

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Beshalach

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The Road to Redemption

Yair Manas

Towards the beginning of our parshah (Shemot 13:18), the Torah tells us that the Jewish people left Egypt *chamushim*. Rashi, quoting a midrash, provides two explanations of this term. First, he suggests that *chamushim* means "armed". Rashi then quotes a few sources, as well as the explanation of Onkelos, to demonstrate that *chamushim* means "armed." Rashi then quotes a second explanation, suggesting that *chamushim* means "reduced to one-fifth". He suggests that only 20% of the Jews left Egypt, while the other 80% died in Egypt.

Rashi elsewhere (Shemot 10:22) provides more details to support this claim that 80% of the Jews died in Egypt. According to Rashi, Jews who were "wicked" died during the plague of Darkness, so that the Egyptians would not see the deaths of these Jews and think that G-d had struck down the Jews just as He had struck down the Egyptians.

Examining Rashi's words closely, we see that he notes that the "wicked" were killed in Egypt. We can infer that the ones to leave Egypt must not have been wicked; otherwise, they too would have died during the plague of Darkness. Therefore, the 20% of the Jews that left Egypt must not have been wicked. Yet, this idea presents us with a problem.

Shemot 14:22 says that the Jewish people "entered into the sea, on dry land, and the water was a barrier on the right side and on the left side." However, Shemot 14:29 says, "the Jewish people went on dry land within the sea." First, the Torah tells us that the Jews entered into the sea, which may be taken to mean that they entered the water itself. Second, the Torah says that they entered the dry land that was within the sea. Which is it - did the Jews enter the sea, or did the Jews enter the dry land within the sea? Further, why does the Torah need to tell us that the Jews entered into the sea twice?

The Vilna Gaon (Kol Eliyahu Shemot 57) contends that these verses refer to two groups that entered the sea. The group of completely righteous people, those with devout faith and belief in the salvation of G-d, immediately entered the sea while it was still roaring. These are the people that the Torah describes as having "entered the sea, on dry land," for they entered while it was still a sea. This group, led by Nachshon ben Aminadav and the tribe of Yehudah, believed that G-d would save them, and demonstrated their belief by entering the sea. The second group consisted of those who did not believe as much as the first group, and only fully believed that G-d would save them when they saw the sea turn to dry land. This group

entered the dry land that was within the sea.

According to the explanation of the Vilna Gaon, the group who entered the dry land within the sea did not fully believe that G-d would save them. If so, why did these people not die during the plague of Darkness? Shouldn't these people have been considered "wicked"?

This question can be answered via a midrash. (Mechilta d'Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai 14) In the midrash, Rabbi Meir taught that each person said "I will go first" into the water. Rabbi Yochanan taught that each person said "I will not go first" into the water. Although the midrash presents this as an argument, Rabbi Matis Blum suggests that perhaps this was not an argument. Initially, each person said that he will go first, but when the Jews actually approached the sea, each person said "I will not go first." According to this explanation, we can suggest that the Jews who left Egypt had good intentions: each Jew believed that G-d would save the Jewish people. However, when faced with a trial these Jews failed to act on their belief. The Jews who held back, and only went into the sea once it was already dry, were included in the 20% that left Egypt because of their good intentions.

Having good intentions is not as ideal as acting on those intentions, but having the right intentions is enough to make a person not "wicked". Intentions form the person that we strive to become, and having good intentions is what caused people who were not righteous to be redeemed from Egypt. There is an idiom, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions," but we see from our parshah that the road to redemption can also be paved with good intentions.

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ברוך דיין האמת
We extend our condolences to
Eli and Renee Rubinstein on the passing of
Eli's mother Judith Rubinstein z"l
and
Ben and Roz Schultz on the passing of
Ben's mother Molly Schultz z"l
May the families be comforted
among the mourners of Zion and Yerushalayim

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When the Jews arrive in the Sin Desert, the Torah (Shemot 16:1) gives us the date of the story that follows; it is the fifteenth day of the second month since their departure from Egypt. By counting in this manner, the Torah fulfills its own commandment from last week's parshah (Shemot 12:2): this month (i.e. Nisan) will be the first of your year's months. This mitzvah, as explained by Ramban there, obligates us to count all the months in a numerical manner, starting from Nisan as the first, in order to serve as a reminder of the Exodus.

As Ramban himself indicates, this manner of counting fell out of use in the days of Ezra; when the Jews came back from Babylon, they brought with them the Babylonian names for the months. The reason for that, per Ramban, was to provide a reminder of the second national salvation, our redemption from Babylon.

In recent generations, though, another change has occurred. It seems that today, many Torah-observant Jews hardly live their lives by the Hebrew calendar, whether counting first and second months or naming the months as Nisan and Iyar. In most areas of life, even among ourselves or in religious matters, we tend to use the 'civil calendar', also known as the Gregorian calendar. This has triggered an ongoing debate between halachic authorities.

Chatam Sofer (Torat Moshe on Shemot 12) and Maharam Schick (Yoreh Deah 171) opposed this practice vigorously, while others were more lenient. Rav Ovadia Yosef, in an exhaustive responsum on the subject (Yabia Omer 3:9), notes that the Chatam Sofer himself, when writing to the

government, used the civil date. Rav Yosef concludes that all agree that when speaking with a non-Jew one may use a civil date, and perhaps one could even do so among Jews where that would be more comfortable. The reasons are various, including a suggestion that the mitzvah does not require use of numbers, and a suggestion that one violates the mitzvah only by counting from a month other than Nisan, not by naming the months.

A very interesting opinion is offered by Rabbi Asher Weiss. (Minchat Asher, Shemot 14) He suggests that because the months in the civil calendar are solar rather than lunar, the mitzvah of counting them in a certain manner is irrelevant. Seen in this way, the civil calendar is supplementary for the Hebrew one, but does not replace it.

In my humble opinion, the idea of Rabbi Weiss fits Ezra's change to the calendar, the Babylonian names, very well. Perhaps here, too, Ezra did not change the existing system, but only added to it. The Jews were expected to remember Yetziat Mitzraim, and also to add this reminder of the second redemption.

This understanding is important, because it can urge us not only to find leniencies to permit use of the civil calendar, but also to see where we can use the Hebrew one as well. This would ensure that the civil calendar would only be an addition, not a replacement.

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Hitoriri:
Jewish Spirituality
Adding Sweetener
Hillel Horovitz

כאשר בני ישראל מגיעים ל"מרה" ולא יכולים לשתות מהמים, משה זורק עץ לתוך המים והם מומתקים. אחת השאלות שמעלים הפרשנים היא, מדוע נצרך הניסיון הזה ומה הוא בא ללמד את בני ישראל? ננסה לענות על כך באמצעות שאלה אחרת, באותה הפרשייה הדנה באשר ארע ב"מרה" מופיע הפסוק הבא: "שם שם לו חוק ומשפט ושם נסהו." מהו אותו חוק ומשפט שניתן במרה?

החלוקה הקלאסית במפרשים היא להסביר ש"חוק" הוא מצווה או כלל, הניתן לנו, ואנו לא בהכרח מבינים. "משפט" לעומת זאת הוא כלל אותו אנו מבינים או נותנים לו טעם. הקב"ה מוציא את ישראל ממצרים, מעניש את המצרים וקורע לבני ישראל את הים. התחושה הכללית מן הסתם של בני ישראל היא שהקב"ה ינחה אותם תמיד בהנחיה ניסית ושהם לעולם לא יתקלו בקושי גשמי שנית. בהגיעם ל"מרה" מלמד הקב"ה את בני ישראל שהעולם עדיין במנהגו נוהג וישנם גם קשיים טבעיים שעדיין עומדים בפניהם, ישנם עדיין חוק ומשפט לטבע העולם ועל בני ישראל להתמודד עם ניסיון זה.

ניתן אולם לקחת רעיון זה צעד נוסף קדימה. הקב"ה מלמד את בני ישראל כי בהנהגת הקב"ה בעולמו ישנם גם קשיים. לא כל הנהגתו של הקב"ה מתגלה בחסד וברחמים, וחלק נכבד מהנהגתו של הקב"ה בעולמו היא במידת הדין. בני ישראל צריכים ללמוד שיש "חוק" בעולם. ישנם דברים לא מובנים, ישנם קשיים שהקב"ה מזמן לנו ועלינו לקבל אותם ולא לתמוה על מציאותם, ישנה גם מרירות בעולם.

אם כן מהו הפתרון לאותה מרירות שאיננו יכולים להבין? הפסוק אומר: "ויורהו ד' עץ וישלך אל המים וימתקו המים." התורה משתמשת בלשון של "ויורהו" מלשון הוראה, לימוד. התורה מורה לנו כי ישנו "עץ" שאם אנו נשתמש בו נוכל להמתיק את המרירות. התורה נמשלה לעץ, "עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה." אם נדע לאחוז ב"עץ" נוכל להתמודד עם קשיי העולם ולהפוך מר למתוק. עד עתה הקב"ה דאג לכל צרכיהם של בני ישראל ותיקן למענם את העולם. מעתה, מוטלת האחריות על בני ישראל, לאזור חיל ולהשתמש בכוח התורה בכדי להפוך את המר למתוק. משום הקב"ה לא פותר את הבעיה בשביל בני ישראל אלא מלמד את משה כיצד הוא יכול לפתור את הבעיה. זהו הניסיון שהחל ב"מרה", וממשיך עד עצם היום הזה. הניסיון לדעת ולהפוך מר למתוק.

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613 Mitzvot: #240
Embarrassing Others
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Mitzvah 240 instructs us not to embarrass others. As the sages explained (Sifra Kedoshim 2), this is intended to limit the mitzvah of rebuke (#239). We are to rebuke repeatedly, but not to the point of embarrassing another publicly.

The Gemara describes embarrassing another person as "whitening his face," in that one causes the blood to drain from his face. Playing on that physiological manifestation, the gemara compares embarrassing someone to murder. Indeed, King

David is cited (Bava Metzia 59a) as remarking, "One who commits adultery is subject to capital punishment but will enter the Next World; one who whitens the face of another in public loses his portion in the Next World." This is the seriousness of our obligation to guard the honour of others.

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**Torah in Translation
Matzah Machines****Rabbi Avraham Sofer****Ktav Sofer Orach Chaim Nosafot 2****Translated by R' Mordechai Torczyner**

I have been asked about the machine on which they bake matzah; word that it is used for baking in our community has reached his honour's ears. Because his honour is pressing, I have hastened to respond, although the day causes me to be brief in my statements. I will speak the truth in brief.

For many years, the bakers have asked me to permit them to bake with the machine. They did not create the machine themselves; it was invented in other places, abroad. I did not wish to inject myself into this, which is new to me and which I have never seen; as a general rule, I withdraw my hand from creating novelties.

However, times have changed in the past year and Jewish workers are not found as they were in the past, and the workers we have are of the worst breed, bad and hasty, and they do not listen to the supervisors, and they have caused uncountable errors. Now, because of a lack of even people like these, I have needed to approve the use of non-Jewish workers, other than for the matzah of the mitzvah.

Because of all of this, after a great deal of persuasion, I agreed to have one machine brought here many weeks before the time to bake matzah, to examine it and see its nature and its product. My court and I went to the bakery and we saw its deeds, and we stood for many hours until matzot were baked, and we agreed to bake with it when we saw that all was done with greater alacrity than with human workers, and it is possible to supervise the few workers involved and to choose workers who will listen to the instructions of the mashgiach and authorities. We created rules, and during the baking of matzah we observed and then created more rules and repaired further, and again last year we added further.

In truth, even the machine operation requires great supervision to ensure it is cleaned well, and especially the *veltzen* which develop holes and require continual repair and cleaning, with alacrity and haste. Still, we have found it better than what was before, when they ate and drank while working, and they were greatly exhausted by baking day and night, and they would not listen. It was impossible to bear their rebellion, theirs and that of their masters, the bakery owners.

Even among the illustrious Hungarian rabbinates of 19th century Europe, Rabbi Avraham Shemuel Binyamin Sofer stands out for his remarkable lineage. Rabbi Sofer, who entered this world on the first of Adar (February 11), 1815, was the son of Rabbi Moshe (Rabbi of Pressburg, also known as Chatam Sofer) and Sarale Sofer, and grandson of Rabbi Akiva Eiger, the great sage of Posen. Further back, his lineage included great rabbis from across the "Holy Roman Empire".

The younger Rabbi Sofer was given the name "Shemuel Binyamin" at birth; the name "Avraham" was added when he became deathly ill at the age of six. It is claimed that when he recovered, his father declared, "I worked for a Jubilee of years for him;" indeed, he lived another fifty years.

At the age of eighteen, Rabbi Sofer married Chavah Leah. Upon the passing of the elder Rabbi Sofer in 1839, Rabbi Avraham Sofer became the Rabbi of Pressburg as well as the head of its yeshiva. The community thrived under his leadership, and the yeshiva doubled its student body; Rabbi Sofer was also consulted by communities across Europe, as a major authority in Jewish law.

Rabbi Sofer is best known today for his writings, all of which were published posthumously under the title, "Ktav Sofer". These include volumes of responsa, a commentary to Chumash, and a commentary to part of the Talmud.

Upon the Ktav Sofer's passing on the 19th of Tevet (December 31), 1871, his son, Rabbi Simcha Bunim Sofer, took his place. Rabbi Sofer's legacy was broader, though; his children and grandchildren included many leaders of pre-War Europe. A chain of Talmud Torah schools in Israel and educational institutions around the world is named for the Ktav Sofer.

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I am sending his honour the conditions I have enacted with the beit din here; the beit din in Cracow has written to me two or three times and I have told them all of this and sent them the same. The rule in this is that the judge only works with what his eyes see, everything according to the place and time and situation of particular need. I do not accept responsibility for others.

**This Week in
Israeli History
Shevat 19 1902
Shaare Tzedek****Adam Frieberg***19 Shevat is Wednesday*

On 19 Shevat 5662 (January 27, 1902), the construction of Shaare Zedek Medical Center, then the most modern hospital in the Middle East, was completed, and the opening ceremony took place. The hospital was located on Jaffa Road, just three kilometers outside of the Old City. The hospital had only twenty beds and was directed by Dr. Moshe Wallach, who had arrived in Jerusalem from Cologne, Germany in 1892. Dr. Wallach had such a dominant personality that many referred to it as Wallach's Hospital.

In truth, the hospital's history really begins in 1873, when the first Shaare Zedek Committee was founded; it consisted of prominent rabbis and philanthropists from Germany and the Netherlands, and their goal was to raise funds for the establishment of the hospital. Their dream came true with the opening of a hospital that went on to serve the population of Jerusalem throughout many crises. A notable example is the opening of the only isolation ward in the city in 1910, saving many lives in the fight against epidemics of typhoid and diphtheria.

In 1916, Selma Meyer arrived from Hamburg, Germany, at Shaare Zedek, beginning what would be her life's work as head nurse at the hospital. Selma, who was known as "Schwester Selma", was the first registered nurse in Israel and brought her colourful personality to the hospital. She was the driving force behind much of the hospital's success, including the opening of the school of nursing in 1936. TIME magazine nicknamed her, "Angel on Earth"; she passed away in Shaare Zedek on her hundredth birthday.

In 1968, Dr. David Maier made aliyah from the US and became the hospital's third Director. He was instrumental in moving the hospital to its current location in Bayit VeGan, where it still stands, 111 years after its inauguration. Throughout the years, Shaare Zedek was a key centre for treatment in various wars and terrorist attacks. It is the home of 14,000 births each year, the most in the country.

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What is the source of our haftorah?

The book of Shoftim (Judges) describes the events between the time of Yehoshua and the era of Shemuel. The first two chapters of the book depict the outcome of Yehoshua's wars, what was conquered and what wasn't. The next fifteen chapters review the careers of various shoftim (judges, leaders or saviours) who followed Yehoshua, leading the nation and protecting it from its enemies. The rest of the book is dedicated to two stories: Michah's statue and Pilegish b'Givah (the Concubine at Gibeah). These two events illustrate the sorry state of the Jewish nation in the days 'before a king was crowned'.

The main message of the book of Shoftim is explicitly stated and repeated many times. In virtually all of the book's stories, trouble befalls the Jewish nation because of their failure to keep the mitzvot; the people repent and ask for G-d's help; G-d exhibits mercy and sends them a shofet to deliver them; after a short period of peace, the nation return to its sins. This repetitive pattern is highlighted in chapter 2, verses 11-23.

According to the Gemara in Baba Batra 14b, Shemuel wrote the book of Shoftim.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah consists of two parts. The first part (4:4-4:24) is the story of the judge/prophet Devorah and the leader Barak defeating Yavin, king of Canaan, and his military commander, Sisera. The second part (Chapter 5) is the Song of Devorah. Clearly, this second part is the connection between our haftorah and parshat Beshalach and Shirat HaYam, the Song of the Sea.

Our haftorah begins from the middle of the story; in the passage preceding our haftorah (4:1-4:3), one may read that as a consequence of the sins committed by the Jewish nation, Hashem had sent them into the hands of Yavin. Yavin oppressed them heavily for twenty years. At this point – the start of our haftorah – Devorah commands Barak to wage war against Yavin and the Canaanites.

Barak declines to go fight Sisera alone, and he demands that Devorah go with him. Devorah agrees, but warns him that he has chosen a path with no glory; Hashem will give Sisera into the hands of "a woman". Undoubtedly, Barak thought that Devorah was speaking about herself, but he later saw this prophecy realized in an unexpected way. As the Israelite forces gained superiority in the battlefield, Sisera fled

to a nearby tent, in which resided a woman named Yael. The book of Shoftim tells us that the local population lived in peace with Yavin, and so Sisera hoped he would be able to have shelter there. Yael invited him to enter, but after giving him a place to hide and some milk and putting him to sleep, she struck him with a stake and a hammer. Sisera was killed instantly, and Yael announced the news to Barak. From there on, Yavin was defeated and his forces were routed.

This event inspired Devorah to sing the song of the second part of the haftorah. In her song, Devorah praises the victory, the warriors and herself, and condemns those who did not join the war against Yavin. She thanks Hashem for the miracles that happened during the war, and asks Him to bless Yael for her courageous act.

The song ends with a parody of Sisera and his worried mother. Sisera's mother waits for her victorious son to return with female captives, when in fact he has been killed by a woman, as Devorah had predicted.

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Highlights for January 25 – February 1 / 15 - 21 Shevat

Friday, January 25 Tu b'Shevat

8 PM Oneg Shabbat in honour of Tu b'Shevat, Hillel and Michal Horovitz, 116 Rosedale Heights, Thornhill

Shabbat, January 26 Tu b'Shevat

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for mitzvot and the parshah, Or Chaim

10:20 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park

After musaf Hillel Horovitz, The Song of Tu b'Shevat, Zichron Yisroel

Derashah Adam Frieberg, Shaarei Tefillah

4:05 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi, BAYT

4:25 PM Adam Frieberg, Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Avodah Zarah: Heated Wine, BAYT

6:50 PM Yair Manas, Parent-Child Learning: Tu b'Shevat, Shaarei Shomayim

Sunday, January 27

8:45 AM R' Milevsky, Michal Horovitz, Tu b'Shevat, Bnai Torah

9:15 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah Preview, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

9:15 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Professional Ethics, Kehilat Shaarei Torah, *breakfast* (Shacharit 8 AM)

After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, *mixed*

Monday, January 28

8 PM Mon. Night Beit Midrash: Clanton Park, Bnai Torah

8 PM Hillel Horovitz, Sefer Melachim, Building the Temple, Bnai Torah

8 PM R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Mesilat Yesharim, Bnai Torah, *high school students*

9 PM Hillel Horovitz, Rav Kook's Ein Ayah, Bnai Torah

Tuesday, January 29

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daniel: The First Dream, Shaarei Shomayim, *Mekorot*

8 PM Yair Manas, Chaburah: Sanhedrin, 33 Meadowbrook

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings: Daat Torah and Foreign Policy, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

Thursday, January 31

10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jonah: Week 1, BEBY, *Melton*

8:30 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park

9:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Ethical Challenges, Thornhill Woods Shul

Coming Up

Feb. 3: Dental Halachah at BAYT

Feb. 11: Medical Halachah at Shaarei Shomayim