifteen minutes and think about the wonders that you see in that creation of Hashem; you're seeing giluy Shechina. Absolutely.

And Hashem made it for the purpose of teaching it to you. Only in order to make the lesson more delicious, He makes the apple more delicious. It's like having a Gemara printed on sponge cake. So you take a little bite from the margin, a geshmake sugya.

And therefore the fruits are a wonderful opportunity to gain emunah and to gain ahavas Hashem. That's how to celebrate Chamishah Asar B'Shevat. That's how to eat fruits on Chamishah Asar B'Shevat. And on the sixteenth of Shevat and the seventeenth of Shevat and all year long.



Q ***Is having a fish tank in the home a good way to teach children the Niflaos Ha'Borei, the wonders of Hashem's creations?***

A An apple in the home is a good way. Put an apple on the table and teach your children to admire that apple. "Look how beautiful it is. It looks almost natural. Of course it's nothing but a plastic, a Hashem made plastic. But it's so beautiful, the colors."

Now, color you have to know is not so simple. Color is not an accident. It's niflaos ha'Borei. And the purpose of the color in an apple is to make you aware of the Creator. You should think about the apple before you begin to eat it. That's the purpose. Isn't it a pity? You've been eating apples for so many years and you didn't understand the

purpose; all those opportunities went down your throat for nothing. Why don't you stop for a moment before you eat and think about the wonders of this color? Where does a color come from? Is there any red in the seed of the apple? Take an apple seed and open it up and see if there is any redness in it. In vain you'll seek for any pigment. So where did the red color come from?

It's a remarkable thing! It has to come from someplace. Did it come from the soil? Soil doesn't have any pigments. Did it come from the rain? After all, an apple is mostly rain. If you would dry up this apple, if you would desiccate it, it becomes as small as a pea almost. Maybe as small as a plum. All the rest is nothing but water that fell from the clouds. But the cloud water doesn't have any color. If it would rain Pepsi Cola, raspberry soda, so you might imagine – it's false too but you might imagine it made the apples red. But it rains colorless water, so how do you get color here? - There's wisdom here! There's chemistry that they haven't discovered yet. They'll never discover the secrets of the apple. There are millions of secrets that they have to fathom before they understand how to make an apple.

So certainly you can teach a child niflaos ha'Borei in the home. You want a fish tank? Nothing wrong; but you don't need it if you have fruit in the house. Because anytime you open an orange in the house, say, "My child, look at this! Why is an orange so beautiful on the outside but when we open up the skin there's no color on the inside of the skin?" - You know that's a kasha that no scientist can answer? They'll stand on their heads but they can't answer that. Why is the orange's skin so beautiful on the outside while on the underside of the skin there's no color, no color at all? Nobody can answer that. Because there's only one answer. Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants you to see the color, to be seduced by it.

And so the purpose of color is chessed; it's for kindliness. Not only He gives you something to eat. He makes the color to make you happy; and you don't need color underneath. Once you open it up, you

see the color inside, the fruit, so you'll eat it anyhow – you don't need color on the underside of the peel.

So there's a lot of niflaos ha'Borei in the home without a fish tank. Only you have to teach yourself. If you teach yourself, you'll be able to teach your children too.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Rebbe Reb Shmelke of Nickelsburg *zt'l* hardly slept. (It is repeated that his mother once said, "I have two children: One never says *kriyas Shema she'al hamitah*, and the other one never recites *birchas hamazon*." – She meant that her son Rebbe Shmelka hardly slept, and her son the **Hafla'ah** barely ate.)



Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* once hosted Rebbe Shmelka and requested that he sleep well, because he believed that he would accomplish more if his mind were well rested. - Rebbe Shmelka agreed to Rebbe Elimelech's request.

In the morning, at the tefillah, Rebbe Shmelke reached very high spiritual levels, and the entire community became inspired together with him. When they got to *Az Yashir*, people raised the hems of their clothing because they felt themselves actually crossing the sea and didn't want their clothes to get wet!

After the exalted tefillah, Rebbe Shmelka said to Rebbe Elimelech, "Sleep is excellent, but who has time for it?"



Birds, Bread, And Bitachon - Rav Chaim Kanievsky on Chumash

The Shabbos on which *Parashas Beshalach* is read is called *Shabbos Shirah*, the Shabbos of Song. There is a widespread custom to put out food for the birds on this Shabbos. Some of the reasons given for this custom are:

1. **The *Maharal* of Prague** instructed parents and teachers to gather children in the courtyard of the synagogue on this Shabbos, and describe to them in vivid detail the scene of the Jews crossing the Red Sea, and singing praises to Hashem for their salvation.

One of the points they should mention is that the birds chirped and sang along with them, and to make a greater impression on them, the children should feed the birds kernels of wheat to encourage them to chirp and sing. (This was related by Rav Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch.)

2. **The *Shaar Bas Rabbim* and Rav Meir of Premishlan** said that Dasan and Aviram hatched a wicked plot to try to prove that the *mahn* fell on Shabbos, contrary to what Moshe said. They clandestinely spread some *mahn* from their portions in the fields, and planned to show it to others on Shabbos, pretending that it had fallen then. Their plot was foiled, however, by the birds, who ate the *mahn* they had set out, ensuring that they found nothing when they went out to gather it on Shabbos. - As a reward for this, we feed the birds on this Shabbos, when we read the *Parashas HaMahn* (*Taamei HaMinhagim* 531:98).

3. **The *Chasam Sofer*** writes that we are trying to internalize the lesson of the *mahn*: the Jewish people are compared to birds, and just as birds find their food without undue toil, so, too can we be

sustained directly from Hashem's Hand if we but turn our attention to learning His Torah and following His commands (*Ohr Pnei Moshe*).

This ancient custom is debated among the *poskim*, as it is generally forbidden to feed non-domestic animals on Shabbos, since they do not rely on humans for sustenance. Accordingly, the ***Magen Avraham*** (324:7) and ***Shulchan Aruch HaRav*** rule that one should refrain from feeding birds on Shabbos.

The *Levush*, however, defends the custom, explaining that Shabbos Shirah falls in the winter, when food is scarce, rendering birds effectively dependent on human assistance.

Rav Chaim related that his father, **the Steipler Gaon**, followed this practice on Shabbos Shirah. When his brother-in-law, the **Chazon Ish** expressed objection, the Steipler deferred and instead placed food out after Shabbos, apparently considering this sufficient for fulfilling the custom, as the sanctity of Shabbos extends until after Melaveh Malkah.

Rav Chaim's brother-in-law, **Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein**, offers an ingenious method by which one can follow both opinions. In his *sefer Aleinu LeShabei'ach* he proposes putting out the food for the birds before Shabbos with a plate covering it. On Shabbos, he may then remove the plate to use for his Shabbos meal, thus indirectly making the food available for the birds' consumption on Shabbos.

It is worthwhile to mention here that the ***Shemiras Shabbos KeHilchasah*** (27:21) rules that one may shake crumbs off a tablecloth outside even though the birds will eat them. The reason one may not feed non-domestic animals is because one may not exert himself unnecessarily on Shabbos; in this case, his exertion is needed for his own purposes, in order to clean the tablecloth. The fact that the birds will then eat the crumbs adds no effort, and is not cause to forbid this action.



I Care About You!

וְאָמַר פַּרְעֹה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נְבֻכִים הֵם בָּאָרֶץ סָגַר עֲלֵיהֶם הַמִּדְבָּר

"Pharaoh said to the Children of Israel, they are confounded in the land, the Wilderness has closed in upon them." (14:3)

When **Rav Shmuel Auerbach** eulogized his father, **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l**, he quoted one of his father's favorite stories.

Rav Baruch Frankel-Te'omim (1760-1828), was a gadol in Europe. His son became engaged to a girl from a very wealthy and prominent family. The families got together before the wedding to discuss the details of the marriage. The future mother-in-law saw that Rav Baruch was distressed. She asked him why he seemed so distressed. She wondered if he felt that there was something wrong with the shidduch.

Rav Baruch told her that he was upset because the water carrier in his city was very sick. The mother of the *kallah* was shocked by this answer. A water carrier was not considered a distinguished person. She could not understand why Rav Baruch would allow the water carrier's illness to dampen his mood at his family *simcha*.

As soon as he heard this, Rav Baruch announced that the *shidduch* was off! He would not let his son marry into a family that didn't feel empathy for the misfortune of another Jew. That showed a lack of sensitivity required of a Jew.

In this week's parsha, Pharoah finally agreed to let the Jewish People leave Egypt. The *pasuk* (Shemos 14:3) says, "Pharaoh said **to** the Children of Israel, they are confounded in the land, the Wilderness has closed in upon them." **Rashi** wonders how the pasuk could say that Pharaoh was speaking **to** the Children of Israel since

there were no Jews left in Egypt at that time. All the Jews had already left Egypt! **Rashi** interprets the the pasuk to mean that Pharaoh spoke ABOUT the Children of Israel rather than TO them.

Targum Yonosan ben Uziel has a different interpretation. He says that Pharaoh was speaking **to** Dasan and Aviram, two members of *Bnei Yisrael* who remained in Egypt.

The **Maharal Diskin** says that according to one interpretation in **Rashi** (Shmos 13:18) 80% of the Jewish community perished during the 3 days of Darkness! They were considered wicked and unworthy of experiencing the Exodus. Dasan and Aviram were very wicked people. They informed on Moshe Rabbeinu to Pharaoh telling Pharaoh that Moshe had killed an Egyptian (the Egyptian who had been beating a Jew). Had Hashem not miraculously saved Moshe, he would have been killed. Dasan and Aviram did not even want to leave when Bnei Yisrael were given permission to leave the country. If so, asks **Maharal Diskin,** why were they still alive? How did they survive the plague of Darkness if they were such wicked people? Did they have a special merit?



The **Maharil Diskin** answers that indeed, Dasan and Aviram did have a special *merit*. The Egyptians had appointed them to be *two of the* taskmasters over the Jewish slaves. They were told that they had to make sure that the Jews met their daily quota of producing bricks. Otherwise, they, themselves, would be beaten. When the Jews could not complete

their quota, the Jewish taskmasters did not oppress them or whip them. Instead, Dasan and Aviram, and the other Jewish taskmasters, allowed themselves to be beaten by the Egyptians. Dasan and Aviram took the punishment of their fellow Jews. **It was this z'chus of suffering on behalf of other Jews that saved Dasan and Aviram.**

Rav Yosef Salant (1885-1981) gives a beautiful explanation of a similar theme from a different pasuk. The pasuk in the beginning of the parsha says that when the Jewish people left Egypt, they were "chamushim" (Shemos 13:18). There are different interpretations of what that means. **Targum Yonasan ben Uziel** explains that "chamushim" means that all the Jews went out with 5 children.

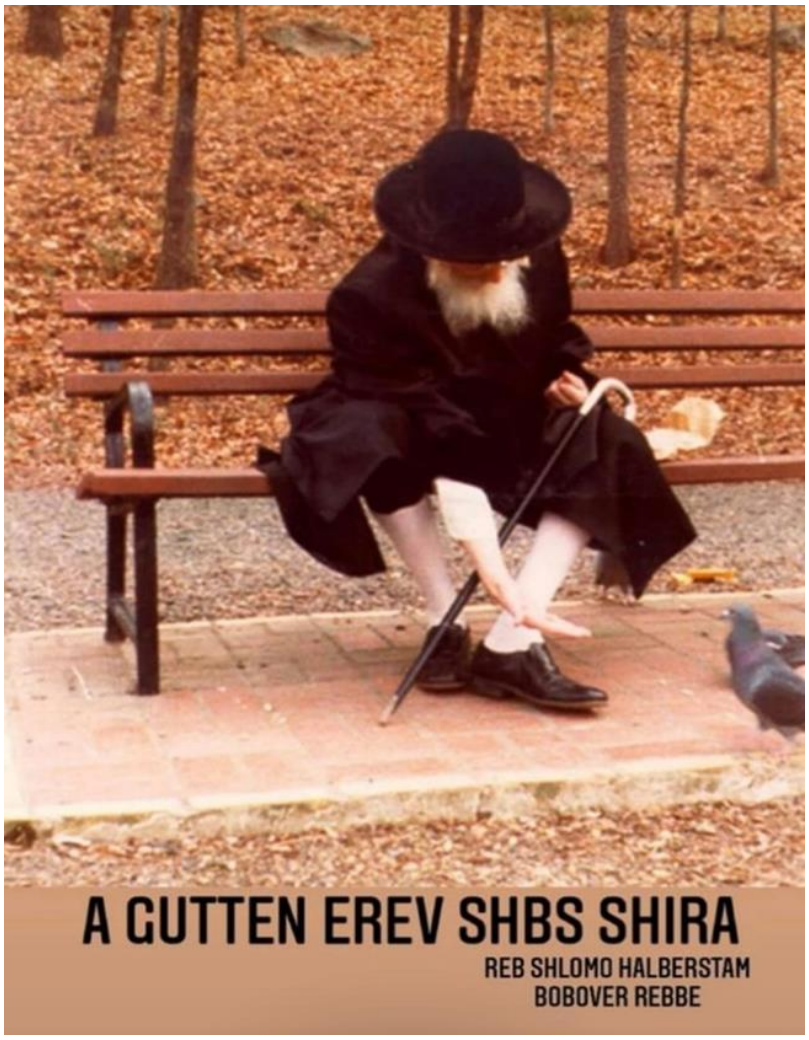
Does that mean that everyone had the same number of children, which was 5? Didn't the rabbis teach us that the Jewish women gave birth to 6 babies at a time?

The Be'er Yosef by **Rav Yosef Salant** gives a beautiful answer. When it says that four-fifths of the Jewish people died during the Plague of Darkness, that probably just referred to the adults. Most likely, the young children did not die. That means that four-fifths of the Jewish children at the time of the Exodus were orphans! Who was going to take care of them? The answer is that every one of the remaining Jewish families agreed to take care of the orphans. Thus, every remaining family adopted the orphaned children of four families. Therefore, when the **Targum Yonasan ben Uziel** says "five children", he does not mean that everyone went out with 5 children. He means that everyone went out with 5 families worth of children. They went with their own children as well as the children of four other families whose parents had died during the Plague of Darkness!

What a beautiful act of selflessness exhibited by the Jewish People! They took care of so many Jewish children who were not their own!

These acts of kindness was a source of extraordinary merit for the Jewish People.

When we show how much we care about our fellow Jews, it brings nachas to Hashem! - We receive great merit for doing so!



There is a custom to give birds food on Shabbos Shirah. **The Yismach Yisrael** explains that when you feed an animal, such as your cow or horse, the animal feels it deserves the food because it works for you. But birds don't do anything for you. When they are fed, they understand that this is an underserved gift.

We, too, seek to attain the awareness that Hashem doesn't owe us anything, and if we have parnassah, we should thank Hashem for His chesed."

Rabbeinu Bachya notes that the mahn fell while the Jewish people slept. This design proved that parnassah is ready for us from Heaven; our work is merely a technical formality required to access it. - Realigning our perspective to prioritize trust over toil is the work of a lifetime.

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – Burst of Inspiration

The Chofetz Chaim teaches us a very powerful life lesson in this week's sedra. You see, many times in life we have choices to make, two pathways, two career choices, lots of different choices.

For example, a career choice. One choice could be financially very lucrative. They're very exciting, but on the other hand, it comes at a spiritual cost. If they're demanding a 12-hour day with travel time, I'm going to get very little time to learn, family time, communal involvement. On the other hand, an alternative career path could be less lucrative, but yet it will give me more time to learn, spend time with the family, to involve myself with the tzibur.

Which one do I choose? Says the Chofetz Chaim that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is teaching us this life lesson in this week's Seder. How so?

You see, as it were, HaKadosh Baruch Hu also had a choice.

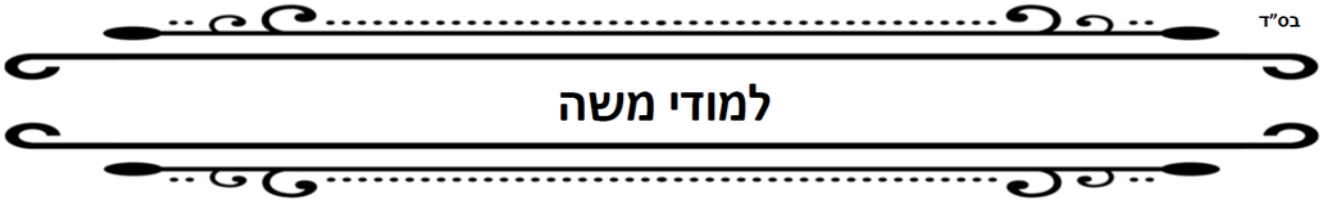
וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא נָחָם אֱלֹקִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא

Paro sends away the people. HaKadosh Baruch Hu didn't lead the people through the land of the pelishtim, although it was the shortest route, instead, instead, HaKadosh Baruch Hu led the people through the Midbar.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu also had a choice. On one hand, take a map of the Middle East. Going from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael is pretty direct. Do I go that way or do I go the long way around? You see, if I go the short way, then physically, materially, it's so much easier. It's inhabited land, it's easier to feed a people of probably three million plus. But spiritually it's dangerous, because I'm exposing Klal Yisrael to very bad negative influences. [**עוֹבְדֵי עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה**] -

But if I take them דֶּרֶךְ הַמִּדְבָּר, there, no bad influences there, spiritually it's much easier, but physically, materially, how am I going to sustain them?

HaKadosh Baruch Hu also had that choice. When you've got a choice, if it's where the sustenance is hard but spiritually it's so much easier, or where the sustenance is easy but it's spiritually dangerous, HaKadosh Baruch Hu is telling us, 'Go for the route which is spiritually advantageous because ultimately that's what counts'.



Looking At the Roots

The *Magen Avraham* in *siman* 492 brings the *minhag* to decorate *shuls* and houses with trees on Shavuos, to remember that on Shavuos we are judged about fruits of the tree. And in *siman* 131 he brings the *minhag* of Ashkenazim to increase in the eating of fruits on Tu BiShvat, as it is the Rosh Hashanah for trees.

R' Yoel of Satmar *zt"l* asks that seemingly it should be the opposite, on Shavuos when we are judged about fruits we should eat fruit, and on Tu BiShvat when it is Rosh Hashanah for trees, we should bring trees into the *shuls*?

R' Yehuda Aryeh HaLevi Dunner *shlita* answers *al pi derush* that when we judge trees that allude to the fathers, we also look at their fruits to see what type of children come from them. However, when we judge fruits which allude to children, we look at the trees which are the father from where they come from.

TORAH TAVLIN

STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

משל למה הדבר דומה

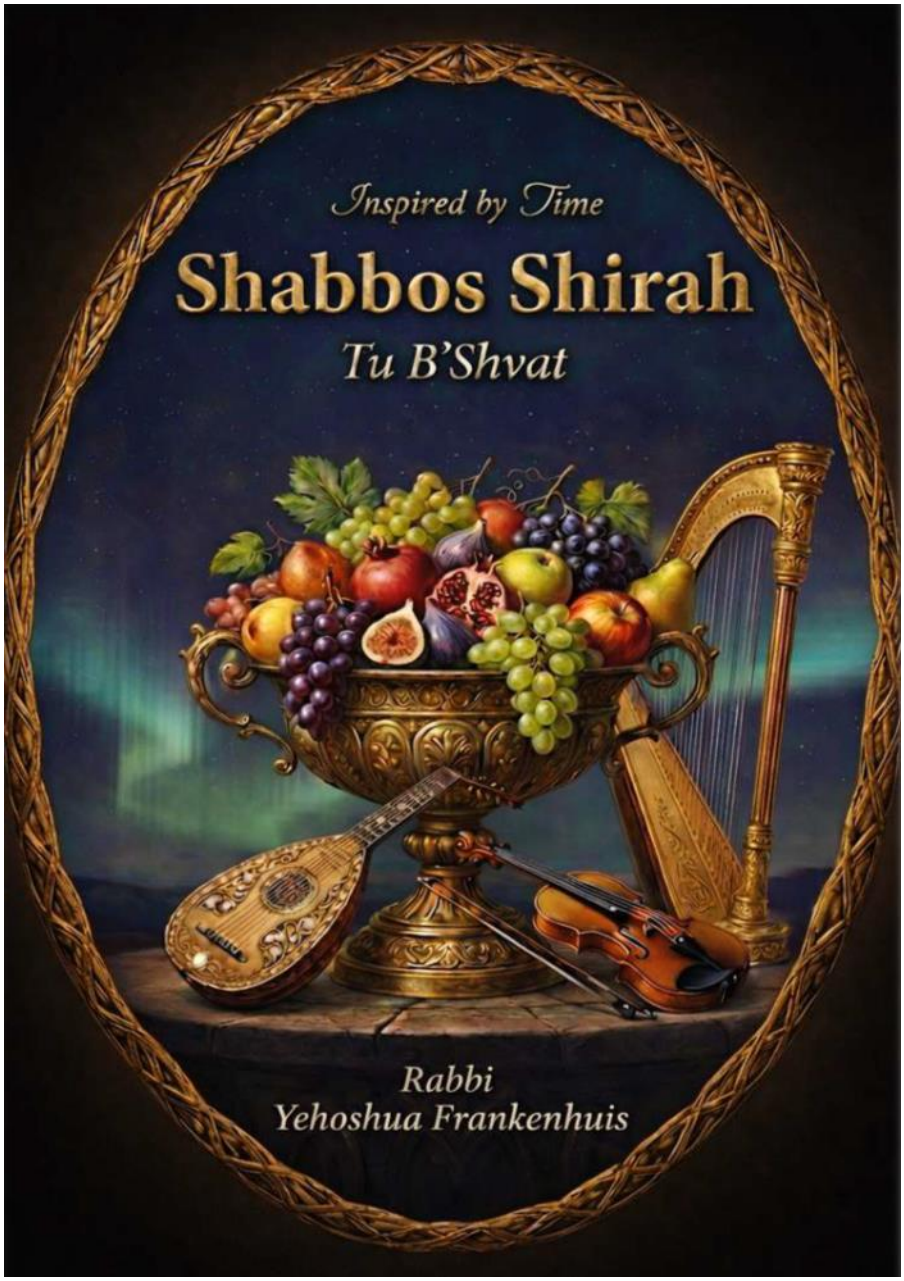
In Jerusalem in the 1600's there was a devastating drought that brought much pain. The local Ottoman governor (Pasha) needed a scapegoat to blame. Like so many before, he flew into a rage, blaming the Jewish community for the lack of rain. With his sword held high up in the air, he threatened them with expulsion if the drought didn't break.



R' Moshe Galante *zt"l* led the community out to the tomb of *Shimon HaTzaddik* to pray. But before they left the city walls, he issued a strange command: "Everyone must wear their heavy raincoats and carry their umbrellas."

The day was blistering hot and the sky was a clear, mocking blue. As the Jews marched through the streets in their rain gear, Arab neighbors and Ottoman soldiers laughed and jeered at the "crazy" people carrying umbrellas and other such paraphernalia in a desert heatwave.

However, as soon as R' Moshe finished his prayers, the sky suddenly turned black. A massive downpour erupted with such force that the very soldiers who had been mocking them had to beg them for shelter under those same umbrellas.



Shabbos Shirah

The holy Arugas HaBosem reveals a breathtaking insight.

The Low Notes and the High Notes

Have you ever heard a choir sing?

It is something extraordinary. Dozens of voices, each singing a different note, a different tone. Some voices are high and piercing, others deep and steady. Some sing melody, others harmony. Each singer holds a different page of music, filled with notes that look nothing alike. And yet, when they sing together, it is magnificent.

But imagine isolating just one voice. Just the bass. Just one harmony line. On its own, it may sound flat, even unpleasant. It doesn't carry beauty by itself. In fact, many of the individual notes would never be considered "music" if heard alone. - Each tone, standing on its own, lacks meaning. It is only when all the voices merge that the music becomes beautiful.

Says the Arugas HaBosem, this is exactly how Shirah works. In life, there are notes we do not appreciate at all. Tzaros. Pain, confusion, heartbreak, fear. Notes that sound harsh and discordant. Notes

that feel completely wrong. We cry out and ask: Why this pain? Why now? Why us?

These notes are unpleasant. They are impossible to understand on their own.

But shirah is not about singing each note separately. Shirah is about seeing how everything comes together. When all the tones are finally woven into one Divine composition, we begin to see that even the painful notes were necessary. Even the suffering had a place. Only then do we realize that what once felt unbearable was part of a larger harmony – a harmony of chessed and hashgachah pratis from the Ribbono Shel Olam. - And this is what makes Shiras HaYam so unique.

The Precious Low Notes

Unlike most songs of praise, Shiras HaYam does something astonishing. In the very middle of the shirah, we recount the tzaros themselves. We quote Pharaoh's threats word for word:

אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֶרְדֹּף אַשִּׂיג אֲחַלֵּק שָׁלָל תִּמְלָאֵמוֹ נַפְשִׁי אָרִיק חַרְבִּי תּוֹרִישֵׁמוֹ יָדִי - "The enemy said: I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoils..."

Part of the shirah is the pain – the difficulty, the threats of the enemy. But why bring Pharaoh's cruelty and arrogance into the very song of salvation? Why give his voice a place inside our redemption? Wouldn't it make more sense to erase those memories? To focus only on the miracle, on the victory, on the downfall of Mitzrayim?

But that is precisely the point. Because now, after the Yam Suf has split, after the Egyptians have drowned, we finally understand. These were the notes that made no sense while we were living through them. But now we see that they were essential.

Pharaoh had to chase us. He had to pursue us relentlessly, step for step, all the way to the edge of the Yam Suf. Only then, could Hashem draw him in, and lure him into the Yam Suf, with his chariots

and his army, as he charged forward arrogantly. And only then could the final yeshuah unfold in its fullest glory – not merely by saving Klal Yisrael, but by turning Pharaoh's very pursuit into his downfall, drowning him in the sea at the exact moment he thought he was about to destroy us.

Now the tones come together. Now even the threats and fear is revealed to have been part of the song. This is true shirah – not denying the darkness, but revealing its place within the light.

A Level Deeper

The Arugas HaBosem adds a further, stunning layer.

Notice that Pharaoh's declaration begins with a series of words that all start with aleph: **אָמַר אוֹיֵב אֶרְדֹּף אַשִּׂיג אֲחַלֵּק** – Why the aleph?

Because now we recognize that everything came from the Aleph – Alufo shel Olam, the Master of the world. Even Pharaoh's words. Even his pursuit. Even his cruelty. It was all orchestrated by Hashem.

The Ribbono Shel Olam Himself guided Pharaoh to chase Klal Yisrael, so that he would fall into the trap of Kri'as Yam Suf. What looked like the enemy's plan was, in truth, Hashem's plan. - Aleph upon aleph upon aleph – all pointing back to Hashem.

And deeper still: the aleph itself hints to Shem Havayah – an aleph composed of a vav and two yuds, whose total is twenty-six. Even in the darkest moments, Hashem's Name was present, hidden within the events. - What sounded like the voice of the enemy was really the concealed voice of Hashem.

Reb Tzadok haKohen says that the minhag of eating fruits on Tu Bishvat is a minhag nevi'im! It is therefore as special as the minhag nevi'im of hoshanos on Hoshana Rabba!

The Torah repeats the fact that Moshe davened for the removal of each of the makos. - This seems superfluous.

The great Mashgiach, R' Yerucham Levovitz zt"l, would explain that the Torah means to teach us an important and timely lesson: There is only one way to receive anything in this world - through tefilla!



Why Not Open Your Gemara?

Whenever someone is sick, Hashem yerachem, we close our gemaros, say tehillim, and daven for his speedy recovery. **R' Shimshon Pinkus** would ask why we do so. Surely the zechus of Torah learning is far greater, on the contrary, we should be closing our tehillim and siddurim and opening our gemaros instead!

The answer is that while Torah is indeed the source of the greatest zechusim, the only way to receive something in this word is through tefilla. Tefilla is the gate through which all the shefa passes. If a person does not have the key to the gate, he may have all the zechusim in the world and deserve a yeshua, however, the gate will remain locked and he will not receive the shefa.

R' Yerucham noted that during one of the greatest eis tzaros Klal Yisrael have ever had, when Moshe Rabbeinu descended Har Sinai to find Klal Yisrael worshipping avoda zara, what did he do?

He did not rush to the Beis Hamedrash to learn in Klal Yisrael's merit; he ran to Hashem and begged for forgiveness. He knew that it was tefilla that could bring results.



"The prayers of one Jew bring Hashem more joy than all the praises of the angels combined." ~ Chofetz Chaim.





◣ It's All Hashem - Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם - ***"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt."*** *"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt." (13:18)*

Our translation follows that of Rashi, who renders **חמושים** as "armed," but this leaves us with the question of why the Jews took weapons with them. Since they had benefited from so many outstanding miracles until now, surely they could rely on Hashem to protect them even if they did not have weapons.

From this, however, we can learn a fundamental principle that applies to every aspect of life:

One should not think that a miracle consists simply of doing nothing and watching his enemies fall before him. Instead, one must know that however much effort is put into accomplishing one's goals, and however much success his efforts appear to bring him, it is really Hashem Who does everything. In any battle one fights, Hashem is the only Warrior and the only Victor.

This, then, explains the seeming paradox that the Jews took weapons with them into the Wilderness but so little food.

Even though they trusted in Hashem to protect them, they still had to make a show of defending themselves and for this they needed weapons. As to food, however, they knew they could not hope to bring enough food to sustain them through the long trek across the

desert, and they had no choice but to expect that once their food ran out, Hashem would feed them through miracles.

Therefore, they opted to take nothing, except for the remnants of the matzah they had baked, and that only as a precious reminder of the *mitzvah* they had been given to do.

◣ After Trouble Strikes - Avnei Ezel



וּפַרְעֹה הִקְרִיב וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם נֹסֵעַ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּירְאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְּנֵי־ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־ה׳ - *"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)*

'Pharaoh drew Israel toward repentance'. (Midrash)

The threat of annihilation at the hands of Pharaoh's host put the fear of G-d into them, arousing them to repentance. The fact that it took Pharaoh and his army to make them repent and they had not done so earlier struck fear into the Jews' hearts. They "cried out to Hashem" at the thought that they had repented only when they saw Pharaoh and his army in hot pursuit behind them.

◣ Even When Satiated - Reb Naftali of Ropshitz

"In the afternoon you shall eat meat, and in the morning you will be satiated with bread, and you will know that I am Hashem, your G-d."

That was the true miracle of the *manna;* for a man to be satiated and still recognize Hashem. *(16:12)*

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Our Parsha begins as the Jews left Egypt. After a year of plagues, death, destruction, powerlessness, and suffering, Pharaoh relented and sent the Jews out. Interestingly, the Torah says - **וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פַּרְעֹה** - he **"sent"** them, not he "let them go." - That's because Pharaoh, as an egotistical leader, had to be in control. Even when he had to let the Jews go, he refused to admit that he had no choice.

The narrative is powerful. Nevertheless, only a few verses later, he second-guessed himself and wondered why he ever allowed them to leave! The reason? A new narrative.

וַיֻּגַּד לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם כִּי בָרַח הָעָם וַיֵּהָפֵךְ לְבַב פַּרְעֹה וַעֲבָדָיו אֶל הָעָם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מַה זֹּאת עָשִׂינוּ כִּי שִׁלַּחְנוּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעָבְדֵנוּ. - *"And it was told to the King of Egypt that the nation **ran away** and the hearts of Pharaoh and his staff turned around, saying, "What did we do, to send the Israelites from our midst?!"*

When the story was spun to say that the Jews had run away, Pharaoh had a change of heart because it seemed like the Jews had bested him and he didn't like to lose. He therefore gathered his armies and chased them to his nation's ultimate defeat and decimation.

Look how powerful perspective is. See how a few words can lead a person to act wisely or foolishly; to be satisfied or angry, even if the actual facts never change, just the narrative.

This means that we have the power to change lives, to write the future, and ensure better outcomes by thinking clearly and speaking nicely.

If we are positive and upbeat, we can make others happy. If we put things in a good light, that's how they will be seen. If we praise people, they will live up to that praise and achieve things they might otherwise have considered impossible.

We are a nation whose power lies in its mouth. Not only for prayer and study, but for the ability to change how people think.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Shaul Yedidya Elazar Taub ZT"L (1886-1947), better known as the **Modzitzer Rebbe**, an extraordinary Torah scholar and master composer of Chassidic melodies, says that Bnei Yisrael were redeemed in the merit of their ability to see and implement the trait of Emes – truth.

Where do we find Bnei Yisrael practicing the Middah of Emes? We find that they admitted to themselves that they were unworthy of redemption. - Hashem's message was that you were redeemed because of your Middah of Emes.

With this understanding, the Modzitzer Rebbe interpreted the words of the Hagaddah, "In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he himself was redeemed from Egypt".

The explanation is that each one of us must be honest with ourselves and see ourselves as we are, with all our character flaws, as Bnei Yisrael did in Egypt when they acknowledged that they were unworthy of redemption.

Living Kiddush Hashem FOUNDATION מקדשי שמך

From Criticism of Chareidim to Compassion

I wanted to share a powerful story that took place in the aftermath of the terrible tragedy that occurred in Yerushalayim last week, when two young children died in a charedi daycare. It appears that there was overheating, and as a result, two infants, one three months old and one six months old, were niftar, R"l.

I believe the story below captures something profound about how the Jewish people can navigate deep and painful machlokes within our nation. The tensions between the charedi community and the rest of the population are currently at an all-time high. Many people have accused the charedi public of an overall culture of lawlessness.

One such person is Chaggai Luber. Chaggai, a religious Zionist, lost his twenty-four-year-old son, Yonatan, in Gaza last year. He has since been an outspoken critic of certain aspects of the charedi world.

This past week, Chaggai joined the many Israelis who felt anger, and even a sense of smugness in reaction to the daycare tragedy.

He wrote in a social media post:

"And I too participated yesterday, at least as a listener, in the collective frenzy.

And I too clicked my tongue at the irresponsible parents....

And I too read about a culture of contempt, lawbreaking, and irresponsibility among the charedim.

And I too hurried to reach a verdict and take a stance.

And I too wallowed in that same murky swamp."

But then he wrote that his wife reminded him of something that shook him to his core.



Chani Katz, the mother of one of the children who died in that daycare, had once visited the Luber family during their shiva. Not only that, but when she came, she brought with her a heart shaped necklace bearing Yonatan's image. It was part of a large jewelry project she launched after October 7, to commemorate those who were killed in the war.

Chaggai wrote that in that moment everything changed. The charedim were no longer a faceless group to criticize. They were people. Brothers and sisters. Broken parents. "And I saw her standing before me. A mother filled with hurt. Filled with pain. Filled with loss.

What happened to me, a bereaved father, that I joined in the celebration against the charedim? That I got carried away, even if only in thought, into that terrible dance of blame, while the dead were still before us, even before burial? - And I regretted it. And I felt like tearing my clothes in mourning."

This story, I believe, carries within it an answer to the existential struggle of painful machlokes in Klal Yisrael. We can disagree strongly, even passionately, and still truly feel another person's pain. We can see the most human side (Tzelem Elokim) of those with whom we differ.

Chani Katz, who carried her own ideological worldview, nevertheless entered the home of grieving parents and joined them in their mourning. Her ability to feel the pain of others created a remarkable transformation in someone who had been emotionally closed off to her world.

This is the challenge of our generation. How to defend Torah values with vigor and conviction, while remaining faithful to Torah's call for love, dignity, and respect.

We can unequivocally reject ideas without rejecting people. And perhaps the most compelling defense of our values is not the force of condemnation, but the integrity of our conduct. To live as a reflection of Hashem, as people of strong values and **רַחֲמָנִים, בַּיְשָׁנִים, וְגוֹמְלֵי חֲסָדִים** to the point that the Name of Heaven becomes beloved through us.

סְגֻלָּה לְפָרָשַׁת בְּשַׁלַּח – שַׁבַּת שִׁירָה

This **שבת** brings a special **עת רצון** for **רפואות** as we are informed for the first time, **כִּי אֲנִי ה' רֹפְאֶךָ** - ***'For I Hashem, am your healer.'*** (15:26)

Therefore, the **סגולה** for **רפואה** is immense. Let's utilise this great opportunity, to daven for **רפואות**.

"When we serve Hashem according to our nature, Hashem leads us according to the rules of nature. But when we go beyond our nature, Hashem reciprocates and performs miracles for us beyond the limitations of nature. When the Jewish nation were at the seashore, they served Hashem with mesirus nefesh, beyond their nature, making them worthy of kriyas yam suf." ~ Rebbe Michel of Złotcher.

Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita



It's parashas shira. It's really all about emunah and song. The parasha of Kiryas Yam suf, the parashas Hamon, the parashas which tell us about, really, when there's belief in HaKodesh Boruch Hu.

I'd like just to explain something about the Pashas Hamon. There's an inyan of a segulah. There is a common practice to recite Parashas Hamon daily with the belief that it ensures one's parnassah (livelihood). I want people to really understand this in its right perspective. I'm not trying to dampen the kind of segulah. People are very keen to say Parshas Hamon every day because they believe that when you say Parashas Hamon on a daily basis, then your hishtadlus for Parnassah is sorted.

The way the **Mishna Berurah** brings this in siman 1:13, the real understanding of this is a little bit different. The inyan of saying Parashas Hamon, referring to an everyday, as the Mishna Berurah says, he has to realize that Parashas Hamon is a Musser Sefer, it's a parasha of living with Emunah, and the koach of Hakadosh Baruch Hu Who brings him his parnassah, so long as he lives with Hashem and does things 'al pi Hashem'. The Mishna Berurah explains that Parashas Hamon is a parsha about living with emunah—reliance on divine providence—not merely a recited text.

True blessing arises from living daily with faith in HaKadosh Baruch Hu, doing everything according to His will, and trusting in His provision.

It is not one's status or recitation alone that brings blessing; it is the faith-driven lifestyle behind the recitation. This is what brings him bracha.

I'd like to share with you a **געוואַלדיקער טייַטש** that there is from the **Malbim** in the Parshas Hamon. The Parshah begins and says, **הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם וְיָצָא הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנַסֶּנּוּ הֲיֵלֵךְ בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם־לֹא** 16:4. **– זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' לִקְטוּ מִמֶּנּוּ אִישׁ לְפִי אָכְלוֹ**

לְפִי אָכְלוֹ -"*According to his requirements" – representing the future amount one should gather, based on faith in divine provision. 16:16*

Dasan and Aviron disbelieved and saved manna for the next day, but it spoiled. Their portion of manna became limited to what they previously gathered, illustrating the consequence of lacking emunah.

וַיִּלְקְטוּ אֹתוֹ בַבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר אִישׁ כְּפִי אָכְלוֹ – 16:21 - **כְּפִי אָכְלוֹ** -"According to what he ate" – based on past consumption, reflecting a lack of trust in future provision.

The manna was meant for those who live with emunah (Lefi Ochloi), trusting Hashem for future needs. When individuals rely on their own efforts rather than faith, they limit their sustenance to their own calculations (Kefi Ochloi).- This teaches that true livelihood and blessing come from reliance on Hashem, not solely human effort.

The world often emphasizes hishtadlus (personal effort), believing that success depends entirely on human planning. But true emunah acknowledges human effort but ultimately relies on HaKadosh Baruch Hu's power, which transcends human understanding.

We must take a balanced approach: make reasonable efforts but leave ultimate outcomes to divine providence.

Emunah is the cornerstone of divine blessing and salvation. Reciting parshas Hamon gains significance only when accompanied by a life of authentic faith. - Good Shabbos.

UKforTORAH@gmail
Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Insights Into The Torah Perspective From Great Personalities Of The Last Generation & Beyond

16 Shevat: Rav Mattisyohu (Mattis) Davis

Rav Yechiel Mattisyohu Davis—known in Yerushalayim as "Reb Mattis"—was one of the outstanding Torah personalities of old Yerushalayim. Although he never held an official rabbinic position, he was widely regarded as both a great talmid chochom and a tzaddik.

He studied in Yeshivas Eitz Chaim under Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer and continued learning with him even after leaving the yeshiva. Reb Mattis maintained close relationships with many of the leading rabbonim of Yerushalayim, including Rav Zelig Reuven Bengis and Rav Yosef Tzvi Dushinsky, and he frequently visited the Brisker Rav to discuss Torah.

His personal character was legendary. The Brisker Rav once described him in a letter as an exceptionally rare individual distinguished in Torah, yiras Shamayim, and refined character.

When Rav Aharon Fischer passed away young, Reb Mattis took responsibility for raising the orphans. One of them, Rav Yisroel Yaakov Fischer, later became a leading posek and Rosh Beis Din of the Eida Chareidis. In a hesped, Rav Fischer remarked that Reb Mattis was a personality impossible to describe adequately—his Torah scholarship, piety, sacrifice, and middos defied description.

Reb Mattis was known as a passionate defender of *kavod Shamayim*. Despite his strong kana'us, he was remembered as a person of exceptional refinement and sensitivity.

After his passing, a small collection of his Torah insights was published under the title **Mattas Melech** on the Rambam.

The Chazon Ish Letter

Reb Mattis maintained a close relationship with the Chazon Ish and would travel from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak to discuss Torah with him.

On one occasion the Chazon Ish spoke unusually openly about deeper spiritual matters. Over a year after the Chazon Ish's passing in 5714, Reb Mattis carefully recorded these statements in a brief typed document. Because the material was considered sensitive, it was not publicized at the time.

The document was later passed to his son-in-law, Rav Shmuel Dovid Munk, who in turn shared it with Rav Elyokim Schlesinger of London. Portions of it eventually appeared decades later in works discussing the Torah perspective on Zionism.

When the authenticity of the document was later questioned, it was reportedly shown to Rav Chaim Kanievsky, who responded that some of the contents were already known to him.

Themes of the Letter

In the document Reb Mattis summarized several ideas attributed to the Chazon Ish regarding the spiritual significance of contemporary events. Among the themes mentioned were:

- The establishment of the State was viewed as part of a Heavenly decree whose ultimate outcome remains in Hashem's hands.
- The opposition of Torah-true Jews to Zionist ideology was seen as having deep spiritual significance.
- Certain historical events were interpreted as spiritual rectifications for earlier failings in Jewish history.

Many statements in the document are brief and cryptic, and their precise meaning remains difficult to interpret.

Reb Mattis Davis passed away on 16 Shevat. He left behind a legacy of extraordinary Torah scholarship, deep piety, and unwavering dedication to preserving the mesorah of Yerushalayim.

May his merit continue to inspire those who strive to live with devotion to Torah and yiras Shamayim.

15 Shvat / Tu BiShvat תפילה לאתרוג נאה

This prayer for a beautiful Esrog and song for Tu BiShvat was composed by the great author of **Ben Ish Chai - HaRav Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad**.

בט"ו בשבט ראש השנה לאילנות, על כן טוב ונכון לומר ביום
ט"ו בשבט בשחרית פסוקים אלו ובקשה זו, וידוע הוא
שיש קבלה ביד חכמי אשכנז ז"ל שצריך לבקש ביום ט"ו שבט
בפרטות על האתרוג שיזדמן לישראל אתרוג טוב ויפה בחג:



The Bnei Yisaschar (Month of Shevat, 2:2) writes that "A person should pray on Tu BeShevat to find a kosher, beautiful, mehudar esrog with which to fulfil the mitzvah."

The Ben Ish Chai composed a special tefilah especially for the esrog and arba minim to be said on Tu BeShevat. He writes that "It is a tradition from the sages of Ashkenaz that on the 15th of Shevat we pray especially for an esrog that the Jewish people should find good and beautiful esrogim for the holiday of Succos."

TORAH TAVLIN
STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

ויאמרו איש אל אחיו מן הוא כי לא ידעו מה הוא וגו' (טז-טו)

Rashi explains the word '**מן**', means a 'preparation of food.'

R' Dovid Feinstein asks, why did the Bnai Yisroel call this 'heavenly bread' by such a general name and not a more specific name that would identify it's true nature?

חז"ל tell us in Gemarah Yoma, that the **מן** tasted to each individual like the food he most desired. Imagine, then, the following conversation between two Jews when the **מן** first fell:

'This is the most delicious cake I've ever tasted,' said the first.

'Cake!' said his friend, 'What do you mean, cake? This tastes like those rich, juicy carrots that I get in the summer at the market!'

Since the Jews themselves couldn't agree on what the **מן** tasted like, at least they gave it a name that all could agree on: **Food**.

וישב הים לפנות בקר לאיתנו ומצרים נסים לקראתו וכו' (יד-כז)

A condition was made with the sea at the time of creation that although its norm was to flow continuously, at this specific time the sea should split. If so, why is this mentioned here, at the time that it went back to its norm of flowing, and not earlier when it was required to split?

The **Sefas Emes ZT'L** answers that once the sea split and this caused a great **קידוש** amongst the nations, the water was reluctant to flow again. It wanted to remain as a wall and be a permanent reminder of the powers of *Hashem*. Therefore, a condition was made, originally, with the water that it should flow continuously, save for the time of the crossing.

We can now understand the statement of *Chazal*, 'It is as difficult to create a match between a man and a woman as **קריעת ים סוף**. This

comparison is hard to comprehend. The match brings together, but the splitting of the sea separates.

Explains the *Sefas Emes*, a single person sometimes feels that he or she can accomplish a lot more while single, without family responsibilities, than when married. This is like the sea wanting to remain split and thus serving *Hashem*. However, *Hashem* wants people to serve Him and do His *mitzvos* in all of life's situations.

The comparison to '*krias yam suf*' is to the sea becoming one again, just like marriage, where the two souls were once seperate, which now become one again, in marriage.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

כל המחלה אשר שמתי במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך וגו' (טו-כו)

A woman once came to the home of the great **Chid'a, R' Yosef Chaim Azulai ZT'L**, and explained that her husband was influenced by his secular friends and has slackened considerably in his performance of *mitzvos*. 'What can I do?' asked the woman.

The Chid'a, at once, got up and went to the see the man. When he got there and began talking to him, he understood the situation at once.

'Let me tell you a story,' said the Rav to the man. 'Once there was an intelligent, well-educated individual who had to know everything. He had to know how flowers grow, how the birds fly, why the sky is blue and why bread sustains life. He researched, studied, and became very knowledgeable.

One day he became sick and his condition deteriorated steadily. The doctor came and found his patient fighting for his life. He quickly took out his syringe, took the patient's arm, and was ready to inject some penicillin to save his life.



'Stop,' ordered the intelligent patient. 'What are you doing? I want to know how this works!'

'It's a very lengthy, involved and complicated explanation,' said the doctor. 'I would first have to explain to you what the illness is, its causes and repercussions, what penicillin is, and how it deals with the illness. By the time my presentation is over, and you understand everything properly, who knows if you will still be alive! Trust me, I have been in the field for several decades and I have saved hundreds of lives. Give me your arm and allow me to save your life. Afterwards, I will explain everything to you.'

'No,' insisted the patient. 'I never do anything without knowing how it works.'

'Very well,' said the doctor, and he began his presentation. In the meantime, the patient closed his eyes, forever...'

The Chid'a looked closely at the sceptic. 'This is what is said in the *posuk*: 'If you heed His commandments, and you observe all his statutes, every illness which I placed in Egypt I will not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your physician.'

You should know, that the *mitzvos* are the cure. A person must trust the expert physician, *Hashem*, and must always take the medication - *mitzvos* - as prescribed by Him. Only afterward, if he wants, he try to understand how they work. But, before anything, he must follow them fully, without trying to outsmart them.'

"A true sign of a person's love for Hashem is the love they have for their fellow human beings." ~ Rabbi Yisroel Salanter.

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein — Wanting vs. Needing



This week's **פרשה** is **פרשת בשלח**, and there is a very interesting **פסוק** that is difficult to understand.

פרק י"ד, פסוק ט"ו tells us that **כלל ישראל** was trapped between the **ים סוף** in front of them and the **מצרים** behind them. The **פסוק** says:

ויאמר ה' אל משה מה תצעק אלי? דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו. Why are you crying out to Me? Tell **כלל ישראל** to move forward.

We all know the famous **מדרש** that **נחשון בן עמינדב** jumped into the **ים**. The water rose higher and higher, until it reached his nose. Only then did the **ים סוף** split.

But why did he have to go so far? Why wasn't jumping into the water enough?

We know that when a Yid is in trouble, the power of **כלל ישראל** is: **הקול קול יעקב**. Our **כוח** is **תפילה**. So why, at this moment, did **הקדוש ברוך הוא** say: **מה תצעק אלי?**

This is not the time to daven. This is the time to act. **וימאן** — Never Give Up

To understand this, I want to go back to the end of **פרשת ויחי**. We know that the final **פסוק** of a **ספר** summarizes the entire **ספר**. Yet the last **פסוק** of **ספר בראשית** seems particularly negative:

וימת יוסף בן מאה ועשר שנים ויחנטו אותו ויישם בארון במצרים. - **יוסף** died at the age of 110. He was embalmed and placed in a coffin in **מצרים**.

How does this summarize **ספר בראשית**?

The **ספר** begins with **בראשית ברא אלוקים**—the creation of the world—and tells the stories of **אדם, נח, אברהם, יצחק** and **יעקב**. And it ends with **יוסף** dead in a coffin in **מצרים**!

The answer is a tremendous lesson. **פרשת ויחי** is **סתומה**, a closed **פרשה**. This represents the idea that life is often **סתומה**—what appears to be bad may ultimately be the beginning of something very good.

There is another important **וימאן** in the story of **יוסף**. When **אשת פוטיפר** tried to seduce **יוסף**, the **פסוק** says: **וימאן יוסף**.

The word **וימאן** has a **שלשלת**, a special **טעם**. Later, when **יעקב** was told that **יוסף** had died, the **פסוק** says: **וימאן להתנחם**. **יעקב** refused to be comforted.

How could **יעקב אבינו** refuse to accept the death of his son? If anyone could have said, "This is what **הקדוש ברוך הוא** wants, and I accept it," it should have been **יעקב**.

חז"ל explain that **יוסף הצדיק** had learned with his father for seventeen years. He was his father's **תלמיד מובהק**. **יעקב אבינו** essentially said: "You're coming to me with a bloodstained coat and telling me that my son **יוסף** is dead? I refuse to believe it. I invested seventeen years in this child. He is my **תלמיד מובהק**. Until you bring me a body, **וימאן להתנחם**. I will not be consoled."

There was no body. He saw a coat and blood, but: **טרוף טורף יוסף**. Something happened—but I don't know what happened. And therefore, **וימאן להתנחם**. - **יעקב** refused to give up on his child.

That is a message for every parent and every **רבי**: no matter how far a child may have gone, **חס ושלום**, as long as he is alive, we never give up. We continue to **דאוועו**, to hope and to work.

יוסף and the **קריעת ים סוף**

The **חיד"א** explains that the greatest trial of **יוסף הצדיק** was his confrontation with **אשת פוטיפר**. She represented the **נחש**, the **שטן**, and the battle between **חיצוניות** and **פנימיות**.

The **פסוק** says that she grabbed him: **בבגדו**. People often understand this to mean that she grabbed his coat as he ran away. But that is

not what happened. The **פסוק** says: **ויעזוב בגדו בידה וינס**. **יוסף** took off the garment and left it with her. In other words, he said: "The **חיצוניות**—you can have it." And he ran.

יוסף הצדיק broke his **טבע**. He went against his natural inclination and gave up everything rather than sin. Now we can understand: **מה ראה הים וינס**? What did the **ים** see that caused it to flee—to split?

חז"ל bring two versions: the **ים** saw **ארונו של יוסף**, or **עצמותיו של יוסף**.

Why did the **ים** split because of **יוסף**?

Because **יוסף** had gone against **טבע**. Therefore, **מידה כנגד מידה**, the **ים** was forced to go against its own **טבע**.

The **שר של ים** argued: "They are **עובדי עבודה זרה** and we are **עובדי עבודה זרה**. I am the **ים**. I don't split. Why should I go against the **טבע** that You created?"

But then the **ים** saw **ארונו של יוסף**. **יוסף** had broken his **טבע**, and therefore the **ים** had to break its **טבע**. **משה רבנו** was carrying the **ארון** of **יוסף הצדיק**, and in the **זכות** of **יוסף**, the **ים סוף** split.

This also connects the two **וימאן**s:

יוסף—**וימאן יוסף** refused **אשת פוטיפר**. And: **יעקב**—**וימאן יעקב להתנחם** refused to give up on his son. That **וימאן** of **יעקב**, the refusal to give up on **יוסף**, was connected to the **וימאן** of **יוסף** himself. And ultimately, in the **זכות** of **יוסף הצדיק**, the **ים** split.

Why Was **יוסף** Left in **מצרים**?

Now we can understand the final **פסוק** of **ספר בראשית**: **וימת יוסף בן מאה ועשר שנים ויחנטו אותו ויישם בארון במצרים**.

Why was **יוסף** left in **מצרים**? **יעקב** had asked to be buried in **ארץ ישראל**. Why didn't **יוסף** make the same request?

The answer is that **יוסף הצדיק** knew there would come a time when **כלל ישראל** would be trapped at the **ים סוף**. The **ים** would refuse to split because **כלל ישראל** did not yet deserve that **נס**.

But the **ים** would split for **יוסף הצדיק**. Therefore, **יוסף** specifically arranged that his **ארון** should remain in **מצרים**.

The final word of **ספר בראשית** is: **במצרים**. Had **יוסף** been buried in **ארץ ישראל**, the **ים** would not have split. **כלל ישראל** needed the **זכות** of **יוסף**. And without **קריעת ים סוף**, there would have been no **קבלת התורה**. Without **קבלת התורה**, there would be no purpose to the creation of the world.

So the **פסוק** that appears to be the most negative **פסוק** in **ספר בראשית** is actually the **פסוק** that makes the entire future of **כלל ישראל** possible.

That is why, at the conclusion of the **ספר**, we say: **חזק חזק ונתחזק**. What looks like the worst situation may actually be the beginning of the greatest **ישועה**.

When תפילה Is Not Enough

Now we can return to: **מה תצעק אלי?** What was **הקדוש ברוך הוא** telling **משה רבנו?**

There are times when a person must stop crying out and start acting. - **לא המדרש העיקר אלא המעשה**.

נחשון understood this. He entered the **ים**, but as long as he could still breathe, it was not yet **מסירות נפש**. He could still survive. The water kept rising. And only when it reached his nose, when he could no longer breathe, did he reach the point of genuine **מסירות נפש**. - Then the **ים** split.

Sometimes **תפילה** is not enough. To create a **נס**, a person needs **מסירות נפש**. Just as the **מסירות נפש** of **יוסף הצדיק** caused the **ים** to split, the **מסירות נפש** of **נחשון בן עמינדב** caused the **קריעת ים סוף**.

Sometimes a person has the **כוח**, through **מסירות נפש**, to bring about a **נס**.

The Story of Rav Shteinman

I want to tell you an amazing story that happened to me.

I have a high school in America that I started for girls who had gone through terrible abuse and had extremely difficult lives. They were **ממש** living on the streets of Brooklyn. Some were sleeping in Dunkin' Donuts and being given old donuts in the morning. The world had given up on these girls. They had been thrown out of school and had already been on the streets for a year or two.

ברוך השם, הקדוש ברוך הוא gave me the **זכות** and the **דעת** to open a school for them. But despite all the work we did, at the end of the day they went home. And the dysfunction and abuse they experienced at home would undo much of what we had accomplished during the day.

We would work with them all week, and then after they spent **שבת** and the weekend at home, they would come back on Monday, and it was almost as if we had to start again. So we realized that we needed to create a home for them.

We wanted to take a house, create a dormitory, put a family in it, and have room for twenty girls. We had thirty girls in the school, and we felt that twenty of them came from dysfunctional homes.

It was a dream of mine. If I could give these girls a healthy place to come home to after school, with a **פרום** family as their family—eating breakfast together, spending **שבת** together—it would be absolutely amazing.

Everything we accomplished during the day and during the week could continue. We wouldn't lose it every night.

Two years ago, I realized that I needed this dormitory. I went to **רב שטיינמן** for a **ברכה**. I told him: "I need a **ברכה**. We're going to have to raise $300,000, and things in America aren't so good right now. I need a **ברכה** from the **ראש ישיבה** that it should go easily."

I told him honestly: "I want to build a beautiful home for these girls." I had flown all the way from America to receive this **ברכה**.

רב שטיינמן looked at me and said: **וועד זאגט?** Who says that **הקדוש ברוך הוא** wants you to have such a home?

I thought, "What?"

I had come all the way from America! I said, "Maybe the **ראש ישיבה** didn't understand. I want to build a home for **הקדוש ברוך הוא**'s daughters. They're **ממש יתומים בחיי האב**." - I needed a **ברכה**.

And again he said: **וועד זאגט אז הקדוש ברוך הוא וויל אזא היים?**

I walked out of there **ממש צעבראכן**. I thought: "**ר' שטיינמן** thinks this isn't going to happen. I'm wasting my time."

וכך היה. It didn't happen.

A year later, I went back. I had been there for **יום כיפור**, and I returned to **ר' שטיינמן**. I said: "**ר' שטיינמן**, I'm back again. I need to build a home for these girls. They're on the street. I'm begging the **ראש ישיבה**—give me a **ברכה**. I need to build a home."

This time he said: "You're going to have the most beautiful home. You're going to be **מצליח**. You're going to find the money. It isn't going to be **סתם** a home. The **שכינה** is going to be there."

I was amazed.

I'm a little bit of a **מחוצף**, so I said, "**ראש ישיבה**, last year I asked you for the same **ברכה**, and the **ראש ישיבה** said, 'Who says that Hashem wants such a thing?' And this year the **שכינה** is going to be there. **מה נשתנה**? What happened?"

He answered with a **נויטיקע יסוד**—a fundamental principle.

I hadn't seen **ר' שטיינמן** in a year. Thousands of people must have come to him in the meantime. Yet this is what the **גדול הדור** told me:

"Last year, when you came to ask me, you said you **want** a home for the girls. This year, you said you **need** a home for the girls."

He explained: There are many people who **want** to do good.

"I **want** to help the world. I **want** to give **צדקה**. **I want** to build **מוסדות**. **I want שלום בית**."

People **want** many things. But most of the time, nothing happens. There are a few people who **need** something.

"When you **need** something, and it is correct, **הקדוש ברוך הוא** makes it happen."

That was the difference.

From that day on, whenever I deal with **שלום בית**, I tell people: "If you **want שלום בית**, you'll need help. If you **need שלום בית**, you'll have **שלום בית**."

If someone comes and says, "I **need** to get along with my wife," I tell him: "You'll get along with your wife."

If someone says, "I **need** to learn **תורה**," he'll learn **תורה**.

There are thousands of people walking around saying, "I'd like to get along with my wife. I'd like to learn **תורה**. I'd love to go to **מנין**. I'd love to do **חסד**." - But it doesn't happen.

When a person **needs** something, that's when it happens.

That was the **יסוד** the **גדול הדור** taught me:

"A year ago you **wanted** a dorm. Now you **need** a dorm."

And **ברוך השם**, on October 1st, we opened that dorm. The girls finally had a place to go because I **needed** a dorm.

That experience changed my life.

The difference between getting something done and not getting it done is the difference between wanting and needing.

And that is exactly what **הקדוש ברוך הוא** told **משה רבנו**: **?מה תצעק אלי**

We Don't Want — We Need

נחשון בן עמינדב understood something. To make a **נס**—to make something happen—you have to **need** it. He entered the **ים**. The water rose until it covered his nose. At that point, he was no longer saying, "I **want** the water to split." He was saying: "I **need** the water to split, because if it doesn't split, I'm dead."

And the **ים סוף** split.

מה ראה הים וינס?

ארונו של יוסף, עצמות של יוסף.

יוסף didn't merely want to run away from **אשת פוטיפר**. He **needed** to run away.

His father, **דיוקנא דאבוה**, had never given up on him.

The **מדרש** says that **יוסף** understood that if he committed this **עבירה**, his name would not appear on the **חושן**. His name would be erased from **כלל ישראל**. That was not merely a want. That was a need.

And I think that is the lesson of this week's **פרשה**. We have to take our "**I want**" and turn it into "**I need**."

"I want to learn." "I want to grow." "I want to change." "I want **שלום בית**." "I want the best for my children."

No. **I need** the best for my children.

There is a tremendous difference. **I need שלום בית**.

I need to help other people.

I need to learn **תורה**.

Then you have the **ברכה** of the **גדולים**. Then you have **נסים**. Then the **ים** splits.

We Want משיח — But Do We Need משיח?

There is a song that children sing: We want **משיח** now! And there are many people sitting here who want **משיח**. So why isn't **משיח** here?

Perhaps the answer is because we don't **need משיח**.

We have to reach the point where we turn to **הקדוש ברוך הוא** and say:

"We don't just **want משיח**. We **need משיח**."

And if we need **משיח**, then we'll have **משיח**.

How does a person change a want into a need?

By understanding the importance of what he wants.

Understand the importance of learning **תורה**: I need to learn **תורה**.

Understand the importance of **שלום בית**: I need **שלום בית**.

Understand the importance of **חסד**: I need to do **חסד**.

If a person understands, "I cannot live without **שלום בית**," then he will make it happen.

And think about our children. - We don't teach marriage in **ישיבה**. A child's understanding of marriage comes largely from what he sees at home. The **רבי** and **מורה** of marriage are **טאטי** and **מאמי**. If there is no **שלום בית** at home, the children are being taught the wrong lesson about marriage.

So don't merely say: "I want **שלום בית**."

Say: I need **שלום בית**.

Don't say: "I want to learn."

Say: I need to learn.

Don't say: "I want to do **חסד**."

Say: I need to do **חסד**.

וימאן להתנחם

And finally, **וימאן להתנחם**. We have to refuse to be comforted that we are living in **גלות**. A person can say: "I have a parnassah. I have a **שול**. I have a **מנין**. I learn **דף יומי**. Everything is good."

No. **וימאן להתנחם**. This is not good. We are in **גלות**. The **שכינה** is in **גלות**.

וימאן להתנחם—I refuse to be comforted while the **שכינה**, while **הקדוש ברוך הוא**, is in **גלות**.

I don't care how much money I have. I don't care that I have freedom of religion. The **שכינה** is in **גלות**.

Our children are suffering. We are suffering. **כלל ישראל** is suffering. People don't have **פרנסה**. People are struggling to have children. People are struggling with **שלום בית**. Hospitals are full of **יידן** who are critically and terminally ill.

כלל ישראל is in **גלות**. The **שכינה** is in **גלות**.

So do we **want משיח**? No.

We **need משיח**.

And perhaps when we reach that point within ourselves—when each person truly feels that he **needs משיח**, and we stop merely saying **מה תצעק אלי** and start doing something about it—then, **בעזרת השם**, **בקרוב ממש, משיח** will come, and we will return to the **בית המקדש**.

R' Moshe Sofer ZT'L (Chasam Sofer) would say:

'Rather than curing patients once they become ill, the aim of a 'family-doctor' is to keep them healthy in the first place. Similarly, Hashem is our 'family-doctor', who has given us the Torah for our spiritual health. When we 'prescribe' to His mitzvot, it prevents all kinds of spiritual maladies.'



Celebrating Potential

The new year for trees is an exception. What happens on this day? And why do we celebrate it? If we were to celebrate the date when the trees become adorned with fruits, it's understandable. The date we celebrate for the trees is actually at a time when the trees are barren and cold, naked, orphaned from their foliage and orphaned from their produce. Yet this day became the Rosh Hashanah for trees.

What is the meaning of this? And how do we celebrate? We celebrate it by eating fruits from the tree, which at this point the tree is not capable of producing.

What is the message of this? In the land of Israel at this point, most of the winter's rain has already saturated the earth. By this day, the fifteenth day of Shevat, we can be sure that a new vitality, a new sap, ascends into the tree, allowing for its future rejuvenation. At the surface, there's nothing going on right now.

But that is only on the surface. Tu B'shevat is the celebration of potential, invisible potential, but real and authentic. All of the future growth of the tree is possible only because of the sap rising in the tree at the time of the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat. The potential has been created, and that is what we celebrate today.

At the surface, you say I don't see any change whatsoever. The trees are barren and lifeless, but precisely at this moment, life secretly started to develop anew in this tree. You can't always see the fruit, but you can still celebrate the process of growth itself, because the most important thing in life is to identify and celebrate the existing potential, not getting frustrated by the process, and imagining the final product right now, to the point that we already sit down and we take fruits and we put it on the table and we say

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ.

Wait, the trees are dead? No, no, no. We don't see death. We see the potential for life, and we already are filled with joy as though the process has been completed, even though it has not been completed. This is a very comforting message in today's day. Many of us are on lockdown.

Our lives have been transformed. Many of us have suffered significantly with the onset of this horrific pandemic. Everyone's life has been affected. There is fear, there is anxiety.

There are those loved ones who we had to say goodbye to. And the finality is devastating. And the future seems bleak. Nobody knows what's going to happen. Will we have this under control at some point? Will life go back to normal?

And yet, I think that this message of the fifteenth day of Shevat teaches us something very powerful, and that is real transformation happens in silence. Real transformation happens during those times in our lives when it doesn't seem like a lot of good things are happening. That moment when the trees celebrate their birthdays are not moments that at the surface seem so promising. Whenever you have to give birth to a new reality, a new concept, a new emotion, a new experience, a new opening in your life, often you have to lose everything from the past.

The seed cannot morph into a tree if it's not decomposed. If you wanted the seed should be maintained as a seed on your windowsill, that's wonderful, but it's never going to be able to be transformed into a tree. It has to go through the stages of decomposition in order to be able to be metamorphosized into something completely new. And that metamorphosis is never visible.

It's going to take a lot of time till we're going to see the results. But don't lose your enthusiasm and your passion during those moments.

They once asked Winston Churchill what his definition of success was. And Churchill said, 'my definition of success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm in the process.'

And of course what he meant is that's exactly how you're going to succeed.



Timeless Truths by Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

"In Shemos (14:15) Hashem says, וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מַה־תִּצְעַק אֵלָי דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִסָּעוּ – 'Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them journey forth!'

This can be interpreted as follows:

Instead of crying out to Me to bring Moshiach, speak to the Jewish people that they take the initiative to repent; If they do so, Moshiach will come at once!" ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk. (Chassidim Mesaprim, Rabbi Y.L. Levin, z"l)

