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Rav Soloveitchik ZT'L Notes (Volume 3)

Notice These are unapproved unedited notes [of R.Y.?] of classes given by Rav Soloveitchik. We do not know who wrote the notes. However we offer this to the world that maybe someone can get some use out of these notes. A member of the family has looked at the notes and said that look like the real thing . (Rav Soloveitchik did NOT write these notes.) [Thanks to David Isaac for typing these notes]

**Lecture delivered by Rabbi Soloveitchik on Saturday night,
February 3, 1980**

Parsha B'shalach / Shabbos Shirah

We call this Shabbos, "Shabbos Shirah" and it is the one in which Parsha B'shalach is read. It is the one in which we recite the Shira or song of Moshe Rabbenu at the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea.

Who actually said Shira concerning the miracle of the Exodus, Yetzias Mitzraim? If you carefully read today's Shira from A to Z, you find no mention of Yetzias Mitzraim. All you find is the miracle of Yam-Suf -- the Red Sea. It is very strange! If you look into the "P'sukei D'zimra" (those prayers each morning of praise of G-d from Ashrei on) you will notice something strange. It was arranged by Chazal -- the sages and runs to the paragraph which ends "Kol Hanshama T'hallel Koh Halelukah". A Jew cannot daven, cannot say Brochos without talking of the great event, Yetzias Mitzraim - the birth of the nation. Whenever you praise G-d, the Exodus always comes up. Then in the following paragraph Vayorech Dovid - the praises of David, there begins a balance between Yetzias Mitzraim and Kryas Yam Suf - the crossing of the sea. From this, we go on to the "shira" only. Therefore, in the prayers of "P'sukei D'Zimra" we have a combining of both. We mention Mitzraim and then go on to the Shira. (All this concerns us - the people who lived ages after the actual event - but not the people who took part in the Exodus. They only sang at the sea.)

Actually, who was the first one to sing praises concerning the liberation from Egypt? It was Yisro, Moses' father-in-law in next

week's sedra. When he came and heard of the deliverance, he exclaimed (Yisro, chapter 18, line 10), "Blessed is G-d who saved you from the hand of the Egyptians." It is said that Moshe was wrong in not saying Shira earlier. Gemora is critical of Moshe. But it isn't so, after all, Moshe did say the Shira. However, he didn't mention Yetzias Mitzraim. Why did he leave it out of the context?

Apparently, there was something missing in Yetzias Mitzraim which did not generate the feeling. Then something occurred to create the feeling. What happened which did not happen seven days earlier?

Interestingly, just before Shira, the paragraph reads, "On that day, they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant." "Bayom Hahu" - it was on that day. The Shira begins, "Oz Yoshir Moshe." What is "Oz"? ("then" did Moses sing). I would translate "Then they witnessed the miracle and were impressed." Only then did he recite the Shira. Actually, even then he would have abstained but suddenly, he realized that something occurred which did not happen a week ago. He realized that he shouldn't be reluctant. He consulted his mind: "Should I say Shira or not?" The decision was "Yes!" This Nas - (miracle) - was worthy of Shira. Moshe, himself, was impressed. "There I thought the miracle was not complete!"

Shouldn't it have been instead at "Lay Shimurim" - (a night for watching or waiting for) the very moment they became free?

Wouldn't that be the appropriate moment? Apparently, Torah did not think this was the right moment. Torah abstains at the point of Lay Shimurim; it comes to fruition and conclusion right here -- at the sea. When did Torah pick up the axiological conclusion at the sea?

"Krias Yam Suf" is not only "nas" - miracle - but it is the entire "geulah" - redemption. Therefore, "Bayom Hahu" - only that very day did the people realize what "Yetzias Mitzraim" means to them. "Vayar Yisroel Nas Al Sfas Hayom" - they saw the miracle at the sea's edge - is not just a physical redemption. Only then did they recognize in retrospect what had happened. There were miracles before then but those they didn't understand. A man can see a miracle and not recognize it as such. If a man could recognize all the miracles that occur to him, he'd say "shira" all his life. "Emunah" - faith is more than seeing a miracle. The people in Mitzraim only saw or recognized "Etzba Elokim" the "finger" of G-d. Here, they recognized the entire "Yad" - Hand. Here began their "Emunah". The "pshat" - meaning - is "Bayom Hahu" - on that day G-d redeemed the people not only physically and politically. One can be a free person politically and physically but not spiritually. Here there was spiritual liberty. G-d's rebuttal to Moshe when he argued against going to Egypt was "My purpose is not only physical or political redemption for if such I could have chosen someone from amongst the slaves who had been himself in servitude. That is not My purpose! They must be made into a great spiritual people. They (the people) didn't realize it. At "Yam Suf" they realized there is a greater form of liberty than that which most people understand. That is what transpired at "Yam suf"; this is where the transition occurred, where they began to understand true freedom. It is a completely different approach than at Egypt. Why at "Yam suf"? Because suddenly they beheld a vision of "nevuah" - prophecy - more sublime than that which the prophet Yechezkal saw (from the greatest to the lowest milkmaid). What is meant by "miyad Mitzraim" (saved from the hands of the Egyptians). It means saved from the method of thinking in the Egyptian manner. "Miyad Mitzraim" is not only liberation from Egyptian territory of slave drivers but from Egyptian culture.

"Mays Al Sfas Hayom" (the Egyptians dead at the sea's edge). It wasn't an ordinary conflict between slave and master. It was that at "Yam Suf" they realized the truth. The physical defeat of Mitzraim is not to be interpreted as the mundane Mitzraim but the spiritual freedom. There is no Shira to be said unless the person himself

understands and comprehends. Moshe saw that in Egypt they didn't understand. All they saw was "Etzba" - finger. They didn't comprehend - only recognized it as master and slave, cruelty, mundane, secular. Chazal (sages) said, "Zeh Kali" - (this is my G-d) means every child recognized G-d.

Who are meant when Tenach refers to "Bnai Neviim" - the children of the prophets? It means those who are trained, who are taught to understand. Here, everyone became a "novi" - a prophet because all understood. And this is why Moshe said Shira here but not there. There, all they knew was that Pharaoh came in the middle of the night and begged them to leave. Therefore "Oz Yoshir" - only then were they able to sing. One of the most important Mitzvas is for a human to understand a "nas" - a miracle and to interpret it.

There are two experiences - when G-d bestows a blessing in which all is good, and second when there is a time of distress. One should understand distress. One should not say "Chavivim Yisroel" -- that one should live by pain. Instead, he should overcome it by all means. When G-d bestows "Chessed" - lovingkindness - one should recognize it and do all he can in his power to show his appreciation to G-d. The sin of Job was that he didn't utilize to good the blessings of G-d. When you don't recognize it, you cannot say Shira. "Chazal" say that G-d wanted Cheziah - the pious King of Israel (under whose kingship the Assyrian army was miraculously destroyed) to be the Messiah but he didn't say Shira after the great miracle because he didn't understand the significance. Therefore, he couldn't be "Moshiach". If there is "Emunah" there is Shira; otherwise no Shira.

There is another aspect. Yetzias Mitzraim was a miracle which didn't spread easily throughout the Middle East. People didn't understand it easily, not even the "Mitzrim" themselves. The leaving of the Jews made little impression upon the peoples of the time. In fact, when theologians tell the virtues of Christianity, how often do they mention our name? How often do they mention Maimonides? They circumvent it. They talk of Thomas Aquinas instead. This is one of the aspects of "Golus" - diaspora. "Yetzias Mitzraim" had little luck; it made little impression.

"Krias Yam Suf" made an impression. What is "malchus of Rosh Hashanah"? All nations will recognize the kingship of G-d. Suddenly the "Krias Yam Suf" spread to all neighboring nations. (In sedra Yisro - what was it that Yisro heard? - Rashi: "the crossing of the Red Sea".) They suddenly realized: "Here is a nation of an enigma." They felt that here was a singular people. This is what happened at "Krias Yam Suf" - not "Yetzias Mitzraim". "Krias Yam Suf" led to "Matan Torah" - the giving of the Torah - but was almost a cosmic event. Many nations came to Bilam who was a great teacher to ask, "What is it?" He answered, "G-d has given His Torah to His people!" What Chazal wants to explain is that "Matan Torah" was not just for Jews but all nations came to Bilam, the scholar, for explanation. But "Yam Suf" did not have the impact. "Krias Yam Suf" was universal in proportion: "Yetzias Mitzraim" was local. Here nations realized "there is a great nation - a great people." After the Jews realized the impact of "krias Yam Suf" then in retrospect they realized the meaning of "Yetzias Mitzraim."

At the seder, however, all the stress is placed on "Yetzias Mitzraim". They only place we mention "Krias Yam Suf" is in the "Hallel". Why? Because "Hallel" was generated by "Krias Yam Suf". Another event is not mentioned in the Hagadah - Eretz Yisroel. There is no tendency to talk about the land because that belongs to a different holiday, Shavuoth. We who live thousands of years later can revalue this but they couldn't. Therefore we say the "Hallel". We enjoyed the privilege which Moshe did not enjoy.

"Zeh Kali V'anvayhu, Elohay Avi V'arom'menu" (This is my G-d and I will glorify Him; my father's G-d and I will exalt Him). "V'anvayhu" - I'll build a temple - Bais Hamikdosh. Whatever I'll

do, whatever Mitzvos, I'll do it in a beautiful way. We want that when man shall perform a mitzvah, it shall be not as a burden but because we love it. We can do a mitzvah in an ugly way. For instance, although a mitzvah, one can put on tefilin and take them off as a burden. Secondly, I'll be like Him. He is merciful, I'll be merciful. Man should imitate G-d, follow in his footsteps. It all has the same root. "V'anvayhu" - all merge into "Ani V'hu" (I and He) - imitating being like G-d. Rav Yochanan says that if Torah didn't say it (being like G-d) it would be blasphemy (for it would intimate that man is trying to be G-d). How can man say I'll be as G-d? We cannot create metaphysically the earth, the atmosphere. But it means ethical virtues. I don't like the word "like G-d". It means, whoever sees me will be compelled to say, "G-d resides in me." If we see a person who is obnoxious, we say he is not a G-dly person. If we see a great person we say, "he is divine". Whoever meets one should say, "That person is so fine, so sublime because he is divine -- because there is "Shechina" (G-dliness) - there is something of G-d in him. We don't need proof that G-d exists, that He rules the world. A person who doesn't believe cannot say, "Only I exist". But all the arguments come from the cosmos. The proof of the creation is from the Creator. If I walk by a beautiful house and everything is exquisite - the dwelling, the lawn, the trees, we want to see and to know the builder, the master. This is what every man should want to realize when he lifts his eyes and sees the stars, the sky; the presence of G-d. When man wakes and says the "brochos" he comprehends the great Creator. "Pesukei D'Zimri" is not related to miracles but to the beauty of the cosmos. This is how the human mind can understand the cosmos. "I'll give a better place to find G-d, not in the stars millions of miles away but in my very self." "I walked everywhere - the streets, the market places, the cities; I didn't find Him in myself." This is the "Zeh Kali V'anvayhu". No human could exist in the beautiful way unless the "Shechina" existed in him. His actions are so impressive, so kind, so morally perfect only because they "neshama" - the soul exists within him. As I said, to find G-d in me, you can do a mitzvah beautifully or not beautifully. Many Orthodox don't! What is Kiddush Hashem (sanctifying G-d) or Chillul Hashem (desecrating G-d)? Walking into a store and not paying at once but procrastinating the payment causes the owner to misinterpret - "He won't pay," even though he pays the next day.

What is: I'll build him a "Bais Hamikdosh"? It doesn't mean a Temple of brick and stone. It means myself! G-d doesn't need a home. If G-d needs a home, it is man. Therefore, the common denominator is, give the opportunity to G-d to speak through man. "Give Him the microphone to address Himself -- not through long sermons but through the actions of man. Through me, G-d has the opportunity to address Himself. I'll perform the mitzvos in the most beautiful way!

What else do we find in the sedra? I should call today's sedra the "Doctrine of Private Property". Americans in general, if they don't like something, put it into the waste basket. The way things are now, we'll almost all have a Marxist order. Has "yehadus" given us a qualified approval of private property or a rejection of private property? What makes possession immoral? It is a serious problem. I believe that we have a comparison here in sedra B'shalach and in sedra B'haloscha where in both instances do we find the people complaining for food and receiving both the manna and the "Slav" - the quail. Here in today's section, we are told that the manna should be picked up just so much for each morning, for each person. What about the quail? Here, it doesn't say how much each person was to gather when the quail fell in the midst of them. In sedra B'haloscha it is described in great detail that so much fell that there was enough for all the people to feed for a month's time and that the ones who took the least gathered at least 10 groups. Apparently, the "slav" was

unlimited. What did Moshe require from them concerning the manna? Basically, he told them, "Collect as much as is necessary to feed the household from day to day. It was one measure allotted to a household. Some grabbed more but it all ended the same for all. Those who took more found it had shrunk. Those who took too little found a full measure. All had but one measure. First, it is allotted to each member and you cannot grab more. Second, don't hoard. Third, on Shabbos, you will have a double portion so that you can prepare the previous day without cashing on Shabbos. Why is Shabbos brought into the matter of manna here. Aren't we told all about Shabbos in the Ten Commandments? There is a link between the two, Shabbos and manna. The people were in slavery for hundreds of years. Egypt, right to private possession was denied to them. Here, the manna was the first thing which they owned through acquisition. People who were released from concentration camps have said that their first desire after liberation was to "make up" for lost time.

Here Moshe taught them the basic tenets of possession. That which can be moral can also be immoral. First is Shabbos. Shabbos is the foundation of private property. In order to be entitled to private property, man must observe Shabbos. G-d created so He owns the world. What is Shabbos? It means cutting off -- stopping. It is the day when humans must recognize that G-d is master of the world. No private property. The same is when a person is engaged in celebration and hears suddenly bad news. He stops. Dynamics do belong to G-d.

Basically, there is no private property. But Moshe said, "Before I tell you how to function let me tell you of Shabbos." In the Ten Commandments, it's only a short repetition. Basically, there is no private property. However, six days shall you work. G-d gives it to man! Man doesn't take it but G-d gives it. It is a concession. When we say, "Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aretz" it means "Man must also participate." True, without G-d's blessing, all man's work would be of no avail. But man must work. Concerning the manna from heaven, man had nothing to do but to pick it up. G-d gives; man just has an illusion that he produces. "Lechem Min Hashamayim" - bread from heaven requires Shabbos, one day a week. The "Chet of M'chal Shabbos" -- sin of Sabbath desecration basically is stealing, that which doesn't belong to us. By observing, we manifest belongs not to us but to G-d.

Secondly, we are taught, "Zdokah and Chessed" - charity and kindness. If we begin to hoard, we imply, "Only I am entitled to it." It destroys "zdokah". Why did Elimelech, husband of Naomi in the days of Ruth, die? Because he should not have thought only of himself and left the poor. Thus, if they hoarded the manna, it spoiled and they had to discard it. It taught us the lesson of sharing with the needy if I have too much and he too little.

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Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Lord Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth

[From 5766]

<http://www.chiefrabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Beshalach

The division of the Reed Sea is engraved in Jewish memory. We recite it daily in the morning service, at the transition from the Verses of Praise to the beginning of communal prayer. We speak of it again after the Shema, just before the Amidah. It was the supreme miracle of the exodus. But in what sense?

If we listen carefully to the narratives, we can distinguish two perspectives. This is the first:

"The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left . . . The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen--the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left." (Exodus 14: 22, 28-29) The same note is struck in the Song at the Sea:

By the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. (Exodus 15: 8) The emphasis here is on the supernatural dimension of what happened. Water, which normally flows, stood upright. The sea parted to expose dry land. The laws of nature were suspended. Something happened for which there can be no scientific explanation.

However, if we listen carefully, we can also hear a different note:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. (Exodus 14: 21) Here there is not a sudden change in the behaviour of water, with no apparent cause. G-d brings a wind that, in the course of several hours, drives the waters back. Or consider this passage:

During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. The Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt." (Exodus 14: 24-25). The emphasis here is less on miracle than on irony. The great military assets of the Egyptians - making them almost invulnerable in their day - were their horses and chariots. These were Egypt's specialty. They still were, in the time of Solomon, five centuries later: Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem . . . They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. (I Kings 10: 26-29) Viewed from this perspective, the events that took place could be described as follows: The Israelites had arrived at the Reed Sea at a point at which it was shallow. Possibly there was a ridge in the sea bed, normally covered by water, but occasionally - when, for example, a fierce east wind blows - exposed. This is how the Cambridge University physicist Colin Humphreys puts it in his recent book *The Miracles of Exodus* (2003):

"Wind tides are well known to oceanographers. For example, a strong wind blowing along Lake Erie, one of the Great Lakes, has produced water elevation differences of as much as sixteen feet between Toledo, Ohio, on the west, and Buffalo, New York, on the east . . . There are reports that Napoleon was almost killed by a "sudden high tide" while he was crossing shallow water near the head of the Gulf of Suez." (pp. 247-48) In the case of the wind that exposed the ridge in the bed of the sea, the consequences were dramatic. Suddenly the Israelites, traveling on foot, had an immense advantage over the Egyptian chariots that were pursuing them. Their wheels became stuck in the mud. The charioteers made ferocious efforts to free them, only to find that they quickly became mired again. The Egyptian army could neither advance nor retreat. So intent were they on the trapped wheels, and so reluctant were they to abandon their prized war machines, the chariots, that they failed to notice that the wind had dropped and the water was returning. By the time they realized what was happening, they were trapped. The ridge was now covered with sea water in either direction, and the island of

dry land in the middle was shrinking by the minute. The mightiest army of the ancient world was defeated, and its warriors drowned, not by a superior army, not by human opposition at all, but by its own folly in being so focused on capturing the Israelites that they ignored the fact that they were driving into mud where their chariots could not go.

We have here two ways of seeing the same events: one natural, the other supernatural. The supernatural explanation - that the waters stood upright - is immensely powerful, and so it entered Jewish memory. But the natural explanation is no less compelling. The Egyptian strength proved to be their weakness. The weakness of the Israelites became their strength. On this reading, what was significant was less the supernatural than the moral dimension of what happened. G-d visits the sins on the sinners. He mocks those who mock Him. He showed the Egyptian army, which reveled in its might, that the weak were stronger than they - just as He later did with the pagan prophet Bilaam, who prided himself in his prophetic powers and was then shown that his donkey (who could see the angel Balaam could not see) was a better prophet than he was.

To put it another way: a miracle is not necessarily something that suspends natural law. It is, rather, an event for which there may be a natural explanation, but which - happening when, where and how it did - evokes wonder, such that even the most hardened sceptic senses that G-d has intervened in history. The weak are saved; those in danger, delivered. More significantly still is the moral message such an event conveys: that hubris is punished by nemesis; that the proud are humbled and the humble given pride; that there is justice in history, often hidden but sometimes gloriously revealed.

Not all Jewish thinkers focused on the supernatural dimension of G-d's involvement in human history. Maimonides, for example, writes:

The Israelites did not believe in Moses our teacher because of the miraculous signs he performed. When someone's faith is founded on miraculous signs, there is always a lingering doubt in the mind that these signs may have been performed with magic or witchcraft. All the signs Moses performed in the wilderness, he did because they were necessary, not to establish his credentials as a prophet. (*Yesodei ha-Torah*, 8: 1) What made Moses the greatest of the prophets, says Maimonides, is not that he performed supernatural deeds but that, at Mount Sinai, he brought the people the word of G-d.

Nachmanides, with a somewhat different approach, emphasizes the phenomenon he calls a "hidden miracle", an event that, though consistent with the laws of nature, is no less wondrous: the existence of the universe, the fact that we are here, the sustenance and shelter with which we are provided, and so on. "G-d", said Einstein, "does not play dice with the universe." The astonishing complexity of life, and the sheer improbability of existence (nowadays known as the anthropic principle), are miracles disclosed by science, not challenged by science.

The genius of the biblical narrative of the crossing of the Reed Sea is that it does not resolve the issue one way or another. It gives us both perspectives. To some the miracle was the suspension of the laws of nature. To others, the fact that there was a naturalistic explanation did not make the event any less miraculous. That the Israelites should arrive at the sea precisely where the waters were unexpectedly shallow, that a strong east wind should blow when and how it did, and that the Egyptians' greatest military asset should have proved their undoing - all these things were wonders, and we have never forgotten them.

By Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

A RICH CHASID came to his Rebbe for a blessing. "What is the conduct of your household, and what table do you set from day to day?" asked the Rebbe. "My household is conducted with great simplicity," said the rich man. "My own meal consists of dry bread and salt."

Full of indignation, the Rebbe looked at him and asked, "Why do you not favor yourself with meat and wine, as becomes a man of wealth?" He then proceeded to berate the rich man until he finally promised that henceforth, he would partake of more elaborate meals.

When the Chasid departed, the pupils asked the Rebbe: "What matters it to you whether he eats bread with salt or meat with wine?"

The Rebbe promptly responded: "It surely matters. If he enjoys good fare and his meals consist of fine delicacies, then he will understand that the poor man must have at least bread with salt. But if, being wealthy he renounces all enjoyment and lives so stingily, he will believe that it's sufficient for the poor to eat stones."

Is it a greater nisayon, a greater ordeal, to be wealthy or to be poor? Being wealthy creates possibilities of haughtiness, arrogance, vanity, egotism. The rich may very well swell, bridle, and become cavalier and condescending. The impoverished on the other hand, feel inferior, want, insolvency and constant dependence upon others. But which position presents a greater challenge – readily available cuts of prime ribs or the continued dependence on God's manna? A divine question, indeed.

Soon after crossing the Red Sea, as the Jews began their long trek in the desert, Jews wondered where their next day's nourishment would come from. Jews complained; they wished to have rather died in Egypt, where they could at least "sit by pots of meat and eat our fill of bread." They berated Moshe and Aaron for bringing them out to the desert "to kill the entire community by starvation." They were just unwilling to face up to poverty and misery. God listens, and showers them with water, quail and manna, covered with dew, while simultaneously declaring: Yes, "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and collect a certain portion every day, l'maan anasenu- so that I may test them, whether or not they will keep my law." Just imagine – no double coupons, no price wars, and no inflationary food prices. The price is just right plus free delivery. What kind of nisayon is that? What does God mean saying, "So I may test them?" For God to provide the manna was a chesed not a nisayon, exclaims the Abarbanel. It would seem that the deprivation caused by the desert travails was the test; and the manna was the Divine solution to the problem.

The Chatam Sofer once spent time as a house guest of a member of the Rothschild family who was not only a wealthy man, but also a very pious Jew. As the great scholar was about to leave, he was asked by the host: "Please tell me if you find any aspect of my household which is not in conformity with the Torah, if so, I will immediately rectify the situation."

The Chatam Sofer pondered for a moment and then replied: "Everything that I see within your household is contrary to Torah thought." The pious philanthropist was aghast at the response, but soon enough the Chatam Sofer smiled and explained: "The Torah grimly foretells, vayishman yeshurun vayivat – when the Jewish people accrue wealth, they will rebel. Your home, however, is clearly an exception to this prediction. You have passed the test of plenty. May God grant that all who prosper follow your noble example."

When Reb Mendel of Kotzk was seven or eight years old, he was reported to have asked his teacher in cheder: "When the Israelites were in the desert, and they each received the exact measure of manna necessary to sustain each member of the household, not more and not less, how were they able to fulfill the mitzvah of tzedakah?" The teacher is reported to have remained speechless. What an

unbelievable test – having everything I need, yet not being able to share. Sharing, after all, is what makes one human. What a nisayon – what a test!

On a deeper level, however, there are mefarshim among them Sforno and Orach Chaim, who view the test of manna as the test of wealth. The possession of plenty affords one the means to develop spiritually, intellectually and religiously. When burdens and anxieties of providing daily bread are removed, the test then becomes of what to do with the time, energies and peace of mind now leisurely available. What is to substitute for agony and hardship otherwise spent on one's daily sustenance?

Rashbam, Ibn Ezra and others, view the test of manna not as the easy rider's challenge, but rather as the insecurity and anxieties resulting from daily dependence upon a Higher Being – God. Manna only came down in the quantity required for the day. None was to be left for the following day. Ramban aptly comments in Beha'alotecha, "That even the manna on which we live is not in our possession...but we desire it and are dependent upon it at all times... thus we have nothing at all save our hope for manna." What a way to live – from hand to mouth. Is it any wonder that Chazal teach: "One cannot compare a person who has bread in his basket with one who does not have bread in his basket?" It takes enormous faith and then some to overcome tests of dependence and anxieties of reliance. Thus Reb Yohoshua suggests that an individual should go out and work everyday and not depend on miracles, just as the Israelites gathered their manna daily, and even on Erev Shabbat worried about the next day's portion. On the other hand, Reb Eliezer Hamodai concludes from the very same manna report, that "Whoever has enough to eat today and says, 'What will I eat tomorrow?' such a person is lacking faith."

Wealth, poverty, health, sickness, happiness, sadness – each brings its own set of challenges and tests. There are no escapes from nisyonos. The Magid of Mezritsch said that the nisayon of the manna was meant to test one's genuine faith in God. How so? Because to have been assured of one's daily needs without any worries and concerns and still remain ever cognizant of our dependence upon Him, is a much greater nisayon than being poor and having faith in God.

Well, is it a greater ordeal to be wealthy or to be poor? The answer is personal. The answer must reflect each individual's level of understanding of the nisayon facing them and their ability to cope with their own personal manna.

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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha :: B'SHALACH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The great song of Moshe and of Israel forms the centerpiece of this week's parsha. The song was not a one-off historical event. It has remained a part of the morning services of the synagogue prayers of Jews for millennia.

The song concentrates on God's power, on Israel's always miraculous survival and on the perfidious behavior of the wicked

enemies of the Jewish people. God's power and greatness is seen in the salvation of Israel from its enemies, strong as they may be or have been. This song of Moshe forms one of the bookends of the story of the Jewish people.

The other bookend is the second song of Moshe – this time Moshe alone is the performer – in the parsha of Haazinu at the conclusion of the Book of Dvarim. That song also reiterates the theme of this earlier song relating to God's power and omnipotence, the survival of the Jewish people against all odds, and the judgments to be rendered against the enemies of the Jewish people.

So the Torah at the beginning of the narrative of Israel's sojourn in the Sinai desert and at the end of that forty year period sings the same song, albeit with different words and melody. But the content and message of the song has remained the same. This can also be said regarding all of Jewish history – it is the same song that has sustained us for these many generations though the words and melody may no longer be exactly the same throughout this long period of time and through our varied experiences

Moshe instructs the Jewish people to learn and always remember the song of Haazinu. It is the song of the future redemption of Israel, the song that will light the way for Jews in dark and dangerous times. So why is it that the song that Jews know best, the one that we recite seven times every week of our lives is the first song of Moshe and Israel at the salvation of God at Yam Suf?

The lesson here is obvious though often overlooked. The second song of Moshe has little credence if not for the first song at the Yam Suf. Once having experienced miraculous redemption, it is possible to believe firmly that it will happen once more. We are taught in the Torah that in the future redemption "you will be shown wondrous events just as it was in the days of the Exodus from Egypt." That is why the commandments of the Torah, the Shabat itself and all the holidays are classified and named as being a memory aid to the Exodus from Egypt.

Those who cannot remember the past rarely have lasting hope for their future. The song of Moshe and Israel at the Yam Suf validates all later Jewish experiences, goals and hopes. It is a constant reminder of God's omnipotence and of His guarantee to us of Jewish survival and ultimate triumph over evil and wickedness. This Shabat is one of "shira" – song – because, again, it validates and confirms all Jewish songs throughout the ages.

The Psalmist teaches us that at the time of the final redemption "then our tongues will be filled with song." The melody and words may be new to us then but the message will certainly be grounded in the teachings of Moshe and Israel in the song of this week's parsha.

Shabat shalom.

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

Subject

TORAH WEEKLY :: Parshat Beshalach

For the week ending 15 January 2011 / 9 Shevat 5771

from Ohr Somayach | www.ohr.edu

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com

OVERVIEW

Pharaoh finally sends Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward Eretz Yisrael on a circuitous route, avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song

of thanks. After three days' travel only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain mitzvot . The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. G-d sends quail for meat and provides manna, a miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

INSIGHTS

UnKnown UnKnown

"Then Moses and the children of Israel will sing" (15:1)

Let me start with a confession.

I have never seen a Harry Potter movie. I haven't even read the books.

But I do remember with much affection a great work of imaginative writing, "The Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien.

I was thinking the other day about what makes "The Lord of the Rings" so powerful.

Tolkien pulls the rug out from underneath you.

He starts off with a tale that seems to be very homey and contained and then he starts to reveal that the events that are taking place in this little village are really part of a vast cosmic struggle. He changed the canvas on you. He dropped the floor from underneath you like a roller coaster and the experience takes your breath away.

The power of this technique lies in the disparity between what you think you know and the realization that you really don't know what's going on at all.

In a rare philosophical reflection, former US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld once mused, ".there are known knowns : there are things we know we know. .there are known unknowns : that is to say we know there are things we know we don't know. But there are also "unknown unknowns" - the ones we don't know we don't know."

The revealing of an unknown unknown stuns the viewer.

The experience of the splitting of the Red Sea was an "unknown unknown." Not only did the knowledge of the scale of G-d's power become vastly bigger than anyone could have imagined in their wildest dreams, but G-d revealed how this world is connected to the worlds above - and more.

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel will sing this song.."

Grammatically this verse should have read, ".sang this song.." Why does the Torah use an unusual tense here?

The Torah wants to communicate the vast and unparalleled experience of the splitting of the sea. It wants us to feel as if we are actually standing on the beach with Moshe and the Jewish People witnessing an unknown unknown.

Source: based on the Ramban

Written and compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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Pharaoh approached... and Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem. They said to Moshe, "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us out to die in the wilderness? What is it that you have done to us?" (14:10,11)

The irrationality of the Jewish People is glaring. Their utter bitterness and sarcasm almost jump out at the reader. What makes it more incredulous is that it follows immediately after their prayer to Hashem to protect them from the approaching Pharaoh. Turning to Moshe Rabbeinu when they are in mortal fear makes sense, but simultaneously criticizing Moshe with such vehemence does not make sense. Fear motivates prayer. Does fear catalyze one to lose all sense of decency, to lash out at one's savior, all because he is afraid? If this would have been a single occurrence, it might have been overlooked. After perusing the Chumash, however, we may note that such irrational behavior took place when Klal Yisrael did not have bread. It was repeated when the water was bitter, and again when they wanted meat. The spies returned from reconnoitering Eretz Yisrael with a negative report. This led to a similar response by the people, a reaction of anger, depression, laying blame: "Better we should have died in Egypt." What makes such a great people, a nation who were privy to mankind's greatest Revelation, a nation that was sustained for forty years in the wilderness on a diet of miracles, act so immaturely, with such ingratitude, so sinfully? Interestingly, of all the complaints issued by the people against Moshe, only the first one, above, was accompanied by a prayer to Hashem. Apparently, as time went on, they realized the inconsistency of their actions, but why did they complain?

In his farewell address to his people, Moshe admonishes them, "Rebellious have you been against Hashem from the day I have known you" (Devarim 9:24). Based on the above, one would have expected even stronger words of chastisement. This almost schizophrenic behavior of the people-- recognizing G-d's Presence and simultaneously acting with ingratitude both to Him and to Moshe-- must be explained. In his volume, Biblical Questions, Spiritual Journeys, Rabbi Emanuel Feldman suggests that the answer lies in the fact that the people had lost sight of who they were, the nature of their Patriarchal origins, and their ultimate destiny. As descendants of the Patriarchs, designated as G-d's nation, the bearers of His mission on earth, one would have expected Klal Yisrael to manifest a slightly different-- more dignified-- attitude to challenge. When one forgets or ignores these noble attributes, the spiritual components which enoble him, drain away, such that the base physical components rise to the top of his consciousness.

Klav Yisrael became overwhelmed by their primordial concerns about their physical needs, despite their exposure to the Heavenly miracles that captivated them in Egypt and at the Red Sea; the miracles that accompanied them throughout their forty-year sojourn in the wilderness; the Revelation at Sinai with its unparalleled exposure to the reality of G-d. How quickly they forgot the past, and ignored the future, the hope, the promise of the Holy Land. It all meant nothing once they lost the connection to who they were. They were obsessed with the present, the "now." Once the emphasis is on satisfying one's current desires, regrettably one never has enough to satisfy him. He always finds something to bemoan concerning his present circumstance. It could always be better, or it "was" so much better before. Very few exits exist on the road to complaints. It becomes so bad that the misery begins to look positive. The Jews saw the positive side of the Egyptian slavery. The ability to see G-d, yet not acknowledge His Presence within our midst, characterizes Klal Yisrael. They experienced Egypt - its slavery - and miraculous redemption. Yet, they complained. This reflects their lack of attachment to the spiritual. They did not have the ability to transcend the physical.

The knowledge that we are all descendants of the Avos and Imahos, Patriarchs and Matriarchs; that Hashem loves each and every one of us; that we have a noble and everlasting future; that we are a part of a nation that has for the most part maintained its fidelity to the Almighty throughout thick and thin, infuses us with a sense of pride, dignity and joy. After Adam sinned, Hashem asked him, Ayeca? "Where are you?" We can understand this on a deeper plane. Do you know where you are? Do you realize who you are: your mission, your destiny? If so, how could you have sinned? When we lose sight of ayeca - we forget our purpose in life. We distort our goals and objectives, and everything appears bleak and tastes bitter. Then we complain and whine, lament and ultimately lose touch with reality, so that we rebel. All because we ignored ayeca.

Pharaoh approached... Egypt was journeying after them, and they were frightened and Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem. (14:10)

In interpreting Klal Yisrael's "crying out" to Hashem, Rashi explains, tafsu umnos avosam, "They adopted the craft of their forefathers," namely, prayer. Avraham Avinu prayed; indeed he initiated Tefillas Shacharis. Likewise, Yitzchak Avinu instituted Tefillas Minchah and Yaakov Avinu introduced Tefillas Maariv. Tefillah was very much a part of the lives of the Patriarchs, so what is Rashi teaching us? The fact that the Avos prayed is not novel to us.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, addresses the question in one of his discourses. He begins his thoughts after musing concerning the precarious situation in which the Jewish People found themselves at that time. Germany was beginning its persecution of the Jews. The Russian government, not to be left in the background, commenced with their reign of terror against its Jewish citizens. The Jewish People had nowhere to go: borders were closed; countries that had been diplomatic no longer had room for immigrants. The worst part was that no one seemed to care. The Nazis and the Communists were in control, and it was becoming an accepted way of life. The Jew was finally beginning to acknowledge that no one can help him other than Hashem.

Min Ha'meitzer - "From the straits" - karasi Kah - "I called out to Hashem." When I realize that I am in an impossible situation, with no way out, I turn to Hashem, for He is truly the only One who can save me. Rav Yeruchum asks: Does one have to be in an impossible situation to realize that only Hashem can help him? Does this mean that if the situation were different, if he were not being pursued, persecuted, hunted and beaten, it would be any different? Would he have anyone else upon whom to rely? No! Regardless of the circumstances, be they positive or negative, it is only Hashem to Whom we can turn. If so, why? Should it be any worse when the predicament is such that we are hounded and persecuted, our lives filled with misery and pain? What has changed? We still seek only Hashem's support.

The Mashgiach posits that Rashi specifically addressed this question when he says that the Jews adopted the craft of their forefathers. Rashi is teaching us a powerful lesson concerning the secret of prayer and its efficacy. As the Jews stood at the banks of the Red Sea, they were in serious physical straits. Surrounded on all sides, the sea on one side, the threatening Egyptians on another, the wild animals from the wilderness on the third side, with no avenue of escape in sight, the Jews were in a life-threatening predicament. So, they prayed. After all, what else could they do?

One might think that the prayers proffered by the Jewish People at this moment were quite unlike the prayers expressed by the Patriarchs. Nothing was threatening Avraham; neither was Yitzchak being pressured by adversity. Yaakov was not intimidated when he stopped to pray at the place where his forefathers had prayed. Thus, one would posit that the prayers which the Patriarchs issued were

different in nature than those we have prayed throughout our tumultuous history. Rashi teaches us that this is an error. Even during the most pleasant and calm moments, the Patriarchs prayed to Hashem with such extreme urgency, entreating His favorable response as if they were motivated by the most pressing circumstances. They prayed every prayer as if their lives were hanging in the balance, their future about to become nothing more than a dream. Why? What compelled them to daven with such compulsion? It is because this is the life of a Jew. We never have anyone to depend upon other than Hashem. The Jew is always in a min ha'meitzer situation. Our only recourse is to cry to Hashem, for only He can help us.

This is why the Jews "adopted the craft of their forefathers." Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov prayed as if their lives depended on it - because it did! So, too, did Klal Yisrael pray to Hashem - as if their lives depended on it - because it did. The difference is that the Avos, Patriarchs, were always aware of this verity. Klal Yisrael, regrettably, needed "proof."

The nations of the world have soldiers, weapons, strategy and all the accouterments that provide them with success in battle. We have Hashem, Who directs our lives l'maaloh min ha'teva, above and beyond the rules of nature. There is no nature, no normal, no "what should occur," with regard to the Jewish People. Only the will of Hashem determines our success at anything. The Avos recognized this reality, and they prayed accordingly. Klal Yisrael came to this realization at the banks of the Red Sea. Thus, they "adopted the craft of their forefathers."

Sincerity is the key to effective prayer. After all, if one is insincere, how can he expect to be heard? It is not as if one is speaking to a mortal who is not aware of what courses through the innermost recesses of our minds. We are entreating Hashem, Who knows everything. The key to sincerity is the awareness that no one else, no other entity, has the power to help us, to solve our problem, to answer our prayer. This is how the Avos prayed, because they were acutely aware that Hashem is the only source of our salvation. The following poignant story was told in these pages a number of years ago. It was originally taken from one of Horav Shabsi Yudelevitz's lectures. It is worth repeating, because its powerful message is timeless.

The young boy looked out of the window of the cramped dormitory room of the Peruvian orphanage which he called home. He noticed a scene that made his heart flutter and his eyes tear. Before him stood a "family": father, mother, son and daughter, walking together as a family. This was a scene which the young orphan longed to experience, but one that had eluded him all of his short life. The only family he had ever known was the company of other orphans like himself, bunched together in small, cramped, cold rooms. He felt more like a prisoner than a resident. It was not as if the staff did not try to be nice. They were just not a replacement for parents. At times, the counselors who were in charge of the youngsters got carried away and took out their anxieties on their young charges. Regrettably, today was another one of those days.

"Come on, out of bed. Time for breakfast and chores. Let's move it kids," could be heard throughout the dormitory. The young boy quickly completed his chores. It was not as if he disliked work. He just needed the warmth of a home, the support of a family, the encouragement of a father and mother. This was the young boy's recurring dream. He decided that he could no longer live like this. Since no one seemed to care, he was determined, once and for all, to leave the orphanage. He had a plan, and the time to implement it was now.

He had written a letter - a simple letter - but it carried a most powerful message. He put it into an envelope and placed it in the

mailbox. Now, he would wait for a response. The postman who picked up the letter was taken aback. He had never before seen a letter addressed to "G-d." No return address and no name - just "G-d" as the addressee. Under normal circumstances, in most other countries, one opens such a letter to obtain some clue concerning the sender. Peru did not permit such an infringement on personal privacy. Mail was not opened by anyone other than the intended addressee. It had something to do with superstition. What would they do with the letter?

The letter traveled from postal supervisor to supervisor until it caught the attention of the media. Once the media got hold of it, it became a national conversation piece. Everybody wondered what was in the letter and who had sent it. After receiving such attention, it ultimately made its way into the halls of the Peruvian government, where, after a few weeks of being shuttled from minister to minister, it landed on the immaculate desk of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister was a no-nonsense leader. He could not understand how a letter could have traveled throughout the country for weeks, with no one responding to it. He, therefore, proceeded to open the envelope. Out fell a note written in large children's scrawl. He began to read:

"Dear G-d,

My name is Diego, but I'm sure that You already know that, because You know everything. I'm 9 years old, and I live in an orphanage. I miss my mother and father and badly want a family. Please, can You help me? You are the only one who can. Your son, Diego"

The Prime Minister was visibly moved by the letter. After wiping away the tears from his eyes, he summoned his advisors to decide what to do about Diego. He also called his wife. After some discussion, he decided to pay Diego a visit, but first he had to locate him. The government initiated an intense search until they located the orphanage which was Diego's home. The Prime Minister immediately dispatched a chauffeur-driven limousine to fetch the boy. Diego's personality fascinated everyone, and, before long, he had won over the hearts of the Prime Minister and his wife. They then decided to take a bold step and asked to adopt Diego as their son. The young boy's dream became a reality.

Diego was a hopeless child who was acutely aware that only G-d could transform his nightmare. He prayed; he acted; and G-d responded, because the child was sincere. He turned to the only One Who could help. We must do the same. When we pray to Hashem, it should be much more than mere lip service. We should mean what we say.

Rav Shabsi concluded his lecture with the following inspirational words. David Hamelech says (Tehillim 145:18), Karov Hashem l'chol kor'av, "Hashem is close to all those who call Him," but He endears Himself, especially l'chol asher yikre'uhu b'emesh, "to all those who call out to Him - truthfully/sincerely." It is the sincerity that makes the difference.

You will bring them and implant them on the mount of Your heritage, the foundation of Your dwelling place that You, Hashem, have made - the Sanctuary, my Lord, that Your hands established. (15:17)

Rashi explains that the Bais Hamikdash of this world coincides with the Bais Hamikdash of Above - they stand directly opposite one another. Indeed, the city of Yerushalayim of this world stands opposite the Heavenly Yerushalayim. Furthermore, it was the Yerushalayim of this world that catalyzed the construction of the Bais Hamikdash Above. The Bais Hamikdash of this world was built upon a mountain - a mountain which had earlier earned its credentials as the place wherein Yitzchak Avinu lay down his head to be slaughtered as a sacrifice to Hashem. The rest of the story is history. The Divrei Chaim, Horav Chaim Halberstam, zl, wonders why

Hashem chose the mountain of the Akeidah as opposed to Har Sinai, the mountain upon which the Torah was given. He explains that, on Har HaMoriah, our Patriarch stretched out his neck in preparation to serve as a sacrifice for Hashem's honor. There is no greater act of hisbatlus, self-abnegation, before Hashem. Thus, Hashem selected this place as the site for the Bais Hamikdash.

Was Har Sinai not also a scene of hisbatlus? In fact, it was more than partial renunciation; it was absolute surrender, whereby the nation committed itself completely to Hashem when they said Naase v'nishmah, "We will do and we will listen." Horav Eliyahu Marciano, Shlita, notes that this idea is underscored in the Talmud Shabbos 68a, which relates an episode concerning a Tzeduki, Sadducee, who saw Rava studying a Talmudic matter. Clearly disturbed by this display of devotion to Torah She'Baal Peh, oral law, the Sadducee noticed that Rava had placed his fingers beneath his leg and was inadvertently crushing them, to the point that his fingers had begun to bleed. The Sadducee could no longer contain himself and remarked "O, impulsive people, who put their mouths before their ears. You sill persevere in your impulsiveness! First, you should have heard the commandments so that you would have known whether you were able to accept them. And if you did not hear the commandments, then you should not have accepted them." Rava replied, "About we, who go in the ways of complete faith, it is written, 'The perfect faith of the upright shall lead them' (Mishlei 11:3). About those people who go in the ways of perverseness, it is written, 'And the perverseness of the faithless, shall destroy them'" (ibid).

The Bais Halevi explains that when Klal Yisrael declared naase v'nishma, they finally dedicated themselves to Hashem in such a manner that they became totally committed to Him in every way. This is much like one who sells himself as a slave. He is committed in every way to his new master. He must do everything that he is asked/told to do. While the Torah was given on Har Sinai, this presentation was preceded by a declaration of naase v'nishma, which connotes clear and unequivocal commitment to the will of Hashem. Is there any greater form of hisbatlus, surrender, than that? This brings us back to the original question: Why was the Bais Hamikdash not built on Har Sinai, the scene of the Jewish People's greatest surrender to Hashem?

Furthermore, at Har Sinai, an entire nation of hundreds of thousands of Jews committed themselves to the Almighty. How can the surrender of one individual overshadow such a seminal event in the history of our nation? Concerning this question, Rav Marciano posits that, on the contrary, the mere fact that the declaration was public, with each individual serving as a source of encouragement to his neighbor, decreases the impact of the sacrifice. The greatest generation in Jewish history banded together to declare emphatically their total commitment to Hashem and His Torah. This is an incredible event, but it does not compare to the sacrifice of the individual who stood alone, with no outside support, to render himself null and void before Hashem. Yitzchak stood alone, as he prepared to give up his mortal existence to serve Hashem. This act of self-abnegation warranted even greater Heavenly recognition than the declaration of naase v'nishma at Har Sinai.

In addition, Yitzchak's act of courage and self-sacrifice implanted the attribute of hisbatlus to Hashem in the Jewish DNA. The reason Klal Yisrael had the fortitude and resolution to make their seminal declaration was that their ancestor, Yitzchak, stretched out his neck in preparation for the greatest act of self-sacrifice. Yitzchak led the way - Klal Yisrael followed.

I think we can take this idea one step further. When Yitzchak walked to the Akeidah, he acted with complete faith in his father. Avraham Avinu heard the command from Hashem. Yitzchak did not. He acted with emunas chachamim, faith in the Torah scholars, which is a

cornerstone of our faith. The Akeidah personifies this essential quality. The Jews stood at Har Sinai and heard Hashem amidst an unprecedented, unparalleled Revelation of His glory. They committed themselves to Hashem, because they heard Him. Yitzchak listened to his father. This represented a greater level of faith, a stronger sense of commitment. Thus, the Bais Hamikdash was built on Har HaMoriah, the scene of the Akeidah.

Miriam, the prophetess... took her drum in her hand and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dances. (15:20)

The pesukim indicate that first Moshe Rabbeinu and the men of Klal Yisrael sang Shirah to Hashem. Afterwards, the womenfolk, led by Miriam HaNeviah, took their drums and expressed their gratitude to Hashem. The men articulated their praise, while the women expressed it through motion and dance, accompanied by the beat of drums. Why was there a dichotomy between the men and women? If perhaps it was for tznius, modesty purposes, why did the women not sing the Shirah quietly, exclusive of the men? Would it be any different than women davening in shul behind the mechitzah? The men recite Hallel; so do the women. Why did it have to be separate and ultimately, through two distinct venues?

Horav Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, zl, attributes this to reciprocity. The joy which accompanies freedom and salvation is commensurate with the suffering endured by the one who sings the praises. "No pain, no gain" claims the popular dictum. With regard to expressing Shirah to Hashem for His salvation, one must have had firsthand knowledge of the "pain," the misery of the slavery, before he can sing Hashem's praises. The men felt the pain. Chazal teach that when Egypt caught up with the Jews, the Jewish people recognized the taskmasters that beat them.

The women were also involved in the neis. The extent of their involvement, however, was limited to the pain that they experienced while watching their husbands suffer under the whip of the Egyptian taskmaster. Clearly, this was painful, but to a much lesser degree than the pain endured by the men themselves. This experience served as the precursor of their desire to sing Shirah. Thus, although the women had achieved a very high level of Heavenly perception, it was still not enough for them to sing Shirah. They listened to the men and they expressed their personal praise via the medium of the drums. Perhaps we can explain this idea further. Prayer is a conversation that takes place between man and Hashem. It is a dialogue: we ask; we are answered. Rabbi Hillel Goldberg writes about a blind Sephardi man who cautiously made his way to the Kosel. He put down his cane and slowly began to caress the stones, lovingly running his hand over them. After a few minutes of doing this, he began to recite a few chapters of Tehillim. Then, he began his conversation with Hashem. It went something like this:

"Ribono Shel Olam, I have not had the opportunity to be here for a few weeks, so I have to bring You up to date about my life and my family. You remember that I told You about my son who was supposed to enter the army. Well, he left ten days ago. I have no idea where he is, but I am sure that You do. Please watch out for him. And then, of course, You remember my daughter, who is ready and of age to get married. She has recently started dating and finding it more difficult than she had expected. Perhaps, You could ease the process for her. And my third child..."

By this time, a man who was listening to all of this felt he was eavesdropping on a private conversation. So, he moved away. After all, he did not want to appear to be nosy. The story is obviously impressive, and gives us much to consider and think about our own relationship with Hashem. Perhaps Rabbi Goldberg sums it up best when he writes, "Does one have to be blind to see G-d in such a direct way?"

There is formal prayer, which is structured and community-orientated. There is also personal prayer, which reflects our relationship with Hashem. One who has experienced a serious trauma, or has endured a terrible illness and has emerged well and with all of his faculties, has an enormous debt of gratitude to Hashem. He acknowledges his obligation and seeks to express himself in the most personal manner. Clearly, the level of expression is commensurate with the unfortunate experience and how much pain he personally sustained. One who is a spectator can, and should offer thanks to Hashem for His beneficence, but it is not the same as that of the actual beneficiary. If one speaks or utilizes another form of expression, such as the drums, the manner in which he speaks and what he says are all personal reflections of his experience. The women's Shirah was of a personal nature, expressed more as observers than as participants. Thus, their manner of expression differed from that of the men.

Va'anai Tefillah

sus v'rochvo ramah ba'yam.

He hurled horse and its rider into the sea.

There seems to be a variance in the way Targum Onkeles translates this phrase when Moshe Rabbeinu sings the Shirah, compared to his translation of Miriam HaNeviah's rendition of the Shirah. In the latter, he writes shadi ba'yama, while in the former he writes, rama ba'yama. Why does he deviate from his original definition? The Baal Haflaah explains that two miracles occurred when the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea. First, when the Jewish People were halfway through the sea, the Egyptians chased them in an attempt to also pass through the dry land. The sea swept them up and flung them back into the water. This is called shadi ba'yama. Second, once the water returned to its natural position, the Egyptians who still remained on the shore were heaved into the sea. This is referred to as rama ba'yama.

The men who preceded the women into the water saw the Egyptians who were still on the banks of the sea flung into the water. Hence, it is translated as rama ba'yama. The women, however, who were second to enter the water, saw the Egyptians who went in after them being flung backward into the sea. Onkeles, therefore, translates it as shadi ba'yama.

Dedicated in loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother Leona Genshaft Leah bas Raphael HaCohen a"h niftar 16 Shevat 5770 by her family Neil and Marie Genshaft Isaac and Naomi

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Subject Rabbi Frand on Parsha

Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas B'Shalach .

Tribes & Elders Given The Royal Treatment At Elim

The pasuk says, "They arrived at Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date-palms; they encamped there by the water" [Shmos 15:27]. The Ramban wonders why it was so significant for us to know that there were 12 springs and 70 palm trees in Elim. This does not seem to be a particularly impressive number of either palm trees or flowing rivers. There are places, he notes, where thousands of date palms grow in close proximity to one another. Likewise, the number of flowing streams would not seem to be so significant that the Torah should bother to emphasize these facts.

Even more troubling, the Ramban notes is that in Parshas Massei where the Torah reviews all the travels of the Jewish people in the

wilderness, most of the stopovers are given very short shrift. Even the stopover at Marah, which was the site of significant events, the Torah only mentions in passing, very briefly. However, when the Torah mentions the stop at Elim in Parshas Massei , it again notes the number of springs and the number of palm trees [Bamidbar 33:9]. This surely begs for an explanation! What is so significant about this stop at Elim and the number of springs and palm trees?

The Ramban quotes a Medrash – the Mechilta of Rebi Eliezer haModai – who notes that at the time of Creation, G-d created this place with 12 springs corresponding to the 12 Tribes of Israel and 70 palm trees corresponding to the 70 Elders (of the Sanhedrin). Each tribe dwelt by its own stream and each member of the Sanhedrin sat under the shade of his own palm-tree, thanking the Almighty for preparing this respite for them in a parched wilderness, from the time of Creation.

What is the message of this Medrash? What is the Torah trying to tell us here?

Consider the following parable: Imagine guests who are attending an "out-of-town wedding." The entire wedding entourage is staying in a hotel. The hosts have prepared a hotel room for each of the guests. In each hotel room, they prepared an elaborate package of fruits, cakes, chocolates, and drinks. Each room contains the newspaper of the home city of those guests. What does such an arrangement say to the guests? It tells the guests that they are very important. The hosts are so pleased to have the presence of each guest at their simcha that they went out of their way to cater to each one's personal needs.

This section appears prior to the Receiving of the Torah. The Almighty went "out of His way", so to speak, to impress the Jewish people -- before they received the Torah -- with their importance. Each member of the Jewish people belongs to one of the 12 tribes. G-d did not merely provide a river with enough water for everyone to drink. Rather, He provided them with the equivalent of their "home newspaper" – a personalized stream for each tribe. The message is: "You are one of the 'Select Twelve' -- part of My treasured nation, My chosen people. I treat you like My honored guests."

The other thing Klal Yisrael must know before they receive the Torah is that "Kabbalas HaTorah" cannot work without the 70 Elders. We are dependent on those who transmit Torah, that special subset of the nation who teach the Torah and tell us how to interpret the Torah. That bit of knowledge is crucial before Kabalas HaTorah.

The awareness of these two concepts is fundamental for the nation. They must be aware of the importance of every Tribe and of the importance of the transmitters of Torah to our nation. Therefore, from the beginning of time, G-d already prepared this message, by creating the 12 streams flowing and the 70 palm trees growing in Elim, on the way between Egypt and Mt. Sinai.

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From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>
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Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha
by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Eating Meat and Fish Together

The Sages of the Talmud,¹ in their infinite wisdom, determined that eating meat and fish together² is a sakana — injurious to one's health. Although medical science presents no evidence that eating meat and fish together causes illness, we accept the Rabbis' decree unequivocally, for we know that their pronouncements are sacrosanct, their knowledge being as close to Divine wisdom as is humanly attainable. Indeed there have been poskim, most notably Magen Avraham,³ who have ruled that environmental conditions have changed so, that what once posed a danger no longer does and this prohibition no longer applies.⁴ But the vast majority of poskim disagree,⁵ and the basic halachah forbids eating meat (including poultry⁶) and fish together.⁷ This is surely the universal custom and should be strictly adhered to.⁸

Since it is prohibited to mix meat and fish in any way, one should also not bake a pot of fish and a pot of meat together in the same oven, unless at least one of the pots is tightly covered. If both pots were left uncovered, then even b'diavad it is questionable if the foods may be eaten.⁹ A rav should be consulted.

Bread that was baked in an oven together with an uncovered pot of fish may be eaten with meat. Likewise bread that was baked in an oven together with an uncovered pot of meat may be eaten with fish. But bread or any other food that was baked, cooked or roasted in a pot together with fish may not be eaten with meat, nor may food that was baked, cooked or roasted in a pot together with meat be eaten with fish.¹⁰

Pots and Dishes

The prohibition against eating fish and meat applies only when the two foods themselves are actually mixed together. But the ta'am (meat or fish taste) exuding from inside the pots or dishes used in their preparation or consumption is of no consequence. There is no requirement to set aside separate dishes and pots for the use of fish and meat. It is, therefore, permitted:

- * to cook meat in a pot, remove the meat, scrub the pot thoroughly and then cook fish in that pot even on the same day.¹¹
- * to bake an uncovered pot of fish in an oven and then bake an uncovered pot of meat in the same oven, as long as the oven walls are wiped clean of any spills.¹²
- * to use the same grinder to grind both meat and fish separately, even if onions or other sharp foods were added, provided that the blade and receptacle are wiped clean between uses.¹³
- * to use a clean meaty knife to slice onions that will be cooked with fish.¹⁴

Similarly, if some chicken soup, for example, inadvertently splashed against the outside of a pot containing fish while it was cooking on the stove, the fish may be eaten. This is because only the ta'am of the chicken will affect the fish, and that, as stated in yesterday's Discussion, is of no consequence.¹⁵

Even if, inadvertently, fish and meat were actually cooked together in the same pot (and thus may not be eaten), the pot that was used does not need to undergo a koshering process in order for it to be used in the future. It is sufficient to merely scrub it clean and wait twenty-four hours before using it again.¹⁶

When fish and meat are eaten consecutively:

The Rishonim debate the degree of severity to which the prohibition against eating fish and meat together extends. Some maintain that we must avoid the mixture to such an extent that even a greasy film which lingers in the mouth or on the hands must be carefully washed off before eating meat after fish, or fish after meat. Others, however, hold that we need not be concerned with fatty residue, and there is no need to wash one's mouth and hands between eating these two foods. The final halachah, basically, follows the second opinion.¹⁷

The following rules apply when both fish and meat will be served at the same meal:

Care must be taken that the foods do not mix. Silverware that was used for fish should not be used for meat unless they are rinsed in between. But it is permitted to place both of the foods on the table at the same time.¹⁸ While it is customary in many places to eat fish before meat, this is not a requirement and it is permitted l'chatchilah to eat meat before fish.¹⁹

Although, as stated earlier, we are not concerned with fatty residue and one is not required to wash his hands²⁰ and rinse his mouth between fish and meat, the poskim do require some type of break between eating fish and meat. Some²¹ require that a drink²² be taken between them, while others²³ stipulate that a food item be eaten in addition to the drink.²⁴

Question: What could be done if, inadvertently, a piece of fish fell into a pot of chicken soup?

Discussion: After removing the piece of fish from the soup²⁵ (if it can be found), one must estimate whether or not there is sixty times more soup (including vegetables, etc.) than the piece of fish that fell into it. If there is sixty times more soup, then the soup is permitted to be eaten.²⁶ If not, then the soup should not be eaten.²⁷ Under extenuating circumstances (e.g., discarding the soup would entail a serious monetary loss; the soup is needed for Shabbos or for important guests; shalom bayis, etc.), it is permitted to add more water or other ingredients to the soup so that there will be sixty times more soup than the piece of fish.²⁸

1 Pesachim 76b.

2 The Talmudic advisory warns only against eating fish and meat that were roasted together. The Rishonim deduced that eating them together even if they were prepared separately is also prohibited; Tur, Y.D. 116:2 and Derishah 5.

3 Quoted without comment by Mishnah Berurah 173:3 and Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 116:10. This is also the view of Teshuvos Maharshdam 4:124, quoting Sefer ha-Kaneh.

4 Note that Rambam does not mention this prohibition at all, probably for the reasons mentioned by the Magen Avraham; see Chasam Sofer, Y.D. 101 and Tiferes Tzvi 91.

5 See Chochmas Adam 68:1; Shulchan Aruch ha-Rav (Shemiras Guf v'Nefesh 9); Maharam Shick, Y.D. 244; Yad Efrayim, Y.D. 116:3 quoting Shevus Ya'akov 3:70; and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 33:1, who all either question or ignore the Magen Avraham's opinion.

6 Pishei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:2.

7 The poskim do, however, take the Magen Avraham's view into consideration and allow for some leniency in certain questionable situations; see notes 29 and 31.

8 Chasam Sofer, Y.D. 101; Divrei Malkiel 2:53; Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 173:9.

9 If the oven was small and tightly closed then we are concerned with reicha — that one food will absorb the aroma emitted by the other (Chochmas Adam 68:1). In larger ovens, where reicha is less of a problem, zei'ah — steam which carries the taste of one food to the other — is still an issue.

10 Taz, Y.D. 116:2. See Chelkas Yaakov 1:109.

11 Taz, Y.D. 95:3, quoted by most of the later poskim. There is a minority view that holds that separate pots should be used for cooking fish and meat (see Tur, Y.D. 116:2, quoted by Chachmas Adam 68:1). Although the basic halachah does not require it (see also note 25), it is customary in some homes to have separate pots for fish and meat.

12 According to minority view quoted in the previous note, the oven should be koshered between baking fish and meat.

13 Darchei Teshuvah 116:23. A minority view recommends not to use the same grinder for fish and meat if they are going to be ground with onions or garlic, but the basic halachah permits it; see Shevet ha-Levi 6:111.

14 See previous note for the minority view.

15 Pri Megadim, quoted by Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 116:2.

16 Divrei Malkiel 2:53; Kaf ha-Chayim, Y.D. 116:3; Shemiras ha-Guf v'ha-Nefesh, 1:26 quoting Harav P. Epstein. A minority opinion holds that when koshering is possible (e.g., with a metal pot), it should be done; see Pishei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:3 and Shevet ha-Levi 6:111.

17 Rama, Y.D. 116:3; Mishnah Berurah 173:4. Sefaradim, however, rule in accordance with the first opinion; Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 173:4; Yalkut Yosef 173:2.

18 Noda b'Yehudah, Kama, E.H. 13; Shevet ha-Levi 6:111; Yabia Omer, Y.D. 6:9. It is also permitted for one person to eat fish and one person to eat meat on the same table at the same time, even while sharing the same tablecloth; Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 173:6.

19 See Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 33:1 and Ben Ish Chai, Pinchas 8:10. See also Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 173:2 and Y.D. 116:2: between meat and fish ...

20 In the atypical case (e.g., silverware is not being used) when the hands are soiled from fish, they should be wiped clean before partaking of meat; see Pri To'ar, Y.D. 116:3.

21 Chochmas Adam 68:1, quoted by Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 173:2. There is no need to swish the drink around in the mouth.

22 For unknown reasons, Tosafos, Moed Katan 11a (quoted by Rav Akiva Eiger, Y.D. 116 and by Kaf ha-Chayim, O.C. 170:79), advises against drinking water after fish. She'arim Metzuyanim b'Halachah 33:2 suggests that for this reason whiskey — and not water — is customarily drunk between fish and meat.

23 Rama, Y.D. 116:3, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 173:4.

24 A food item dipped in wine or another beverage covers both requirements; Y.D. 116:3, as explained by Perishah 23.

25 On Shabbos, some soup should be removed along with the fish.

26 Chochmas Adam 68:1; Pishei Teshuvah 116:3; Aruch ha-Shulchan 116:10. While a minority view maintains that "dangers" such as fish and meat together are not batel b'shishim (Taz, Y.D. 116:2), most poskim do not accept this stringency; see Yabia Omer, Y.D. 1:7.

27 If it is questionable whether or not there is sixty times more soup than fish, some poskim are lenient while others are stringent. A rav should be consulted.

28 Although there is a general rule that bitul b'shishim must happen on its own and one cannot cause it to happen intentionally, many poskim permit doing so concerning a fish and meat mixture; see Pishei Teshuvah, Y.D. 116:3 and Divrei Malkiel 2:53. Since other poskim disagree (see Darchei Teshuvah 116:20, 21), one should rely on this leniency only under extenuating circumstances. See also Yabia Omer, Y.D. 1:8.

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