

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Beshalach

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**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Jeff and Nicole Toledano
in honour of all the avreichim and Rabbi Torczyner**

**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Mark Mietkiewicz
in loving memory of his late mother Helen Mietkiewicz, Chaya bas Chayim Shmuel z"l,
whose 49th yahrzeit is on 2 Adar**

Secrets of the Song

Rabbi Steven Gotlib

Picture this: The Jewish people have just gotten out of Egypt. On one side of them is the Sea of Reeds while on the other side are the Egyptians, dead-set on returning the Jews to their slavery. Caught between a rock and a hard place, it seems as if all hope is lost. But then Moshe Rabbeinu raises his staff and the sea splits before them, allowing them to cross on dry land. In this miraculous situation, the Jewish people are brought to sing and dance, led by Moshe and Miriam.

Observing the journey of the Jewish people thus far from a birds-eye view is quite cinematic. Were our history a musical, this would certainly be the most climactic song. And within that song lies a deep look at what it means to be a Jew not only in the Ancient Near East, but in the here and now as well. This can be made apparent by a close reading of the beginning and end of the song respectively.

The first verse of the song (Shemot 15:1, adapted JPS tr.) reads that "Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to Hashem. They said: I will sing to Hashem, for He has triumphed gloriously; horse and driver He has hurled into the sea." Rashi there comments, based on the Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, that the horse and rider are significant because "both of them attached one to the other; and the waters lifted them up and then they descended into the depths and yet they did not become separated." In other

words, the horse and rider were linked to each other throughout the event.

This may seem like a passing detail, but when Miriam is later shown singing the song for the women (15:21) it is only this opening verse that is emphasized for a second time. Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, director of the rabbinical school at Yeshiva University, [suggests](#) that this line is emphasized because it encompasses the message of the entire song. The horses could be understood as the physical wealth in our lives: if utilized correctly, wealth can lead us to greater service of Hashem. But if we misuse it, then it will pull us down with it into the depths of physicality and darkness.

How can we avoid such a tremendous pitfall? The final verse of the song (Shemot 15:18) reads that "G-d will reign for all eternity." Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch comments that this teaches that "Moses and Israel see themselves as the servants and instruments of G-d's great future of salvation, for which He has now laid the foundations by revealing to the world His unique mighty reign of justice and loving-kindness..." a future in which, Rav Hirsch notes, G-d will rule over not only the Jewish people, but all of humanity.

This comment itself hearkens back to an earlier one made by Rav Hirsch (Shemot 14:31) where he notes that "the eternal significance of the moment of redemption, unique in its greatness" is

in demonstrating "His justice; which is to be feared at all times; His loving-kindness, which is to be trustingly awaited at all times; and His almighty power, commanding freely over all things, in which He can practice loving-kindness and justice simultaneously."

It is our job to recognize that serving Hashem is our ultimate goal and to utilize our unique tools (both physical and spiritual) towards that end. This Song emphasizes that message literally from beginning to end.

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OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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Summary

This chapter tells the story of a future redemption of the Jewish people. It begins with a description of the land of Israel returning to life, the desert blooming with flowers. (35:1-2) The prophet and his followers are told to strengthen those who are weak and weary, presumably from exile, and to support them. He is told to tell them that G-d is coming to take revenge on His enemies. (3-4) The prophet also explains that on this day of redemption, all physical maladies will disappear – blindness, deafness, inability to speak, and physical disabilities will be no longer. (5-6) Next, the prophet describes the desert land of Israel becoming filled with water and grass. (6-7) Finally, the chapter ends with a description of the ease with which the exiles will return to Israel, and their rejoicing in their return. (8-10)

Insight

Which redemption is Yeshayahu describing? The return from the Babylonian exile or the final, ultimate, redemption? From the context, following the preceding chapter, it would seem that this speaks of the redemption following the fall of Edom – an event that has happened already, without curing

blindness, etc. So explain Rabbi Yosef Kara, Rabbi Yosef Ibn Kaspi, and others. For them, the miraculous descriptions of the blind seeing must be understood metaphorically.

Other commentators, however, seem to take the miracles at face value. For them, the message of this chapter is not about the end of the first exile. In the words of the Abarbanel (35:10), “This was not fulfilled, neither during the First Temple, nor during the Second Temple. Rather it will be fulfilled during the days of Mashiach.” This approach is also taken by the Talmud. In Sanhedrin 91b, this chapter is used to understand the process of the resurrection of the dead during the times of the Mashiach.

Malbim takes this approach as well, and makes a profound point about the nature of the happiness we will experience at the final redemption. Drawing on the last words of the chapter, “sorrow and sadness will flee,” Malbim highlights the strangeness of this expression: If sadness and sorrowing are “fleeing,” this suggests that something is chasing them. What will chase them away?

Malbim continues to say that during the return following the Babylonian exile, emotions moved slowly. As they returned to Israel, little by little the people’s sadness decreased, and slowly happiness and joy returned. It wasn’t an immediate about-face, but a slow unfolding. Not so with our final redemption. When the ultimate return occurs, we will be so suddenly overcome with happiness that it will feel as though our sadness was chased away. In that instant we will truly feel the ultimate redemption.

The words of Malbim notwithstanding, it is hard to read this chapter and not think about the current Land of Israel. If we are not living in the era of this prophecy, then we are most certainly in the moments immediately preceding it. This chapter can almost serve as a checklist as we look at the Land of Israel today, with its flowing deserts and the return of the Jewish people. May the final verse come soon, swiftly, and may we be suddenly overcome with the happiness and joy of the full redemption.

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Siddur Insights: The Song at the Sea

In this week’s parshah we read about the completion of the Exodus with one of its greatest miracles, perhaps the greatest miracle of them all – the splitting of the sea. After Bnei Yisrael cross the sea and see their enemies vanquished, they burst into a spontaneous song that became part of our daily davening – *Shirat HaYam*.

Why did *Shirat HaYam* enter our siddur? Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (Shulchan Aruch Harav 51:1) explains that the final berachah of Pesukei D’Zimra, Yishtabach, contains fifteen words of praise of Hashem, and those words of praise were learned from the words of praises that appear in *Shirat HaYam*.

As we recite this special prayer every morning, what should we have in mind? Perhaps we can see an answer from a gemara (Sotah 2a, Koren tr.), “**Rabba bar bar Hana says that Rabbi Yohanan says: And it is as difficult to match a couple together as was the splitting of the Red Sea, as it is stated in a verse that speaks of the exodus from Egypt (Psalms 68:7): ‘G-d makes the solitary individuals dwell in a house; He brings out prisoners into prosperity.’**” Adding to this, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (Sefer Hamidot, Chitun, A) says that reciting *Shirat HaYam* with proper focus can help in finding a shidduch.

Intuitively, I would have assumed that it should be the exact opposite. The splitting of the sea is all about separation, not coming together! Why does the Talmud connect these two, and how could it aid in finding a spouse?

Another question we might ask regarding the event at the sea

is that according to a midrash (Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael Beshalach 4), the sea split into twelve different paths, for each tribe to walk on its own. Why was this miracle necessary?

I think this miracle teaches us that people can be different, have different views and go on different paths, and still be emotionally united and close with each other. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein writes (Aruch HaShulchan, Introduction to Choshen Mishpat) that just like the beauty of the orchestra is in its different voices and melodies, so too the beauty of Torah is in the richness of different opinions and ideas. This is why the Talmud and the Jewish tradition is so full of diverse opinions. Torah is beautiful because of that diversity.

This idea is also important in our relationships and shidduchim – recognizing that our differences, even if they are challenging to deal with, are not all bad. We can only produce a beautiful song, a *shirah*, when we talk in different voices and play the music together.

This is an important idea that we can keep in mind when we recite *Shirat HaYam* every day. Even if there is a lot of division between us, in reality, the division can create a beautiful song. As long as we are all heading to Har Sinai, to build a house and society of Torah, our differences can actually make us stronger, and produce the most beautiful harmony.

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Biography

Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Elazar Spira was born in the Austro-Hungarian town of Strzyzow, into the rabbinic family which led the Munkaczer chasidim, in December, 1868. He received the name “Chaim” during a grave illness at the age of three, on the instruction of his father’s mentor, Rabbi Chaim of Sanz.

Rabbi Spira was a child prodigy, writing his first work of Jewish law at the age of 11. He became the head of the beit din of Munkacz in 1903, serving alongside his father, who was the Munkaczer Rebbe. When his father passed away in 1913, Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira became the new Munkaczer Rebbe. He was also known as “Minchas Elazar”, the title of his major work on Jewish law.

The charismatic leadership of Rabbi Spira spurred the growth of the Munkaczer chasidim. People came from near and far to seek his counsel and his blessing, and he organized a network of tzedakah institutions to take care of social needs. His yeshiva, Darchei Teshuvah, attracted students from all over Europe. International leaders, including Czech president Edvard Benes and Holland’s Queen Wilhelmina, visited the sage. By the time of his passing, in May of 1937, more than half of Munkacz was Jewish. When Rabbi Spira’s daughter Frima got married, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia opened their borders to permit visitors to attend the wedding without visas; more than 20,000 guests attended.

Rabbi Spira founded a tzedakah which helped support Jews living in then-Palestine, and he established a Jerusalem neighbourhood, Batei Munkacz. Rabbi Spira himself visited Israel in 1930. However, Rabbi Spira was a strong opponent of Zionism, contending that Jews should not seek to establish a self-governing state until the miraculous arrival of Mashiach. He was also militantly opposed to the formation of Jewish umbrella organizations, including Agudath Israel, contending that Jews should focus on their personal relationships with Hashem.

Broad scholarship and prolific writing have kept Rabbi Spira’s influence alive in the decades since his passing; he published more than twenty books on Jewish law, chumash, chasidut, liturgy and Jewish philosophy.

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Weekly Halachah: New Fruit for Tu b’Shevat

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Tu b’Shevat is Monday February 6. There is a custom of eating fruit, and particularly fruit associated with Israel, on this day. Here are some of the laws of reciting Shehechyanu for new fruit.

One who sees a seasonal, newly available fruit, and feels great joy at seeing it, recites the berachah of Shehechyanu. One whose personal joy is not that great should not recite Shehechyanu.

When?

Technically, one recites Shehechyanu even when *seeing* newly available fruit. However, we generally recite Shehechyanu only upon eating; this is when most people feel the greatest joy.

We recite Shehechyanu before reciting *borei pri ha’eitz*.

One who eats many types of new fruit at the same sitting should recite one collective Shehechyanu.

Which fruit?

Fruit which is available via import all year still warrants a Shehechyanu when it begins to grow locally and one eats it for the first time, if the local fruit is fresher or better, inducing joy.

Fruit which is available during two distinct times of the year, with at least one month of non-availability between them, warrants Shehechyanu when the fruit becomes available and its presence induces joy.

We avoid reciting Shehechyanu on fruit produced via a prohibited cross-species graft.

We do not recite Shehechyanu on underripe fruit, even if it is somewhat edible.

We do recite Shehechyanu on cooked fruit.

Note: Post-shemita fruit coming from Israel may require proper tithing. Shemita fruit has rules of its own. Please consult your Rav for detailed information.

(Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 225:3, 6; Mishneh Berurah 225:11-12, 18; Aruch haShulchan 225:5, 7, 12; Birkei Yosef 225:4; Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 1:87, 2:58, 3:34)

Sefer haChinuch #12: Mixtures Containing Chametz

By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Moshe warned the Jews regarding Pesach, “For seven days, sourdough shall not be found in your homes; any who eat *machmetzet*, they shall be cut off... You shall not eat all *machmetzet*” on Pesach. (Shemot 12:19-20) Our Sages drew from the word “all” that the prohibition includes mixtures which contain any element of chametz. (Pesachim 43a) This is the Torah’s twelfth mitzvah, according to the count of Sefer haChinuch.

The Talmud records a debate regarding the punishment for eating foods which contain a minority of chametz (Pesachim *ibid.*):

- Ramban (Shemot 12:20 and Hasagot to Lo Taaseh 198) contends that the prohibition is rabbinic and there is no court-administered punishment.
- Ramban (Lo Taaseh 198) adopts the view that this is a biblical prohibition with a penalty of lashes, but agrees that there is no penalty if the ratio of chametz to non-chametz is sufficiently small.

Sefer haChinuch (12) notes that this entire discussion relates only to a grain mixture of which only some becomes chametz. If a separate measure of chametz were to fall into non-chametz, the entire mixture would be prohibited, regardless of ratio.

The Torah’s care in prohibiting even mixtures with small quantities of chametz may teach us a lesson regarding laziness. Chametz results when a baker is slow to process his dough; when we are slow to perform a mitzvah, the resultant loss of the opportunity is considered “chametz” at any time of year. Just as we avoid any product with the slightest bit of chametz on Pesach, so we should avoid any degree of laziness in our mitzvot all year long.

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Shabbat Feb. 3-4

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Milevsky Bais Medrash) (men)

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Halachah in the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

45 min. after Shabbat R' Jared Anstandig, Parent Child-Learning, Shaarei Shomayim (middle school)

Sun. Feb. 5

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Program, Clanton Park (men): Niddah

Mon. Feb. 6

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Esther: Week 5 of 5, on ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>

7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Weekly Halachah, Shomrai Shabbos *not this week*

Tues. Feb. 7

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Tzidkat haTzaddik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Wisdom of King Solomon: Mishlei, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 18), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Shovavim Shiur (Semichat Chaver Chazarah), Clanton Park (men)

8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Women's Beit Midrash, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)

Wed. Feb. 8

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstanding, Halachic Philosophy of the Rav, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Esther: Week 5 of 5, Shaarei Tefillah Congregation

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Thurs. Feb. 9

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 30), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah (advanced), for location: ymanntorontotorah.com

Fri. Feb. 10

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Ketuvot Perek 1 *advanced*
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

COMING UP!

7:30 PM to 9:00 PM Monday February 13

NUSBAUM FAMILY MEDICAL ETHICS AND HALACHAH PROGRAM: THE "SHOTEH"
R' M Torczyner, ZOOM @ <http://tiny.cc/mtethics> / Register @ <https://torontotorah.com/cme>
CME Accredited, open to laypeople

10 AM Wednesday February 15

Three-Part Series Begins: DOES JUDAISM BELIEVE IN EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE?
R' Mordechai Torczyner, ZOOM @ <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> Register @ <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays>
There is a fee

Monday February 20

PARENT-CHILD BREAKFAST YARCHEI KALLAH AT BAYT: IS GIVING BLOOD A MITZVAH?
All Middle School Students and Parents Are Welcome!

Shabbat February 24-25

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