



תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

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This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the soldiers of the IDF, the hostages, and the wounded.

Ramban on Our Parshah: Serenaders and Serenaded

After crossing the Sea, the Jews see the bodies of the Egyptians strewn about on the sand and they realize that their captors are truly vanquished. As Moshe declares (Shemot 14:13), they will never again see a fearsome Egyptian army bearing down on them. The Jews are moved to sing full-throated thanks to Hashem. But the Torah introduces the song with the words, **Az yashir Moshe uVnei Yisrael**, which seems to mean, "Then Moshe and the Jewish people **will sing**." Why does the text use what seems to be future tense?

Some commentators have explained the text as past tense:

- Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra contended that *Az yashir* is not actually future tense; it is past tense, "Moshe and the Jewish people sang." In the extended version of his commentary, he noted similar language in other biblical events which were clearly meant to be in the past: "Then Shlomo built" (Melachim I 11:7), "Then Yehoshua spoke" (Yehoshua 10:12), "Then Moshe set aside" (Devarim 4:41).
- Rashi also noted similar language elsewhere, and suggested that *Az yashir* means, "Moshe and the children of Israel were moved to sing."

On the other hand, the tanna Rabbi Meir read *Az yashir* as referring to the future. He saw in our passage a foreshadowing of a future song in the time of *tehiyat hameitim*, when the deceased will be restored to life – "Then, Moshe and the Jews will sing," (Sanhedrin 91b)

Ramban quoted Rashi's approach, but rejected it on the basis of language elsewhere in Tanach that does not fit well with Rashi's explanation. [See, for example, Shemot 33:7 and Tehillim 78:40.] Instead, he contended that the Torah sometimes uses what appears to be future tense to describe past events because the speaker – Hashem – is a Narrator who positions Himself as though observing an event as it happens. Hashem removes the "fourth wall" that is supposed to separate Himself from the audience, and declares, "**Then I saw** Moshe and the children of Israel **on the verge of singing**."

Ramban's perspective reminds us of an important point: that there are two parties involved, not one. Hashem is a party to the story; the song at the sea is not only sung by the Jews, it is also witnessed by Hashem. Hashem deliberately enters the record, describing His experience of the song, in order to say, "I heard their song, and I felt it worthy of recording for future generations."

Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: What did Moshe throw into bitter water to make it sweet? A) Wood B) Sugar C) Stevia

Age 8-12: How long did the Jews go without fresh drinking water, after Yam Suf?

Age 12+: According to Rashi, why did Moshe sit on a stone while davening during the war with Amalek?

Journey Through Tanach: Yehoshua, Perek 15

We've learned that the tribe of Yehudah is the first to receive their lot. Chapter 15 describes their boundaries.

Yehudah receives all of southern Israel, so that their southern boundary is the southern boundary of halachic Israel. Their southeast corner is the southern tip of the Dead Sea; this is difficult to identify today due to changes in water level over time. The border runs west, dipping south along the way; commentators debate just how far south, but it is generally assumed that the biblical land did not extend all the way to Eilat. The border then runs to Yehudah's southwest end at *Nachal Mitzrayim*; most commentators assume that this is Wadi el-Arish. (15:1-4)

Yehudah's eastern boundary is the Dead Sea and the southern portion of the Jordan River. The northern boundary runs roughly due west to the vicinity of Yavneh, and the Mediterranean beyond that. The landmarks identified along the way seem to show the border run south of Jerusalem, so that Jerusalem is actually in the land of Bin-yamin. (For more on that, see 15:63, and Zevachim 54b, Yoma 12a and Megillah 26a.) The western boundary is the Mediterranean Sea. (15:5-12)

We then learn that Kalev is able to conquer the giants living in his portion in Chevron, but he has trouble with an area called Dver, or Kiryat Sefer. He offers his daughter Achsah in marriage to whoever will conquer the area; a midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 60:10) criticizes him for promising her blindly. As it turns out, his half-brother Otniel, who will go on to become the first Shofeit, conquers the city and marries Achsah. Commentators read this story in two ways: either this was a military conquest of a difficult city, or a spiritual 'conquest' restoring Torah that was forgotten after Moshe passed away. (15:13-19, and see Temurah 16a)

The chapter then lists many cities of Yehudah. Some of these are familiar from elsewhere in Tanach, like Kavtze'el (home of Benayahu ben Yehoyada), Tziklag (King David's base when he lived among the Philistines), Tzarah (Shimshon's neighborhood) and Philistine cities Ekron, Ashdod and Aza. At the end we are told that Yehudah failed to settle Jerusalem. Unlike earlier parts of the chapter which placed Jerusalem in Binyamin, this seems to indicate that Jerusalem was supposed to be in Yehudah's portion. (15:20-63)

The 613 Mitzvot: #15-16 - Flesh and Bone, Part 2

Last week we learned that the Torah's 15th and 16th mitzvot prohibit taking meat from the korban pesach "to go" or breaking bones to reach the marrow. This is meant to help us feel the royalty of the korban pesach experience. But the Sefer haChinuch asked: How many practices do we need in order to remember the miraculous departure from Egypt? He responded with a general thesis regarding our need for actions which influence our thoughts and emotions:

Know that a person is energized by his actions. His heart and all of his thoughts are always drawn after the deeds he performs with them, whether good or bad. Even someone who is fully wicked in his heart, and whose natural thoughts in his heart are only bad all day – if he would arouse his spirit and place his effort and involvement perpetually in Torah and mitzvot, even non-altruistically, he would immediately incline to the good, and via the force of his deeds he would extinguish the yetzer hara, for after the deeds are the hearts drawn. And even someone who is fully righteous, his heart straight and unflawed, desirous of Torah and mitzvot – if he would perpetually involve himself in impropriety... then over time he would abandon the righteousness of his heart and become entirely wicked. If it is known and true that each person is energized by his deeds, as we have said.

This is why the Sages said (Makkot 23b), "Hashem desired to provide merit for Israel; therefore He increased Torah and mitzvot for them," so that all of our thoughts would be drawn to them, and all of our involvement would be with them, to benefit us in our end. Because of these good deeds, we are energized to be good, and we earn eternal life...

Israel's Chief Rabbis: A Cross in a Shul, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank was born in 1873, in Kovno, Lithuania, to a rabbinic, Zionist family. He learned under Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor and Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, until his family made aliyah to Hadera in the early 1890's. The young Rav Frank continued his studies in Jerusalem under Rav Yechiel Michel Tukaczinski, Rav Shmuel Salant, Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin and Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook; his brother-in-law was Rav Aryeh Levin.

In 1907 Rav Frank became a judge on the Beit Din of Jerusalem. In 1918 he became the Av Beit Din, and he served in that capacity for the next forty years. He also held positions of civic leadership and communal service during World War I. In later years he aided the Haganah; his home served as an ammunition repository.

As head of the Beit Din, Rav Frank invited Rav Kook to become the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Jerusalem in 1919. Rabbi Kook served in that capacity until his death in 1935, at which time Rav Frank himself ascended to that position. He passed away just before Chanukah in 1960.

Rav Frank was asked whether one may permit a priest to enter a synagogue while wearing a cross, since Devarim 7:26 prohibits "bringing an abhorrent thing into your home." His response (Har Tzvi 1:85) was lenient, for the following reasons:

- According to Yoreh Deah 141:1 and the Shach there, one a cross worn around the neck is not viewed as an idol, so long as no one has bowed to it.
- The Rambam (Hilchot Avodah Zarah 7:2) understands Devarim 7:26 to prohibit benefit from an idol; simple entry into your home is not prohibited. And even within those who understand Devarim 7:26 more literally, the Jew has not brought the idol into the home.
- Devarim 7:26 prohibits bringing idols into "your home"; a synagogue is not an individual's property, or a home.

Despite his leniency, Rav Frank states that one should not actually **invite** someone who wears a cross into a synagogue, since this could be viewed as "bringing" the cross into the synagogue. This would be an even greater concern in a private home, since the Torah's text specifies "into your home."

Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

5:05 PM Shabbat January 27

Halachah and Technology: The Shabbat Elevator, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim

8:30 AM to 9:15 AM Sunday January 28

Fourteen Centuries: The Baal Halachot Gedolot, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, in the lobby at Eitz Chayim

7:30-8:30 PM Monday January 29

Halachah in Healthcare Settings: Davening in Unclean Spaces

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, at Eitz Chayim and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/medhal>

8:15-9:00 PM Tuesday January 30

New Weekly Shiur: Gemara Makkot with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner at 693 Knollwood, for men

Scholar-in-Residence Shabbat February 2-3: Israel, Today and Tomorrow
Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, Director, Israel Region of the Rabbinical Council of America

Sponsorship link: <http://tiny.cc/ecdp>

Age 4-8 A: Wood
Age 8-12 3 Days
Age 12+ The Jewish soldiers were in pain, so Moshe didn't want to have a cushion; see Rashi to Shemot 17:12

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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