

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Beshalach

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Tu B'Shvat: Hope for the Present

Russell Levy

The New Year for trees is on the first of Shevat according to Beit Shammai.

What is the reason? R' Eliezer related in the name of R' Oshiah...Even though most of the winter is still ahead, the majority of the rain has already fallen. (Rosh Hashana 14a)

Two weeks ago, we expanded upon the opinion of Beit Shammai, that *Rosh Hashana L'Ilanot* (the New Year for trees) is on Rosh Chodesh Shevat. As we explained then, a Jew must realize, in the depths of the winter of our galut, that, like the moon, we have the power to rejuvenate, to grow, to reach for the heavens, and to bring about a speedy geulah.

As beautiful as that idea seems, Beit Hillel, whose school of thought has dominated the Jewish world for almost two millennia, rejects this date and sets the New Year two weeks later, on 15 Shevat, Tu B'Shvat. What is missing in the message of Beit Shammai, and what enhancement of this message comes with fixing the date of this New Year to the 15th?

R' Shimshon Raphael Hirsch noted a parallel between our national path,

and the moon's own path (Shemot 12:2):

"G-d called the future leader of His people out into the open, showed him the narrow crescent of the moon struggling out of complete darkness into new light, and spake 'This is to be your model'. Just as it, bound by physical laws, rejuvenates itself, so are you, but of your own free will, to create your own rejuvenations."

R' Yehuda Loew ben Bezalel, the Maharal of Prague, in his work *Gevurot Hashem* (Siman 46), took a similar route, explaining that the full moon represents Klal Yisrael's potential of spiritual perfection. The moon lights our way in our *Derech Hashem*, and it is for that reason that both Pesach and Sukkot are set in the middle of the month, on the 15th. (Shavuot may be seen as a continuation of Pesach; in Mishnaic times it was referred to as Atzeret, the final assembly day of Pesach.)

The fifteenth of the month is when we

can reach our spiritual highs – recreating both the miraculous Yetziat Mitzrayim on Pesach, and the spiritual and physical protection afforded us in the desert on Sukkot. In the middle of the month we are reminded that we are more than the New Moon, which waxes and wanes. We, the Jewish People, are limitless in our ability to connect with G-d; even when we feel that we, either as a nation or as individuals, are broken, downtrodden, or distant from G-d, we must remember we need not wait for our full geulah to reach out to Him. Every day we have the opportunity to reach the spiritual high through our own, personal *Derech Hashem*.

Perhaps this is why Beit Hillel disagreed with Beit Shammai. Beit Shammai instills in us a sense of hope for the future: "I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Mashiach. Even though he may tarry, I nonetheless still wait for him on whatever day he will come." Or as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all. And so today I still have a dream."

Nonetheless, the students of Beit Hillel understand that some may waver in our vision of a full redemption, and they instruct us not to do so. The fifteenth of the month reminds us that the spiritual perfection of the times of the Mashiach is not just a future aspiration; if we strive for it, we can create it in each of our lives today. When we do so, not only will we lead more fulfilling lives, but we will also turn our dreams into reality.

Parshah Questions

Meir Lipschitz

(Sources are provided to help the reader research answers)

- What is meant by HaShem's words *מה תצעק אלי*? (Shemot Rabbah 21:1-8)
- What do the words *וברוח אפיק נערמו מים* refer to? (Rashi, Onkelos, Rashbam, Ibn Ezra, Seforno, Malbim and Netziv to Shemot 15:8)
- Why is it significant that the Jews left Egypt *בבקר רמה*? (Rashi, Rashbam, Ramban, Baal HaTurim, Ibn Ezra, Seforno, Chizkuni, Ohr HaChaim, Malbim, Netziv, and Shaarei Aharon to Shemot 14:8)
- For children: What is the connection between the war with Amalek and the Manna? (Rashi Shemot 17:8)

mlipschitz@torontotorah.com

rlevy@torontotorah.com



Yeshiva University
Center for the Jewish Future



In a passage particularly appropriate for Tu b'Shevat, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai advised his students that if you are planting a tree when someone tells you that Mashiach has arrived, you should finish planting the tree before going to greet Mashiach. (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 31) We emphasize the practical rather than the supernatural.

The Jews' flight from Egypt teaches the same lesson. The Torah describes two possible routes, one hugging the shore of the Mediterranean to enter the southern part of Israel, the other heading east into the desert before turning north and finally west into Israel. Following the Mediterranean route would have been sensible: It was shorter; There would be better roads near the ports; Food would have been widely available in this cultivated area; There would have been no standoff at the Red Sea. And yet, Gd opted for the long way around, lest the Jews encounter war with the Sea People who lived along the short route, and stubbornly insist upon returning to Egypt rather than push onward.

Recognize the irony: The mighty Gd who is capable of bringing hail and frogs and lice, of slaughtering the Egyptian cattle and turning the Nile to blood and splitting Yam Suf, who can harden the heart of the Egyptian Pharaoh even as He melts the hearts of the Egyptian nation, this unstoppable force

to end all unstoppable forces, confronts the immovable object - the stubbornness of the Jews - and changes His plans accordingly.

Gd doesn't look for magic bullet solutions; He takes the practical, step-by-step course, because He realistically recognizes the Jews' unreadiness.

Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai also believed in taking the practical route, and not only in planting trees. At one point during the Roman siege of Yerushalayim two thousand years ago, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai found himself standing toe-to-toe with General Vespasian. Vespasian, Emperor-elect, offered to fulfill any request that Rabban Yochanan might make. Another man in Rabban Yochanan's place might have asked that the Romans back off and leave Yerushalayim alone, but Rabban Yochanan instead asked for lesser favors. Why?! As the Gemara explains (Gittin 56b), R' Yochanan knew that if he asked too much, he might achieve nothing.

HaShem compared the Jewish people to both the stars in the heavens and the sand at the shore. The stars are unreachable from earth, twinkling in the heavens far above. The sand lies beneath our feet, tangible and close at hand. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai understood the lesson of the stars and sand: Though our righteousness might transcend earthly

bonds, our national and individual lives are yet bound by *derech eretz*. Our merit is supernatural, but our actions must be grounded in reality.

And yet: We dare not forget the stars! HaShem may take the Jews around the Philistines, but His eyes are always on Har Sinai, and the eventual union of Deity and man in the Beit haMikdash. Rabban Yochanan will settle for saving the Torah and losing Yerushalayim to the Romans, but his eye is always on rebuilding the Beit haMikdash. Implementation must be practical, but goals must be impractical.

On his deathbed, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai sobbed in fear meeting his Maker, because even he had not accomplished all of his goals, he had not fulfilled all of his expectations. (Avot d'Rabbi Natan 1:25) Yes, Rabban Yochanan opted for small, practical steps, but in setting long-term goals he was most unrealistic, aiming for targets as high and distant as he could fathom.

We must be optimists beyond optimists. We must set impractical, impossible goals, whether in philanthropy or education or religious observance or anything else - and then find small, practical, achievable ways to work toward them.

A gemara (Taanit 23a) says that Choni saw a man planting a carob seed and asked him, "How long will it take for that tree to bear fruit?" To which the man replied, "Seventy years." Choni, taken aback, asked, "Do you think you're going to live long enough to eat fruit from the tree?" And the man said, "No, but just as I came into the world and found fruit-bearing trees, so I will leave fruit-bearing trees for my grandchildren."

This is another example of an impractical, unrealistic goal: One individual cannot, personally, replenish the world for his grandchildren and provide for all of their needs. But this man established a goal in the stars for himself, and then he, like Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, and like HaShem working with the Jews in this morning's parshah, took baby steps through the sand toward achieving it.

The 613 Mitzvot – Mitzvah 21 : Talking about our departure from Egypt

The Torah expresses the mitzvah of *sippur yetziat mitzrayim* (re-telling the account of leaving Egypt) as a two-part mitzvah: (1) To talk about the events of our departure from Egypt, and (2) To thank Gd for engineering that miracle. The Torah says we should do this while eating the *korban pesach*, and so we, in the absence of a *korban*, do this at our *seder*.

The Tzlach (Berachot 12b) noted that there is a separate mitzvah of mentioning our departure from Egypt

on a daily basis, and the gemara even discusses the possibility that such a mitzvah might apply nightly as well. Nonetheless, that on-going mitzvah is not included in the standard count of the 613 mitzvot. The Tzlach suggested that this omission may be because the *pasuk* from which the lesson is derived says, "So that you will remember," and does not command, "You shall remember."

torczyner@torontotorah.com

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Ha'Am V'Ha'Aretz

Rabeinu Nissim of Gerona

Netanel Javasky

Torah in Translation Derashos HaRan #11

The Torah states, after the splitting of the Sea, "And they (Bnei Yisrael) believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant." If so, it appears that before this point their faith was not complete.

One could suggest that immediately after Moshe performed the signs (when he first returned to Egypt *NJ*), they believed him completely, as it says, "And the nation believed." For why should they believe Moshe more after the events of the splitting of the Sea than while he was performing great miracles in Egypt; they all broke the laws of nature! And the explanation of this matter (how they had faith, lost faith and then regained faith *NJ*) can explain many great questions that arise regarding the exodus from Egypt.

Originally when Moshe performed the signs, everyone believed him entirely. However, afterwards, they all saw puzzling matters which required explaining. First, if Hashem remembered the children of Israel and wanted to save them from Egypt and give them the land which He had promised their forefathers... why would Moshe then go and trick Paroh and say to him, "The G-d of the Hebrews has called upon us. Now, let us go a three days' journey..." That is the way of slaves, who have no power, and are attempting to run from their masters! Why would Moshe and Aharon, the messengers of G-d, not confront Paroh and say that the time has come for Israel to be redeemed and they are no longer to be slaves? Was the hand of G-d too weak to cause the humbling of Paroh's heart to agree to this, had they approached him openly? If ten plagues would not have been enough to accomplish this, then He could have added many more!

This is truly a matter which could cause Bnei Yisrael to doubt the mission of Moshe, even though they had originally believed Moshe, as the Torah states, "And the nation believed." If in fact Moshe was the messenger of G-d as he claimed to be, why was he scared to approach Paroh openly?...

Furthermore, when G-d says to Moshe, "Please speak to the Nation and they should borrow (vessels from the Egyptians *NJ*)," this appears very strange and puzzling. Even though the Egyptians owed them their wages for enslaving them - as the Gemara in Sanhedrin says - nonetheless, they

Rabeinu Nissim ben Reuven of Gerona, more commonly known by the Hebrew acronym of his name, נ"ר (Ran), was born in Barcelona, in the year 1320. A physician by trade, the Ran was recognized as the Halachic authority of his time throughout Spain and beyond, receiving questions from as far away as the Land of Israel.

While little is known about the life of the Ran, his prize student, the Rivash (Rav Yitzchak bar Sheishet) writes that he, the Ran and one of the Ran's sons, were all thrown in jail together for six months on false accusations.

The Ran authored thousands of responsa, of which only a small number have been preserved. He also authored a comprehensive commentary on the Rif, Rav Yitzchak Alfasi, as well as a commentary on the Talmud. In addition, he published a philosophical work, *Derashot HaRan*, with twelve essays.

The Ran died in Gerona in 1380.

njavasky@torontotorah.com

should not have approached the Egyptians in this deceitful manner. Even if the Jews did not have the upper hand, this was not appropriate. Given that they had the Hand of G-d with them, why was this trick necessary? They should have approached the Egyptians and said, "Give us our wages!" ...

The answer to these two questions is one idea... G-d wanted to punish the Egyptians in the sea, as they had done to Bnei Yisrael; like Yitro said, "For in the very manner in which they had conspired against them (they themselves were killed *NJ*)."
G-d wanted the Egyptians to enter the sea through their own free will. Had Moshe approached Paroh originally and told him that the time had come for the Jewish redemption, he would have surely agreed, due to the severity of the plagues, to let the Jewish people out, and to refrain from chasing them afterward. Why would Paroh chase after them if he just let them go? Therefore, G-d did not want Moshe to

Ashkelon

Having served as a southern seaport of the Holy Land for centuries, Ashkelon is truly a city of history. Indeed, excavations of Ashkelon have unearthed some remarkable findings. Perhaps the most striking was the discovery of a bronze and silver calf the scholars have dated to over 3,500 years ago, around the same time of the Golden Calf of the Jews in the desert.

The magnificent beaches of Ashkelon were the ideal setting for Samson's seduction by a beautiful Philistine woman, Delilah. Later, David heard of the death of King Saul and mourned greatly, saying: "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice" [2 Samuel 1:20].

Ashkelon reached its zenith as a major city under Herod's rule in the Roman era, when its wines were exported throughout the Empire.

By the 20th century, Ashkelon had become a dusty little village and after the Israel War of Independence (1948) its re-growth began. Today Ashkelon is a bustling resort, home of one of the most popular marinas in the eastern Mediterranean.

tell Paroh the truth, but rather to say that the Jewish people were leaving for three days. Therefore, once people told Paroh that the Jews had run away (i.e. they were not coming back *NJ*), Paroh thought that Moshe's agenda did not originate from G-d; had it been from G-d, why would he need all this trickery? For this reason too, G-d commanded the Bnei Yisrael to "borrow" the vessels...

This is why the children of Israel developed doubts about Moshe's mission, even though they had originally believed him. The Torah hints at this when it says, "And Israel saw the great hand which Hashem used on the Egyptians and the Nation feared Hashem, and they believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant." In other words, at that point they recognized that all the events that had transpired, and all of the items which had raised doubts regarding Moshe, were all just to enable the Egyptians to enter into the Sea.

njavasky@torontotorah.com

את ההלל כחלק מחובת החג. בכל החגים למעט פסח, אנו גומרים את ההלל. לעומת זאת, בפסח אנו גומרים את ההלל רק ביום הראשון (וביו"ט שני בחו"ל) ובשאר הימים אין אנו גומרים את ההלל אלא אומרים הלל חלקי, כך מסביר זאת המחבר, ר' יוסף קארו, בבית יוסף אורח חיים סימן ת"צ אות ד:

כל הימים של חול המועד ושני ימים אחרונים של י"ט קורין ההלל ואין גומרין אותו. כך מפורש בערכין פרק ב' (י) והתם יהבינן טעמא מאי שנא בחג דאמרין כל יומא ומאי שנא בפסח דלא אמרין כל יומא. ושכלי הלקט (סי' קעד סט:) כתב בשם מדרש הרנינו פרשת סוכה שהטעם שאין גומרין ההלל כל ימי הפסח הוא לפי שנטבעו המצריים וכתב (משלי כד יז) בנפול אויבך אל תשמוח.

הבית יוסף מביא כאן הסבר שיש לו הסכמה רחבה גם במפרשי השולחן ערוך אחריו, ה"ט"ז והמשנה ברורה. בעקבות כך שבשיעור של פסח לא גומרים את ההלל כך אין גומרים אותו בשאר ימי חול המועד כיוון שחשיבותו של יו"ט גדולה מחוה"מ ואם ביו"ט אחרון אין הלל שלם כך יהיה גם בשאר ימי חוה"מ. בתחילת דבריו מביא הב"י את דברי הגמרא בערכין י עמוד ב כמקור לחלוקה של פסח משאר הימים הטובים בדיון של הלל. הגמרא בערכין י ע"א א-ב:

מאי שנא בחג דאמרין כל יומא, ומאי שנא בפסח דלא אמרין כל יומא? דחג חלוקין בקרבנותיהן, דפסח אין חלוקין בקרבנותיהן.

מהגמרא בערכין נראה שיש טעם אחר מזה שנותן הבית יוסף. כיצד יכלו הפוסקים להתעלם מהטעם המפורש בגמרא? מדוע הגמרא לא מזכירה במפורש את הקשר בין אמירת הלל לטביעת המצרים? מה אנו יכולים ללמוד מכך לגבי שאלותינו הנ"ל? התשובות לכך בשיעור א"י"ה ביום ראשון.

izolberg@torontotorah.com

מקלסין אותי, כך ישראל היו נתונים בצרה בים, באו מלאכי השרת לקלס להקב"ה נזף בהם, אמר להם הקב"ה בני נתונים בצרה, ואתם מקלסין לפני?

וכן מובא במדרש שמות רבה פרשה כג אות ז:

"א"ר יוחנן בקשו המלאכים לומר שירה לפני הקב"ה באותו הלילה שעברו ישראל את הים ולא הניחן הקב"ה א"ל לגיונותי נתונין בצרה ואתם אומרים לפני שירה, הה"ד ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה,

כבר בשלב הזה אפשר לראות שלא כמסכת מגילה המדרשים, המלאכים אינם נמנעים משירה מפני צרתן של מצרים אלא מפני צרתן של ישראל. הפסוק ממנו לומדים את הדרשה הוא אותו הפסוק "ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה" (שמות יד, כ). מהי הדרשה היותר מתאימה לפסוק? מדרש נתנומא ממשך:

כיון שעלו מן הים בקשו ישראל ומלאכי השרת לומר שירה, אמר ר' אבין הלוי למה הדבר דומה, למלך שירד למלחמה ונצח, ובאו בנו ועבדו ועטרה בידם ליתן בראשו של מלך, באו למלך ואמרו לו בנך ועבדך עומדים ועטרה בידם, מי יכנס תחילה, אמר להם שוטים שבעולם, עבדי קודם לבני, יכנס בני תחילה, כך כיון שעלו ישראל מן הים, באו ישראל ומלאכי השרת לומר שירה, אמר הקב"ה למלאכי השרת הניחו לישראל תחילה, אז ישיר משה [ובני ישראל].

לא זו בלבד שהמדרש מתעלם מצרתם של המצרים בניגוד מוחלט למסכת מגילה הנ"ל, אלא עוד מוסיף המדרש כהנה וכהנה. עכשיו, לאחר הנס, גם מלאכי השרת רוצים לקלס ולשבח לה' אך ה' מעכב אותם כיוון שישראל ראויים יותר בשעה זו לשבח את ה' ולשיר לשמו. האם יש דרך ליישב את הסתירה העמוקה שיש בין הגמרא במסכת מגילה ובין המדרש נתנומא?

בהמשך השיעור נעניי בהכלה למעשה היוצאת מן הפרשה שלנו. במהלך החגים שלנו, אנו קוראים

הדברים הבאים הם בסיס לשיעור שינתן ביום ראשון הקרוב ע"י איתמר זולברג. המקורות ילמדו בשיעור.

בפרשת השבוע אנו רואים את המעמד הגדול של קריעת ים סוף. חז"ל מתארים את קריעת ים סוף, לא רק כתופעה יוצאת מן הכלל אלא גם כמעמד נבואי בלתי רגיל: "ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראו יחזקאל וישעיה" בני ישראל פוצחים בשירת הים, שירה המלאה בנבואה על בית המקדש. אך מה קרה בעולמות העליונים באותה שעה? בעינינו נראה כי ישנם טובים וישנם רעים, אך כלפי שמיא כולם הם מעשי ידיו. הגמרא במגילה י עמוד ב שואלת על כך:

ומי חדי הקדוש ברוך הוא במפלתן של רשעים? והא כתיב (דברי הימים ב' כ) בצאת לפני החלוץ ואמרין הודו לה' כי לעולם חסדו, ואמר רבי יוחנן: מפני מה לא נאמר כי טוב בהודאה זו - לפי שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא שמח במפלתן של רשעים. ואמר רבי יוחנן: מאי דכתיב (שמות י"ד) ולא קרב זה אל זה כל הלילה - בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה, אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: מעשה ידי טובעין בים ואתם אומרים שירה?

מדברי הגמרא נראה כי הקב"ה חס על מעשיו ואינו שמח על מפלתן של רשעים מאומות העולם. מה לגבינו, האם לנו מותרת השמחה במפלתן של רשעים? האם לישראל היה מותר לומר שירה על מפלתן של מצרים?

הפסוק במשלי כד פסוק יז: "בנפול אויבך אל תשמוח" מראה לנו שיש בעיה, לא רק כלפי שמיא אלא אף לנו, לשמוח במפלת האויב. המדרש הבא נתנומא פרשת בשלח יג משנה קצת את התמונה:

בשעה שהיו ישראל חונים על הים באו מלאכי השרת לקלס להקב"ה, ולא הניחן הקב"ה, שנאמר ולא קרב זה אל זה וגו' (שמות יד כ), ואומר וקרא זה אל זה (ישעיה ו ג), למי היו דומים, למלך שנשבה בנו, לבש נקמה באויביו והלך להביא אותו. ובאו הבריות לומר לו אימנון, אמר להן לכשאני פודה את בני אתם

Schedule for the Week of Jan 30, 15 Shevat

Friday, January 29

8:00PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Oneg Shabbat: *Tu B'Shevat in India, Argentina and Poland*, 81 Franklin Ave, Thornhill

Shabbat, January 30

7:50AM R' Azarya Berzon, Ramban al haTorah, *Or Chaim*

Following Hashkama R' Azarya Berzon, Clanton Park

Young Families Lunch: R' Mordechai Torczyner, What the Trees Taught Me, BAYT

45 Minutes Before Mincha: R' Azarya Berzon, What do we take from Mitzrayim?, Clanton Park

Sunday, January 31

Community Beit Midrash: R' Azarya Berzon, Hiddur Mitzvah, FHJC

8:45AM R' Mordechai Torczyner: The Laws of Yichud for Doctors and Patients, BAYT

9:15AM Itamar Zolberg: May One Sing When The Egyptians Are Drowning?, *Zichron Yisrael Men and Women* בעברית

8:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: Masechet Kiddushin in-depth, Shaarei Shomayim

Monday, February 1

8:00AM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Breakfast and Learn at FHJC: The Haitian Aid Worker's Dilemma: Save Myself, or Save Others?

8:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: Rambam's Hilchot Talmud Torah, Clanton Park Men

8:45PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: B'nai Akiva Monday Night Learning, Bnai Torah

Tuesday, February 2

11:00AM R' Azarya Berzon: Masechet Sukkah (Advanced), Clanton Park Men

1:30PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Trei Asar-The Twelve Prophets, Shaarei Shomayim Women, with Mekorot

8:00PM Netanel Javasky: Shiur in Parsha, Westmount Men and Women

8:30PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Minchat Chinuch, Clanton Park Men

Wednesday, February 3

10:00AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Weekly Torah Class, 239 Franklin, **Babysitting provided Women**

7:30PM Meir Lipschitz, Ramchal's Derech Hashem, Kehillat Shaarei Torah Men and Women

8:45PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Tzibburology IV, BAYT Men and Women

Thursday, February 4

11:00AM R' Azarya Berzon: Masechet Sukkah (Advanced), Clanton Park Men

3:40PM R' Azarya Berzon: Hilchot Muktzah (Advanced), Clanton Park Men

7:00PM R' Azarya Berzon: Shiur for Fathers at Or Chaim

8:00PM Netanel Javasky: Halachah and 21st Century Medicine, B'nai Torah Men and Women **Cancelled this week**

8:30PM R' Azarya Berzon: Machshavah and Life Issues, Clanton Park Men