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ON PARSHAS BESHALACH - 5757

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Parsha Questions 1. What does `nacham' mean in the beginning of the Parsha? 2. What percentage of the Jewish people died during the plague of darkness? 3. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation? 4. Why did Pharaoh decide to pursue the Jewish People? 5. How was Hashem honored through Pharaoh? 6. When, besides the week of Parshas Beshalach, do we read from Parshas Beshalach? 7. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People? 8. From where did the Egyptians obtain animals to pull the chariots? 9. What does it mean that the Jewish people "took hold of their fathers' profession" (tafsu umnus avosam)? 10. What other waters divided, besides the waters of the Yam Suf? 11. Into how many `watches' (ashmoros) is the night divided? 12. Why were the dead Egyptians cast out of the sea? 13. Why are the Egyptians compared to stone, lead and straw? 14. Why did "fear seize the inhabitants of Pelashes"? (15:14) 15. The Jewish women trusted that Hashem would grant the Jewish People a miraculous victory over the Egyptians. How do we know this? 16. Which sections of the Torah did the Jewish People receive at

B'S'D' Marah? 17. What is a chok (statute)? 18. What lesson in `derech erez' does the Torah teach concerning the eating of meat? 19. How did non-Jews experience the taste of the manna? 20. Why did Moshe's hands become heavy during the war against Amalek?

Answers to this Week's Questions All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 13:17 - Lead. 2. 13:18 - 80 per cent (four fifths). 3. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear. 4. 14:2 - When he saw that the Jewish People turned back toward Egypt, he thought that they had lost their way. 5. 14:4 - Through punishing him. When Hashem punishes the wicked His name is glorified. 6. 14:5 - The seventh day of Pesach. 7. 14:5 - To regain their wealth. 8. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of Hashem and kept their animals inside during the plagues. 9. 14:10 - They cried out to Hashem. 10. 14:21 - All the water of the world. 11. 14:24 - Three. 12. 14:30 - So that the Jewish People would see the destruction of the Egyptians and be assured of no further pursuit. 13. 15:5 - The wickedest Egyptians floated around the water like straw, taking a long time to die. The average ones suffered less, sinking like stone. Those who were still more righteous sunk like lead, dying immediately. 14. 15:14 - Because they slew the members of the tribe of Efraim who had escaped from Egypt at an earlier time. They feared vengeance for this act. 15. 15:20 - They brought musical instruments with them in preparation for the miraculous-victory celebration. 16. 15:25 - Shabbos, Red Heifer, Judicial Laws. 17. 15:26 - A law whose reason we don't understand. 18. 16:8 - One should not eat meat to the point of satiation. 19. 16:21 - The sun melted whatever manna remained in the fields. This flowed into the streams from which animals drank. Whoever ate these animals experienced the taste of the manna. 20. 17:12 - Because he was remiss in his duty, since he, not Yehoshua, should have led the battle. Bonus QUESTION: "Moshe took Yosef's remains with him ..." (13:19). The Talmud praises Moshe for this by saying, "Look how Moshe loved mitzvos: While the rest of the people were busy gathering the wealth of Egypt, Moshe was busy with mitzvos" (Sotah 13a). But weren't the other people also fulfilling mitzvos by gathering the wealth of Egypt? After all, Hashem commanded that "each man shall request from his neighbor, and each woman from her neighbor, vessels of silver and vessels of gold" (10:2). So why was Moshe singled out for special praise?

Bonus ANSWER: Caring for Yosef's remains brought Moshe no personal benefit; other than a love of mitzvos, no motive could be ascribed to it. The others chose to gather wealth, a mitzva whose performance could easily become self serving. Moshe was praised for his choice of mitzvos. Heard from Rabbi Avraham Eliezer Gordon, shlita

I Did Not Know That! They [the Jewish People] said to Moshe, "Weren't there any graves in Egypt? Is that why you took us to die in the desert?" (14:11)

This verse is `humorous.' Did you not know that? The ability to see humor and irony within tragedy and despair is an inherently Jewish characteristic, exhibited here in the nation's early beginnings. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

RECOMMENDED READING LIST Ramban 14:4 The Miracle of Egyptian Pursuit 14:13 Promise or Command? 14:15 No Need to Cry 14:21 Nature or Miracle? 15:19 When the Shira was Sung 16:4 (second part) The Purpose of Trial 17:9 The War Against Amalek Malbim 14:11-12 Red or Dead 14:16 The Ten Miracles of the Crossing of the Sea Ibn Ezra 14:13 Slave Mentality 14:29-30 Drowning and Dry Land

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Check out the Ohr Somayach Home Page: <http://www.ohr.org.il>
... Insights Help Yourself! "And Yisrael saw the great hand..." (14:31) "A person's sustenance is as hard as splitting the Reed Sea." (The Sages) How can anything be `hard' for Hashem? Was splitting the Reed Sea more

difficult than the Creation of the whole universe? And that Hashem accomplished with two letters. And how can providing a livelihood for someone be hard for He who spoke and the world came into being? A person has to make as much of an effort as he can in order to sustain himself and those who depend on him. Although everything that we receive is decreed on Rosh Hashana, nevertheless, Hashem requires us to make an effort to help ourselves as much as possible. So it was with the splitting of the sea: The Children of Israel had to go down to the sea, to go as far as possible, and only then the sea split before them. In this way the splitting of the sea and a person's livelihood can be equated. Beginnings are always hard. It's hard for a person to start to work, uncertain how things will turn out, pursued by more and more bills -- an army of responsibilities which seem to want to drown him. And it was hard for the Children of Israel to plunge into the Sea of Reeds, pursued by an army of Egyptians who wanted to drown them. All we have to do is try, and Hashem will make sure that neither the Egyptians, nor the bills, will drown us. Adapted from Ma'asei Lemelech

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"ravfrand@torah.org" Rabbi Frand on Parshas B'Shalach
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Aharon On One Side and Chur On the Other Side

A pasuk [verse] at the end of this week's Parsha says that when the Jewish people did battle with Amalek and Moshe Rabbeinu lifted his hands, the Jewish people were victorious. When it became difficult for Moshe to keep his hands up, we are told that he relied on support from Aharon and Chur -- "...one on this side and one on the other side" [Shmos 17:12].

I saw a very interesting thought from Rav Mordechai Ilan. When we view this symbolically, we see something very significant. Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader of all of Israel. Moshe is our example of a leader par excellence. However, we see that Moshe needed the support of Aharon on one side and Chur on the other side. If we look at the lives of Aharon and Chur, we see very diverse personalities. Aharon, as we all know, was the lover of peace and pursuer of peace. He was the one who tried to bring harmony between husband and wife. Throughout Tanach and Medrash, we find Aharon as the classic peace-maker. If there is no peace, there is nothing. The leader of the Jewish people, definitely needs the support, standing by his side, of the philosophy of peace -- loving peace and pursuing it. On the other hand, Chur was the one who stood up for what was right. When the Jewish people wanted to worship the Golden Calf and said "This Moshe who brought us out from the Land of Egypt, we don't know what happened to him" [32:23], it was Chur who stood up to them, facing the angry mob, and answered them back. Chur was killed by the mob. That is the price, at times, that such a zealot needs to pay.

Sometimes we need this type of zealotry. Sometimes we can't say "if there is no peace there is nothing." Sometimes the price of peace is too high. Sometimes we need a Chur to stand up for what is right. This is what the pasuk is telling us by informing us that Aharon supported Moshe from one side and Chur supported him from the other side. Moshe, as the leader, worried about unity and peace in the community. But he also needed a Chur on the other side. Sometimes the price of peace is too high. Certainly, Shalom Bayis [peace in the home, between husband and wife] is a wonderful thing. We see that G-d allows His Name to be erased, in order to preserve Shalom Bayis. However, sometimes, if the price of Shalom Bayis is that there will be no Bayis worth retaining, we do not strive for "Shalom Bayis at all costs." Unity among people, among husband and wife, and among community is very, very important. But at what price Shalom? Sometimes we have to say no, not peace at any price.

The Test of Affluence -----

In the parsha of the Manna, the pasuk says "Behold I shall rain down for you food from heaven..." [16:4]. The Jewish people complain, "When we were in Egypt we had it good, we had what to eat, now you've brought us into the desert to let us starve." G-d responds by saying He would bring down food from heaven "...in order to test you, whether you will follow My Torah or not."

All the commentaries are bothered -- if we were to get bread from heaven, if we were able to go out every morning to our doorstep and pick up our livelihood, lacking nothing, what kind of test could that possibly be? Imagine a life in which one does not have to worry about making a living; a life that is free of 'double-coupons' and the like. A life, literally, with bread from heaven.

Rash"i, the commentary who follows the simple interpretation (pashtan), says that the pasuk refers to the test of fulfilling the commands associated with the manna. There were certain commandments specifically tied to the manna -- one could only take so much per person, one should not go looking for any on Shabbos, one should take twice the amount on Erev Shabbos, etc. According to Rash"i, "In order to test them" means "I'll see if you can keep those Mitzvos."

The Sforno in this week's parsha learns differently than Rash"i and says a principle which, Baruch Hashem, is applicable to most of us in America. The Sforno says the test is to see if the Jews would still follow the Torah when they are able to easily earn their livelihood. Yes, there is a great test in 'bread from heaven.' When one has a livelihood without difficulty, he has affluence and leisure time. This is the great test of the manna. What will the Jewish people do with their leisure time and with their affluence? Yes, we are all aware of the test of poverty. We are all aware of the trials and tribulations of being poor. However, the Sforno says, there are also great temptations that come with affluence. This puts a tremendous responsibility on a person -- determining how he will deal with his disposable income and his free time. This is the test of the Parsha of the manna. The Maggid from Mezritch once said that if one ever looks at people when they have troubles or sickness, G-d forbid, when there is death, Chas v'Sholom - then, everyone is religious. They all come to shul. Their prayer changes, their recital of Tehillim changes, their Tzedaka changes. That is when they have troubles. How is it though, when a person has it good, when things are going wonderfully? To think about the Ribbono Shel Olam in times of plenty is a test in and of itself. This is what the Parsha of manna is all about.

Moshe Took the Bones of Yosef With Him -----
We see at the beginning of the Sedra [Parsha] the way in which the Jewish people dealt with affluence and the way in which Moshe Rabbeinu dealt with affluence. The pasuk at the beginning of the Parsha says, "And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him" [13:19]. There is a famous Mechilta that Rav Dovid Kronglas, zt"l, always used to quote: "This pasuk tells us of the righteousness and piety of Moshe Rabbeinu, for all the rest of Israel were occupying themselves with the spoils of Egypt and Moshe occupied himself with the Mitzvah of the bones of Yosef." The Mechilta applies to Moshe the pasuk "He who is really wise, will take Mitzvos" [Mishlei 10:8]. Rav Mordechai Ilan says a beautiful interpretation in this Medrash. The pasuk is telling us that Moshe took the bones of Yosef WITH HIM! The Medrash means that Moshe took it with him to the World to Come. Moshe Rabbeinu, who had the foresight to occupy himself with Mitzvos, when everyone else was occupied with material things, took something "with him." We all know that "You can't take it with you." True, the spoils from Egypt, one can not take with him to the Next World. Moshe, however, did in fact take this good deed, of occupying himself with the bones of Yosef, along WITH HIM to Olam HaBah. He took that which is everlasting and Eternal. The others took the spoils of Egypt but they didn't truly take it "with them." That which Moshe took, he took with him... all the way!

The Parable of The Chofetz Chaim: Jewels Lying in the Street

The Chofetz Chaim, zt"l once offered a beautiful parable that brings out this

concept: There was once a very impoverished Jew, who heard about a far off land where there were jewels lying in the street for the taking. It was a treacherous journey and not everyone made it. Nevertheless, all one had to do was reach this far off land and where the jewels were lying in the street. After consulting with his family, he decided to take this treacherous journey. He went on the long and dangerous sea voyage. He finally arrived at the far off land and as he walked off the boat the captain told him that the ship would not return for a year. The Jew got off the boat and, sure enough, there were jewels everywhere. He couldn't believe it. The first day he lined his pockets with jewels. The second day he did likewise. After a while, however, he realized, that he could not eat jewels. In this land, jewels were worthless so he could not even trade the jewels for food. In this strange place, the commodity that was scarce was animal fat -- schmaltz! The old law of Adam Smith (Economics 101) -- supply and demand. Schmaltz was very valuable in this land of abundant jewels. He became a fat dealer. He started out small and became bigger and bigger until he became quite a successful schmaltz merchant. He made a fortune in animal fat. A year passed, the time came to return to his family and show them all the riches he acquired in this land. So what did he do? He went and took all this animal fat and packed it on the boat and sailed for home. It was a terrible journey, going through cold and through hot, but finally he made it. The boat came to the dock, the family was anxiously waiting to see if he had been successful. He began unloading his bags and all of a sudden there was a terrible odor. We know what happens to schmaltz when it is not refrigerated. The longshoremen kept bringing out these boxes that reeked with the terrible smell. The family looked at each other in bewilderment, wondering why he would bring back schmaltz. They came to him and asked "Were you successful? Did you find the jewels?" And he responded, "But I brought back all this schmaltz..." The family figured that he was disoriented from the journey so they took him home and let him rest up. He kept repeating "But I have all this schmaltz!" They yelled at him, "Schmaltz! What about the jewels?" He was so broken up that he went to bed and cried himself to sleep. His wife and children threw out the schmaltz and went searching through his clothing. They found a couple of jewels that he had inadvertently left in his pocket. With those jewels the family was able to live happily ever after. This, says the Chofetz Chaim, is Olam HaZeh, our world. G-d sends us to This World and tells us that there are jewels lying in the street. He tells us to grab the jewels while we are in This World, and show Him, when we return how many jewels we've accumulated. But here in this crazy world, instead of grabbing jewels, people grab schmaltz! They grab this thing called money. They grab materialism. We get so involved in grabbing these non-essentials, that we forget why we were sent here. We were sent here for those precious stones. When we leave this world, after 120 years, woe to us if all we have to show for our years in This World are those reeking packages of schmaltz, which we inadvertently became involved in grabbing -- rather than grabbing mitzvos. About this it is written "The wise person takes Mitzvos." "And Moshe took the bones of Yosef WITH HIM." What did Moshe take "with him?" Moshe took the Mitzvah of taking the bones of Yosef. In the final analysis Mitzvos are the only thing that ever last.

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[From last year:] From jr@novell.com Date: Fri, 2 Feb 96 Bshalach
 Shiur Harav on Parshas Bshalach
 "Ashira L'Hashem Ki Gao Ga'ah". Rashi's first interpretation is to mention

the Targum Unkelus, who explains the verse as "I will sing to Hashem because (or since) he is above all". Rashi adds an additional interpretation: the praise that is appropriate to offer Hashem is infinite and due to human limitations it is always incomplete, as opposed to a mortal king who is praised even though he is found wanting of deeds and not deserving of praise. According to the second interpretation offered by Rashi, Moshe was indicating that Bnay Yisrael lacked sufficient praise to offer Hashem. This is the same concept found in the Gemara (Megilla 25a) that restricts our praise of Hashem in our Tefilah to Ha'kel Hagadol Hagibor V'hanora. This limitation is so stringent that anyone who adds praises of Hashem beyond that which the Anshei Kneses Hagedolah established is viewed negatively based on the verse L'chah Dumiah Tehila (Megilla 18a). The second interpretation of Rashi defines the word Ki as "even though", or "despite" (similar to the use of Ki Karov Hu, that Hashem did not lead Bnay Yisrael through the Land of Plishtim EVEN THOUGH it was closer). The Passuk is saying that I will sing to Hashem EVEN THOUGH he is exalted above all and I can't possibly sing all His praises. Based on the above mentioned restriction that limits the praise we may offer Hashem, how did Bnay Yisrael and Moshe have the right to offer the additional praise of Shiras Hayam?

The Gemara (Megilla 25a, Berachos 33b) says that had the Anshei Kneses Hagedolah not incorporated the words Ha'kel Hagadol Hagibor V'hanora into our Tefilos, we would not have been able to utter these words of praise of Hashem either. Their right to incorporate these words was based on Moshe using these words in praise of Hashem (Devarim 10:17). However we still need to understand the fundamental source of permission (Mattir) to pray, on which even Moshe relied to utter these praises.

The Rav offered 3 explanations of the Mattir of Shira, each derived from Shiras Moshe (Note: The Rav used Tefilah and Shira interchangeably in much of this shiur):

The first explanation is based on the Rambam (Note: The Rav mentioned Hilchos Berachos but did not specify the Halacha. See 1:3.). Man has an instinctive need to give thanks and recognition to someone who performs an act of kindness towards him. As pertains to Hashem, this natural urge is translated into praise to Hashem for all His acts of kindness that He does for man on a continuous basis. Limited man is generally enjoined from praising Hashem because he can not complete the praises of Hashem. However, Moshe and Bnay Yisrael at that moment on the banks of the Yam Suf were incapable of controlling their need to sing the praise of Hashem for His many miracles and acts of kindness towards them. There was an urge for Bnay Yisrael to recite Shira and thank Hashem that could not be stifled (similar to the uncontrollable urge felt by Joseph when he revealed himself to his brothers).

This uncontrollable need to thank Hashem is also the basis of permission (Mattir) for our Tefilos in general. Man is distinguished from the animal kingdom by his ability and need to pray. Even though man recognizes the inadequacy of his Tefilos, even before he offers them (Ki Gaoh Gaah), he instinctively must offer them anyway (Azi Vzimaras Kah). This uncontrollable need to thank Hashem serves as the Mattir for Shira and Tefilah.

The Rav offered a second suggestion as to what is the Mattir for Shiras Hayam: How did Moshe know that Shira is permissible? Shiras Hayam required a precedent. Moshe had a tradition from father to son back to Avraham Avinu, that the Jewish Nation is a people that offers prayer and praise to Hashem in times of need and times of joy. The Gemara (Berachos 26b) says that our fore-fathers established the various Tefilos that we have. The intention of the Gemara is not merely to present a history lesson. Rather, it is to show us that because they established the Tefilos (Shacharis, Mincha and Maariv), we too are permitted to pray accordingly. As Moshe mentioned in the Shira, Elokay Avi V'aromimenu, just as my fore-fathers before me offered Shira to Hashem, so too will I.

The Rav offered a third possibility as to what is the Mattir for Shira based on the Rambam (Note: Source believed to be Moreh Nevuchim). As mentioned in the Gemara (Megilla 25a), only one who is capable of reciting all the

praises of Hashem may praise Him (Mi Y'mallel Gevuros Hashem Yashmia Kol Tehilaso, Tehillim 106:2). This of course is impossible for mortals. Yet the prophets often revealed the praise of Hashem (e.g. Rachum Vchanun). These revelations were intended to teach us the ways of Hashem so that we may emulate them and follow His ways and behave accordingly. The permission to recite Shira Vashevach derives from the fact that the Shira Vashevach itself, describing the Midos of Hashem, provides the blueprint that shows man how to follow and emulate the ways of Hashem. The Gemara (Shabbos 133b) derives the obligation to emulate the ways of Hashem from the verse Zeh Kayli V'anvayhu (similar to the obligation of Vhalachta Bdrachav). As Hashem performs acts of kindness so to should you. This is based on the analysis of the word V'anvayhu, as an acronym for Ani V'hu (I and He). When we recite Shira to Hashem we are also reiterating and reinforcing our obligation to emulate the very ways of Hashem for which we are praising Him. The Mattir for Shira is that the Shira itself defines how we fulfill the Mitzvah of VHalachta Bdrachav.

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Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZTL on Parshas Bshalach
(Shiur Date: 2/5/74)

The Torah says that Moshe charged Yehoshua with the responsibility of selecting an army to battle with Amalek. The Ramban comments that even though the Torah says in Parshas Shlach that Moshe called Hoshea Bin Nun Yehoshua, this name change occurred previously, at the time that Yehoshua came to be Moshe's devoted student. When Yehoshua came to Moshe and he realized the potential of his student, he changed his name by adding the letter Yud. The Midrash that says that the Yud represented the prayer that Hashem should save Joshua from the evil plans of the spies. From their earliest association Moshe realized that Yehoshua would be among those that would be sent to spy on the land and he added the letter Yud to his name so that Hashem would save him from being ensnared by the terrible plans of the spies.

The Rav explained the importance of the name change from Hoshea to Yehoshua. The Midrash says that when Hashem changed Avram's and Sary's names by removing the Yud from Sary and replacing it with a Hay and adding a Hay to Avraham, the Yud complained. Hashem consoled the Yud by promising that it would be added to the name of another great personality Hoshea, changing his name to Yehoshua. The Rav noted that this was an amazing Midrash and explained it as follows.

The change in name for Avram represented a major change in the personality of Avram. The Mishna in Bikurim states that a convert may bring Bikurim and state the word Avoseinu because Avraham was Av Hamon Goyim, the father of the multitude of nations. For this reason a convert may daven Shemoneh Esray and say Elokeinu Valokay Avoseinu. The Rambam points out (Hilchos Avoda Zarah) that Avraham had a major impact on the people of his generation, having converted tens of thousands to recognize the One Creator of the universe. The letter Hay was added to represent Avraham as the externally visible and accessible spiritual father to all. He was not someone who was capable of remaining hidden inside his tent. The Hay represents an openness, the Pesach Haohel, the door of the tent, where Avraham always sat, always seeking out people to help and bring them closer to the Shechina. The Hay symbolizes Hispashtus, a willingness to extend oneself to all. Simply put Avraham was a leader who epitomized Chesed, as such he was always available to his people.

The letter Yud on the other hand represents the possessive form (my chair kisie, my house baysie). It shows the private, hidden part of the person who separates himself from the public. He separates himself because he wants to associate himself completely with Hashem, to the exclusion of all others. It is

the Midas Hagevurah, Midas Hatzimtzum of minimizing accessibility.

There are 2 distinct dimensions to a leader: his public and private personalities. On the one hand, the leader must exemplify Chesed to all, and be front and center before the people and sharing in their spiritual and daily experiences. We find that by Krias Yam Suf Moshe and Bnay Yisrael sang praise to Hashem. Also by Mattan Torah, Moshe took the people out towards Hashem because he also wanted to be part of the spiritual experience of Kabbalas Hatorah at Har Sinai. In these cases Moshe was the public leader who stood before the people and was their teacher, leader and guide who participated in their experiences as a people.

On the other hand, a leader must possess the attribute of Gevurah, Tzimtzum, to separate himself from others in order that he might excel in his personal relationship with Hashem. Again we find that Moshe would set up the Ohel Moed outside of the camp of the people as a place where he could communicate with Hashem, away from all others. He could not be in the public eye at all times. There is a time and place for both.

These attributes are seen in Gedolei Yisrael. In some cases, a Gadol may excel in one over the other. The Rav related that he heard from his father who received a tradition from his father that the Vilna Gaon did not say formal shiurim. For the year after the passing of his mother he said shiurim in Mishnayos Zeraim and Taharos, however few if any were capable of keeping up with his brilliance and intellect. The students who heard these shiurim collected them as Shenos Eliahu on Zeraim and Eliahu Rabbah on Taharos. People think of Reb Chaim Volozhin as the Talmid of the Gaon. In reality Reb Chaim's access to the Gaon was that he would assemble questions for the Gaon and twice a year he would present them to the Gaon for a couple of hours at a time. Otherwise the Gaon was completely occupied with his own studying. The Gaon represented the Yud that symbolizes the Midas Hatzimtzum. On the other hand, the Baal Shem Tov represented the Midas Hachessed as the publicly available leader, personifying the Hay of Hispashtus.

Yehoshua already possessed the critical dimension of a leader, the Hay of Hispashtus, he was a man of the people. His personal predilection was towards the Midas Hachessed. Moshe recognized this and wanted to add the Midas Hatzimtzum to him as well. There is a time and place for both attributes in a leader. Therefore the Yud was added to the Hay that was already part of his name. The benefit of this addition to Yehoshua's personality was evident after the episode of the Meraglim. Without the reinforcement of the Midas Hagevurah, Yehoshua's strong sense of being a man of the people might have led him to be engulfed by their evil plan. The Yud symbolized his newly found inner strength to withdraw from the group and to be firm and true in his convictions that Bnay Yisrael could and would conquer Eretz Canaan with the help of Hashem.

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WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5757 COPYRIGHT 1996-7
SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS BESHALACH

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

...A holy Sabbath to Hashem. Bake what you wish to bake and cook what you wish to cook (Exo. 16:23).

Opening Cans and Bottles on Shabbos: Rulings of Harav S.Z. Auerbach

The complicated question of opening cans and bottles on Shabbos has been extensively debated among contemporary poskim. It would be nearly impossible to quote all the different opinions and views on this controversial issue, let alone to reach a consensus for practical application. For this reason,

we have decided to follow the approach of the venerable halachic authority, Harav S.Z. Auerbach, who wrote extensively on this subject and is widely quoted by other authorities(1). Since some rabbonim follow other rulings, however, one should consult his own rav for guidance.

There are four possible Biblical or rabbinic prohibitions one may violate when opening bottles or cans on Shabbos. They are: 1) Tearing; 2) Fashioning an opening; 3) Completing the formation of a utensil; 4) Erasing. In order to satisfy the opinions of all the poskim, it is recommended that all bottles and containers be opened before Shabbos. If one forgets to do so, however, there are still possibilities of opening them on Shabbos:

General Guidelines :What is Prohibited? What is Permitted?

It is prohibited to puncture a hole in a can or a bottle if the purpose is to create a "good" opening through which one can pour out its contents. This is considered fashioning an opening. It is permitted, however, to open a soda or a beer can by lifting its tab. It is prohibited to unscrew a bottle cap if, by doing so, one creates a usable bottle cap cover. This is considered completing the formation of a utensil. It is permitted, however, to unscrew a bottle cap which already is a usable bottle cap. It is prohibited to tear the wrapping on a package if letters or pictures will be torn, or if the wrapper will be retained for any later use, such as to rewrap the item. This is considered tearing which is prohibited. It is permitted, however, to rip the wrapping in such a way that it could never be used again. It is forbidden to open a can of tuna, etc., if, after emptying the can of its contents, one will use it for any other purpose. It is permitted, however, to open a can of tuna if the can will be thrown away after its contents have been emptied, even if the contents remain in the can temporarily.

Practical Applications :

Bottle Caps - Bottle caps which lift off with a bottle opener may be removed(2). Bottle caps which break when unscrewed and leave a ring around the bottle neck [and bottle caps which perforate along the edge when the bottle is opened (3)] are forbidden to be unscrewed(4), since the cap, which originally served as a seal, becomes a functional cap which can now be used as a cover(5). Thus, the first time the cap is unscrewed, it completes the formation of a utensil - the bottle cap(6). [If, however, the bottle is opened with the intention of throwing away the cap, it is permissible to unscrew it(7).]

But only caps made out of metal are included in this prohibition. It is permissible to unscrew a plastic cap, even if it separates and leaves a ring around the bottle neck. This is because plastic caps are functional even before they are screwed onto a bottle (as opposed to metal ones which - due to technological differences - become operational only after being unscrewed from the bottle the first time)(8).

Often, people break off the sharp edges of a metal cap (which was opened before Shabbos) so that they will not injure themselves on it. It is prohibited to do that on Shabbos(9).

Tuna Cans - Nowadays, it is permitted to open tuna cans on Shabbos since they are discarded after their contents are removed. Even though the contents of the can are not removed immediately, it is still not considered as if one is completing a utensil, since a tuna can has no purpose except to be opened and thrown away(10). It is forbidden, however, to remove the metal lid of a can which is meant to serve as a storage bin for the item for a lengthy period of time [such as a soup croutons can, etc.] since these type of containers are made to last for a longer period of time [than a tuna can]. Such cans are normally not emptied out right away, but are retained for as long as their contents last(11).

Soda Cans - It is permitted to lift off the tab of a soda or a beer can, whether one pours its contents into a cup, drinks from the can, or uses a straw(12). It is also permitted to insert a straw into bags or boxes which contain beverages(13).

Packaging - It is permitted to rip off, ("in a destructive manner"), a wrapper which surrounds wine or grape-juice bottle caps, candy bars, etc. It is permitted to rip off a seal that covers the contents of a container, such as the inside seal of a coffee jar or an aluminum foil seal on a yogurt container, etc. When tearing any packaging, one must be sure that no letters or pictures

are torn. It is permitted to cut or tear between the letters of a word or between words(14).

Milk Containers - It may be prohibited to open the spout of a milk or juice container, since doing so might be considered fashioning an opening or tearing [in a "non-destructive manner"](15). One may, however, puncture the bottom of the container and then pour the contents through the spout into another vessel(16). General note: Even if one mistakenly opened a can or a bottle in a manner which is clearly prohibited, the food or beverage does not become forbidden to eat(17).

FOOTNOTES: 1 The footnotes will reflect other opinions as well. 2 Mishnah Berurah 314:17; Chazon Ish 51:11. 3 Harav S.Z. Auerbach in a written responsum published in Me'or Hashabbos pg. 481; Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9: fn *61. 4 One may, however, puncture the cap and then unscrew it - Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9:17, or better yet, puncture a wide hole and then pour the beverage through the punctured hole - Meleches Shabbos pg. 344. 5 Even if the cap was partially unscrewed before Shabbos, but it remained attached to the ring, it is prohibited to unscrew it further on Shabbos - Binyan Shabbos pg. 139; Meleches Shabbos pg. 343. 6 Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Minchas Shlomo pg. 551 and in Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9:17. While many prominent poskim (Harav Y.Y. Weiss quoted in Divrei Moshe OC 12-13; Harav S. Vosner quoted in Shomer Shabbos Kadas; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv quoted in Shalmei Yehudah pg. 104; Az Nidberu 3:40) agree to this, there are other poskim (Harav Y.Y. Fischer in Even Yisroel vol. 2:14; Tzitz Eliezer 14:45; Yechave Daas 2:42; Lehoros Nosan 7:21; Kinyan Torah 4:34; Harav Yechezkel Roth in Ohr Hashabbos vol. 11) who do not. They allow all bottle caps to be opened. Igros Moshe does not address this issue, and there are conflicting reports as to what Harav M. Feinstein's opinion was. 7 Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9: fn 61 and in Meor Hashabbos pg. 480. See explanation in Binyan Shabbos pg. 143. Other poskim do not agree with this leniency, see Dvrei Moshe OC 12-13 and Meleches Shabbos pg. 342. 8 Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Tikunim U'milluim pg.14 and in Meor Hashabbos pg. 481-482. See further explanation in Binyan Shabbos pg. 94. It is also permitted to remove the plastic caps that are opened by tearing a little strip connected to the bottom of the cap - Binyan Shabbos pg. 94 quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach.

9 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Binyan Shabbos pg. 97). 10 Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9:3, in Tikunim U'milluim 9:11 and in Binyan Shabbos pg. 127. Although there are other poskim (Igros Moshe 1:122; Minchas Yitzchak 4:82; Chelkas Yaakov 3:8) who agree with this leniency in principle, there are other poskim (Chazon Ish 51:11; Az Nidberu 11:12) who do not. In order to satisfy the views of the other poskim (see Igros Moshe who is hesitant about this leniency), it is best to first puncture the can and then open it on the other side. 11 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Binyan Shabbos pg. 128). See also Tikunim U'milluim 9:11. It remains questionable what the halacha is concerning Pringles cans, since, on one hand, the actual can is made to hold the item for a longer period of time, but on the other hand, few people do that. Normally, the contents are consumed within a short period. Note, however, that some Pringles or soup croutons cans do not have a metal lid but a paper one. Those may be ripped open, just like the inside seal of a coffee jar. 12 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (written responsum published in Meor Hashabbos pg. 490 and pg. 528); also quoted (from an unpublished letter) in Binyan Shabbos pg. 127 and by Harav Y.Y. Newirth (published in Moriah vol. 109-110, Nissan 5752 and vol. 211-212, Tamuz 5752). There are other poskim who do not agree with this leniency, see Shu"t Ohr L'tzion (Harav B.Z. Abba Shaul) 26, quoted in Meleches Shabbos pg. 299. Surely, the poskim who forbid opening a can of tuna, also forbid opening a can of soda. See also Kuntres Yad Dodi pg. 31 quoting Harav Dovid Feinstein as prohibiting one to even ask a non-Jew to open a soda can on Shabbos. 13 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Binyan Shabbos pg. 127). 14 Entire paragraph based on rulings of Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9:11-12; Tikunim U'milluim 9:11; Meor Hashabbos pg. 496) based on Mishnah Berurah 314:25. Rabbi P.E. Falk (Zachor V'shamor sec. 33 pg. 13, concerning cutting a cake with pictures on it) maintains that "pretty patterns such as a zig-zag design along

the edges, crisscross lines running across the surface, etc.", are not considered as pictures and are permitted to be torn. 15 There is no clear record of Harav S.Z. Auerbach's view concerning milk containers, although from his rulings quoted in Shmiras Shabbos Khilchassah 9 fn 11 and 13, based on Mishnah Berurah 314:25, it looks like he prohibited this. In the opinion of the author of Binyan Shabbos, a close disciple of Harav Auerbach who spent many hours in discussion of these matters with him, it is permitted, since the bottle it thrown out when its contents are removed. Igros Moshe OC 4:78 clearly forbids this. 16 Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9: fn 20 quoting Harav S.Z. Auerbach. 17 Shmiras Shabbos Khilchasa 9:23; Harav S.Z. Auerbach in Meor Hashabbos pg. 527.

----- Weekly-Halacha,
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INPUT/OUTPUT -- DRASHA PARSHAS B'SHALACH

The sea had split. The enemy was drowned. And now the problems began. The newly liberated nation was stranded in a scorching desert facing an unending landscape of uncertainties. Taskmasters no longer responded to their cries -- Hashem did. He responded with protection and shelter on every level. But the Jews were still not satisfied. They were hungry. "If only we had died in the land of Egypt. Why did you liberate us to die in the desert?" they cried to Moshe. (Exodus 16:3)

Hashem responds with a most miraculous and equally mysterious celestial gift. Food fell from the heavens, but the people accepted it with piqued curiosity. Indeed, the dew-covered matter satiated their hunger, but they were not sure what exactly it was. "Each man said to his friend, manna! For they did not know what it was." (Exodus 16:14) The commentaries explain that the word manna is a Hebrew-Egyptian form of the word "what."

At first, the Torah only discusses the physical attributes of the manna: "it was like a thin frost on the earth." The Torah continues to tell us that on Shabbos the manna did not fall. A double portion fell on Friday -- the extra portion was allotted for Shabbos. In referring to the manna of Shabbos the Torah tells us, "the children of Israel named it manna, and it tasted like a cake fried in honey." Later, however, the Torah describes the manna's taste differently: "it tasted like dough kneaded with oil." (Numbers 11:8) Why does the Torah wait to describe the manna's taste until Shabbos? Also, when did it taste sweet and when did it only taste like oily dough?

Another question is before Shabbos people asked, "what is it?" On Shabbos they named the miraculous food -- "It is 'what'" (manna). Why did the Jews wait until Shabbos to describe concretely the miraculous edible with an official title manna -- the 'what' food?

Rabbi Chaim Shapiro tells the following story in his book Once Upon a Shtetl. In the town of Lomza there was a group of woodcutters hired by the townsfolk to cut down trees for firewood. The strong laborers swung their axes and hit the trees all while shouting a great cry HAH with each blow. The timing had to be flawless. If the cry HAH came a split second early or, a second after the blade hit the tree, it would be a worthless shout that would not aid the lumberjacks at all.

Each year, Zelig the meshugener (crazy), a once-successful businessman who had lost his mind together with the loss of a young daughter, accompanied the woodcutters on their quest. He stood in the background and precisely as the ax hit the tree he, too, shouted on the top of his lungs HAH!

When it was time to get paid, the deranged Zelig also stood in line. "I deserve some silver coins!" he exclaimed. "After all without the chopping would not be as effective!"

The case was brought before the Chief Rabbi of Lomza who looked at the five lumberjacks and then at the meshugener. "Listen carefully, Zelig," said the Rabbi. He then took 10 silver pieces in his hand and jingled them loudly. They made a loud clanging noise. Then he gave each woodsman two silver pieces. He turned to Zelig and smiled. "The men who gave the labor get the coins, and, Zelig, you who gave the sound, get the sound of the coins!" Hashem in His infinite wisdom began our lessons in living through our daily fare. The Talmud states that the taste of the manna was integrally linked with the taster's thoughts. If one thought of steak the manna tasted like steak: if one thought of borscht, the manna tasted like borscht. In fact, the Chofetz Chaim was once asked, "what happens if you think nothing?" He answered very profoundly: "If one thinks of nothing, then one tastes nothing!" During the week the Jews had the manna but did not realize its great potential. The Malbim (1809-1880) explains that is why it only tasted like oily dough. But on Shabbos, a day filled with sweet relaxation, heavenly thoughts filled the minds of the nation. And those sweet thoughts produced sweet tastes!

The Talmud also says that to small children the manna tasted like dough, but to scholars it tasted like honey. The Malbim explains that to scholars whose thoughts are sweet as honey, the manna tasted like honey. When one thought of honey, he tasted honey. When one thinks blandly, however, he has bland taste.

Perhaps on Shabbos the Jewish People realized the important lesson of life. The questions we face should not be addressed as eternally mysterious. We can not face the unknown with the question, "what is it?" Rather, we can define our destiny and challenge our uncertainties. "It is what!" What you put into it is exactly what you take out! Life presents us many opportunities. We can approach those moments with lofty thoughts and see, smell, and taste its sweetness. Or we can see nothing and taste nothing. We can chop hard and reap the benefits, or we can kvetch and enjoy only the echoes of our emptiness.

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Jules Beck in memory of Ahron ben Yaakov Naftali Beck

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Peninim on the Torah

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

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Parshas Beshalach

And he turned the sea to damp land, and the water split. (14:21) The splitting of the Red Sea was a remarkable miracle; is there a parallel in Jewish history? Was it truly the only time that water "deferred" to man? Indeed, in the Talmud Chullin 7a, Chazal recount an incident in which R' Pinchas ben Yair was on his way to perform the mitzvah of pidyon shevuyim, redeeming Jewish captives. He came to a river that was impassable. He commanded the water to split, so that he could pass through. The river responded, "You are performing the command of your Master, and so am I. You might be successful in your efforts to rescue the hostage, while I am assured of success. What makes you think that your mitzvah takes precedence over mine?" R' Pinchas ben Yair, responded, "If you do not split immediately, I will decree upon you that all of your water should dry up!" The river split, and R' Pinchas ben Yair passed through. Chazal summarize the story with the observation that R' Pinchas ben Yair's power was equal to that of Moshe and all of Klal Yisrael.

Keeping this in mind, the Sfias Emes wonders how Krias Yam Suf demonstrates the singular greatness of Klal Yisrael. After all, did a similar

miracle not occur for an individual? He offers a profound response. Certainly, Hashem can alter the course of nature for a single tzaddik. The righteous have extraordinary merits which grant them access to miracles. When, however, did Hashem alter nature for an entire nation? The chidush, novelty, of Krias Yam Suf was that an extraordinary miracle took place for an entire nation. This phenomenon demonstrated to the world the kedushah, holiness, of Am Yisrael--not just the individual Jew--but the totality of the nation!

Horav Tzadok Ha'kohen, z"l, M" Lublin supplements this thought. Am Yisrael's innate kedushah was exhibited to the world through the miracle of Krias Yam Suf. After all, what virtue did the Jews have that made them more worthy than the Egyptians to be spared? They had sunk to the nadir of depravity, to the forty-ninth level of tumah, spiritual impurity. What distinguishes one idol-worshiper from another? The answer is that while externally the Jews may not have displayed a spiritual demeanor that would merit Krias Yam Suf, their inner being, their penimius, was inherently holy.

On that day Hashem saved Yisrael from the hand of Egypt. And The Bnei Yisrael went on dry land in the midst of the sea.... (14:29, 30)

And Bnei Yisrael ate the manna for forty years, until their arrival in an inhabited land. (16:35)

One miraculous occurrence followed another; is there a relationship between the two? Chazal seem to think so. They say in the Talmud Pesachim 118a: "A man's sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea." Simply put, providing man with sustenance is as great a feat as Krias Yam Suf. The Zohar Ha'kadosh questions Chazal's statement. Is there any act that is difficult for Hashem to perform? Was Krias Yam Suf difficult for Hashem? Is it difficult for Hashem to sustain a person?

A number of explanations address this Chazal. The Chozeh M' Lublin, z"l, suggests a profound insight. Chazal are not focusing their observation upon Hashem. They are, rather, speaking to man concerning which path to take when life becomes more demanding. Earning a living is -- by any standard -- a complex endeavor. It demands great fortitude and commitment. It requires determination, resolution, and -- most importantly -- faith in the Almighty. What does one do when the situation is bleak, when prospects for success are -- at best -- limited, when every way one turns the door to success "seems" closed?

Chazal's message is to follow the lesson of Krias Yam Suf. The Jews were trapped. They could either look forward to dying at the hand of the Egyptians or to drowning in the Red Sea. What could they do? They had no other choice but to be boteach b'Hashem, trust in the Almighty. They turned to Him in the hope that He would spare them. With this hope and trust, they entered the threatening waters of the Red Sea to be saved by Hashem. Likewise, when we are faced with the challenge of parnassah, livelihood, trusting humans is ineffectual. Absorbing one's mind - and even soul - in the anxiety that accompanies the quest for parnassah is wasteful and detrimental to one's physical and spiritual health. Only one approach will achieve success -- bitachon, true trust in Hashem. If one truly believes that Hashem will help him, He will.

Horav Simcha Bunim, z"l, M' Peshischa gives a similar response with a slightly different twist. At the Yam Suf, the Jews had no idea how they would be rescued. In fact, the splitting of the Red Sea was probably the last thing they expected to happen. With regard to parnassah, Hashem sends salvation from a source that, for the most part, is unheralded. We have no idea from where Hashem will bring about our sustenance. We have only to trust that He will.