

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT" A .

Summarized by Matan Glidai

Translated by Yoseif Bloch

"**G**od did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, for God said, 'Perhaps the nation will change their mind when they see war, and they will return to Egypt.'" (Shemot 13:17)

From this verse it appears that Am Yisrael (the Nation of Israel) was spiritually weak when they left Egypt, as there was a suspicion that the people might want to return to Egypt. Ostensibly, this stands in direct opposition to the words of the prophet: "So says Lord: 'I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridals, your walking after Me in the desert, in an unseeded land'" (Yirmiyahu 2:20), words which express the steadfast faith of Benei Yisrael in God at the time of the Exodus. However, this second verse in turn contradicts God's account as delivered by the prophet Yechezkel (20:7-10): "I said to them, 'Each man... cast away his eye's anathema, and with the fetishes of Egypt do not defile yourselves... But they did not consent to listen to Me... Yet I acted for the sake of My great Name... and I took them out of Egypt...'"

We might attempt to answer by saying that the spiritual state of the nation was very depressed before the Exodus, as Yechezkel describes, but from the moment of deliverance itself, they began to believe in God, as Yirmiyahu relates. However, this possibility is contradicted by the continuation of our parasha: "Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert?... Better servitude in Egypt than our death in the desert!" (14:11-12). Indeed, the Ramban there does not believe that the entire Nation of Yisrael could speak so to God after He saved them, and therefore he writes that among the people there were many different factions, some of which remained resolute in their faith and some of which did not. However, in the continuation of the parasha we see once again a contradiction regarding the people's status. On the one hand, it says, "They believed in God and in Moshe His servant" (14:31), and Am Yisrael bursts forth with Shirat Ha-yam, the Song of the Sea; on the other hand, the Midrash states (24:1): "Once they had descended into the sea[bed] -- it was full of mud, as until now it had been

wet from the water... Reuven said to Shimon: 'In Egypt we were in mud, and in the sea we are in mud!'" In other words, even after God had split the sea for them, all they could think to do was to complain over petty issues.

After Shirat Ha-yam, the Torah notes (15:22): "Moshe caused Yisrael to travel from Yam Suf;" Rashi explains that the people had to be encouraged to move because they were preoccupied with collecting the booty which had washed up on shore. However, the Midrash (24:2) explains this phenomenon differently:

"Yisrael said at that time: The Holy One, Blessed be He, took us out of Egypt for nothing but five things: 1) to give us Egypt's spoils; 2) to cause us to ride on the Clouds of Glory; 3) to split the sea for us; 4) to pay back Egypt for us; 5) to [praise] Him with song. Now He has already given us Egypt's spoils, He has caused us to ride on the Clouds of Glory, He has split the sea for us, He has paid Egypt back, and we have proclaimed song before Him—let us return to Egypt."

Can we really explain all of the contradictions by saying that there were numerous factions among Benei Yisrael? The Torah itself and the midrashim seem to indicate otherwise: that Am Yisrael itself reacted sometimes in one way and sometimes in another. In fact, this is explicit in the Midrash to Shir Ha-shirim (1:5:1):

"'I am black and beautiful:' 'I am black' in Egypt—'They rebelled against Me and did not consent to listen to Me' (Yechezkel 20:8); 'and beautiful' am I in Egypt with the blood of the paschal sacrifice and the blood of circumcision. "'I am black' on the sea, as it says, 'They rebelled on the sea at Yam Suf' (Tehillim 106:7); 'and beautiful' am I on the sea, as it says, 'This is my God, and I will beautify Him' (Shemot 15:20). "'I am black' at Mara, as it says, 'The nation complained against Moshe, saying: What will we drink?' (ibid. 24);

'and beautiful' am I at Mara, as it says, 'He cried out to Lord' (ibid. 25). "'I am black' at Chorev, as it says, 'They made a calf at Chorev' (Tehillim 106:19); 'and beautiful' am I at Chorev, as it says, 'All that Lord has said, we will do and we will hear' (Shemot 24:7)..."

This midrash comes to tell us that the spiritual state of Am Yisrael cannot be viewed as set and immutable, but as variable from moment to moment, sometimes "black" and sometimes "white." Even if we say that there were different factions, this only testifies to the different tendencies among the nation as a whole. In truth, the nation is physically neither black nor white,

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but a complex mixture of the two; so too, the spiritual make-up of Am Yisrael is very complex, an indeterminate shade of gray which varies between extremes.

This message also has an important application in a general sense. One cannot look at reality in a one-sided manner; rather, we must constantly see the complexity of a situation and strive to understand the other opinions. In our time, this becomes a requirement of tolerance for the other; but generally we do not understand what this concept means. Some think that tolerance means that once we understand simplistically the other side, we patronize it and do not state publicly that we feel that the other opinion is groundless and idiotic. In truth, tolerance demands far more than this: to examine the complexity of reality and to see the logic of our disputants, not to ignore the foundation and reason which stands behind their opinion.

The gemara in Eruvin (13b) states:

"For three years Beit (the House of) Shammai and Beit Hillel argued, these saying, 'The law is like us,' and these saying, 'The law is like us;' [finally,] a Divine Voice emerged and declared, 'These and these are the words of the Living God, but the law follows Beit Hillel.'

"Yet if these and these are the words of the Living God, by what did Beit Hillel merit that the law follows them? Because they were easy-going and self-deprecating, and would study their words and the words of Beit Shammai; not only that, but they would put the words of Beit Shammai before theirs.

Beit Hillel recognized that Beit Shammai's opinions were also "the words of the Living God," and they knew to advance the opinion of their disputants first.

The Ritva (ibid. s.v. Eilu) asks: how is it feasible that one permits and the other forbids, yet they are both "the words of the Living God?" He answers that for each and every law, God gave to Moshe forty-nine reasons to

permit and forty-nine reasons to forbid, then told him that it was in the hands of the sages of each generation to decide the matter. Thus, the reality is complex, as there are always reasons on each side. It is forbidden for us to advance one opinion without recognizing the there are grounds to say the opposite. Without this realization, we cannot understand Am Yisrael at the time of the Exodus—or our world today. (*Originally delivered on Leil Shabbat, Parashat Beshalach 5756 [1996].*)

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

The epic poem at the center of this week's Torah portion has been called "Shirat Hayam"—the song of the sea—since the time of the early sages (See Yerushalmi, Megillah 3:7). The word "sea" in fact appears eight times in this poem. On the other hand, one might well wonder about this title. Isn't the central theme of the poem the victory over Egypt? Why wasn't the poem given a name that reflects this victory?

A deeper look at the poem reveals that in fact it has two themes. The first, as noted, is the victory over the enemy. The second theme is the revelation of the strength of the Almighty, as is seen by His control over the sea. The victory over Egypt is seen in the verse, "He sent Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea, and his senior officers were drowned in the Red Sea" [Shemot 15:4]. The other side of the coin is as is written: "With the spirit of your anger the water piled up like a wall of liquid, the deep water stood in the middle of the sea" [15:8].

This insight clarifies some of the dual expressions in the poem. It begins with the words, "I will sing to G-d because He has shown His pride against horse and rider, who rose up in the sea" [15:1]. The second part of this declaration refers to the victory in Egypt, but the first part is related to His greatness in general. This can be tied to His control of the sea, as is written that the Almighty "rules the grand sea" [Tehillim 89:10]. The same is true in the continuation of the poem: "Your right hand, G-d, is great in its power, your right hand will defeat the enemy" [Shemot 15:6]. Once again, the second half of the verse refers directly to Egypt, while the first half seems to be related to G-d's complete control over "the mighty water" [15:10], an expression of the power of the Almighty is (as is written in the next verse, that G-d is "powerful in holiness" [15:11]). It is very likely that these different aspects of G-d were in the background of Chapter 93 in Tehillim, which discusses G-d's greatness in relation to water. "G-d is clothed in greatness, He has donned power... G-d's rivers have risen, the rivers have raised their voices, they will raise their destructive power. From the sound of great water, from the shattering waves of the sea, G-d is great up above." [93:1-4]. This also leads to

greater understanding of the second verse in Shirat Hayam, "Strength and song belong to G-d, and He has provided salvation for me" [Shemot 15:2]. This is also an expression of the two traits: the power of G-d, which He garners around Him and can be seen in His control of water, helped save Bnei Yisrael in their struggle against Egypt.

Near the end of the poem, the reaction of the other nations to the splitting of the Red Sea is described. "All of the inhabitants of Canaan have become liquid, let them be filled with awe and fear" [15:15-16]. This was evidently most and foremost a reaction to G-d's absolute control over the water, as is indicated by what Yehoshua's scouts heard from Rachav: "Fear of you has fallen upon us, and all of the inhabitants of the land have turned to liquid before you. For we have heard how G-d dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you left Egypt." [Yehoshua 2:9-10]. Rachav does not mention at all the fact that the Egyptians were drowned, she only discusses the splitting of the Red Sea!

Thus, "Shirat Hayam" is indeed the proper name for this epic poem. We, who so recently experienced the shock of the great power of the sea, can today better understand the concepts that lie behind the comparison in the verse:

"From the sound of great water, from the shattering of the waves of the sea, G-d is great up above."

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd the Children of Israel lifted their eyes and behold Egypt was traveling after them, and they became very afraid; and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d. And they said to Moshe, 'are there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert? What is this that you have done to us to take us out of Egypt?' These two verses (Shemos 14:10-11) seem incongruous, as the first makes them seem very religious, praying to G-d for help, while the second makes it seem as if they are denying that G-d even took them out, blaming Moshe for doing so. Placing the blame on Moshe itself is difficult, as they had all witnessed the 10 plagues that G-d had sent on the Egyptians. Wouldn't that prove that it was G-d's idea—and not Moshe's—that they leave Egypt?

There are other difficulties that deserve a closer look as well. The complaint against Moshe continues (14:12) with the proverbial "I told you so:" "This is what we spoke to you about in Egypt, saying 'leave us alone and [let us] serve Egypt,' for it is better for us to serve Egypt than to die in the desert." Where did they say such a thing? Rashi tells us that it refers to a comment made to Moshe and Aharon after Paro (Pharaoh) insisted that the amount of bricks produced stay the same despite their raw materials no longer being

provided (5:21), when they said, "let G-d look at you and judge [your] having made our attitude worse in the eyes of Paro and his servants." Yet there is no indication from this complaint that they preferred to stay in Egypt and work rather than being set free, only that they blamed Moshe and Aharon for causing the work to become harder—and the resulting inability to sustain the same quota (or having complained about the new work conditions) seeming like insubordination. How can Rashi (or the Mechilta upon which he is based) equate the two statements?

Additionally, when G-d tells Moshe to change course (14:2-3), the literal translation of the verse is that Paro will say to the Children of Israel that they are lost. Rashi explains that it means that he will say it *about* them, but Yonasan ben Uziel sticks with the literal translation, explaining that Paro will tell Dasan and Avirum, who had remained in Egypt, that their fellow Israelites are lost. How could they have stayed in Egypt after all they had witnessed? And if they were so opposed to leaving Egypt, shouldn't they have died during the plague of darkness, which Rashi explains (10:22) was specifically chosen "because there were wicked Israelites in that generation that did not want to go out, and they died during the 3 days of darkness so that the Egyptians shouldn't see their downfall and say that they (the Israelites) are suffering just like we are." How could Dasan and Avirum have survived if they wanted to stay in Egypt? (See the Rosh at the end of his comments on Rashi on Shemos 10:10, who explains that "even though they were completely wicked, they never gave up hoping for the redemption.") If they stayed in Egypt, how did they end up in the desert, where we find them joining with (or perhaps instigating) Korach's rebellion (Bamidbar 16:1)?

Rav Ya'akov Kamenetsky, z"l, asks (Shemos 14:5) how Paro could have questioned why he let the Children of Israel leave, if he had just suffered through the 10 plagues. His answer may provide the key to answer our other questions as well.

He explains that when G-d had originally told Moshe to ask for a 3-day journey into the desert, that was really all He wanted. The 400-year exile in Egypt that Avraham had been warned about (Beraishis 15:13) was only 209 years old. However, the nation had sunk to such a low spiritual depth, that they would not have been able to be saved if they stayed in Egypt much longer. Therefore G-d wanted them to go on a spiritual retreat, to strengthen themselves enough to withstand another 191 years in Egypt. When Paro refused, G-d had to take them out early, and condensed the hardship of those years into the last six months of the exile—starting from the time Paro said "no" to Moshe.

Paro thought that since the plagues were sent because he hadn't allowed them to go on their spiritual retreat, it would have been enough to let them go on that retreat now instead. He regretted having freed them completely, and chased after them.

The Children of Israel knew that the decree was for a 400-year exile. It would have been for 400 years in Egypt, but, because of Paro's obstinacy, was 400 years from Yitzchok's birth (see Rashi on Shemos 12:40). Dasan and Avirum, however, refused to accept that the exile had ended, because they refused to accept Moshe's leadership—an issue that plagued them decades before the exodus and would plague them after it.

Dasan and Avirum resented that Moshe had prevented their quarrel from turning into a fight, saying "who appointed you as an officer or judge over us" (2:14; see Rashi on 2:13), and informed Paro that he had killed the Egyptian (Rashi on 18:4), causing him to flee to Midyan. When he returned some 40 or 60 years later (see Shemos Rabbah 1:30), they weren't about to accept his leadership either. Although Moshe was telling the nation that the end of the exile had come, they insisted that it still had another 191 years to run. After the workload was increased, it was Dasan and Avirum who told Moshe and Aharon to leave them alone (see Rashi on 5:20) -- because they said that they were still stuck in Egypt for a long time, and claiming otherwise was making things worse. They wanted to leave Egypt too, and so were not killed during the plague of darkness, but their hatred of Moshe prevented them from accepting the possibility that the exile was almost over and G-d had sent Moshe to take them out now.

Although they no longer had the access to Paro that they once enjoyed (as they had lost their fortune before Moshe returned from Midyan, see Tosfos on Nedarim 7b d"h Aniyus), they were able to get in to speak with him about their work conditions as representatives of the Israelite foremen. They stayed in Egypt when the nation left, believing that they would be forced to return (because the 400 years were not yet up), and told this to Paro to try to regain their former standing. The plagues were sent, they believed -- and told Paro—not because the nation was to go free, but because he had worked them too hard (consistent with their previous complaint) and/or because he didn't let the nation take the break that G-d had demanded. When Paro was led to believe that the nation was lost, he told Dasan and Avirum that their prediction seems to have been accurate (as per Yonasan ben Uziel), and they joined Paro's chase after them, telling him that they would try to convince the nation to turn around because the exile was not yet finished. When listing Dasan and Avirum's transgressions, Shemos Rabbah (1:29) includes the "rebellion by the Sea of Reeds," referring to the rhetorical question in our Parsha about having enough graves in Egypt, and having asked in Egypt to be left alone. While others, who believed Moshe that G-d had taken them out of Egypt for good, prayed to Him for help, Dasan and Avirum blamed Moshe for having taken them out too early. This was consistent with their statement in Egypt that the exile wasn't even close to being over—which is why they referred to it.

After G-d split the sea and drowned the Egyptians, they realized that perhaps the exile was over, so remained with the rest of the nation—only to continue to hound Moshe until the ground swallowed them up during Korach's rebellion. © 2005 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

As the Jews begin their travels through the desert, God causes manna (food) to fall down from the heavens. In the words of the Torah, "Behold, I will rain down on you bread from heaven, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day that I may test them whether they will walk in my law or not." (Exodus 16:4) One wonders: what test did the manna involve?

Ramban writes that it was a trial for them not to have food of their own. Indeed, the manna was the only alternative and was a food heretofore unknown.

For Ramban, although the manna provided daily food to satisfy the needs of the Jewish people, it did involve an element of emotional trauma. Notwithstanding that the Jews had never seen this kind of food before, they were expected to depend only upon the manna for sustenance. Additionally, the Jews were not permitted to store any food away. They could only gather what they required on any particular day. (Exodus 16:19) These elements caused psychological pressure in the hearts of the Jewish people and made the manna a true test.

Hizkuni sees it differently. He argues that since manna required no preparation, the Jewish people will have leisure time enough for everything.

For Hizkuni, the test of manna had nothing to do with psychological trauma. Bearing in mind that the Jews would effortlessly obtain their food, they were left with little challenge to sustain their families. The test that the Torah speaks of is how would they choose to use their leisure time—would it be squandered away, or would it be used wisely?

All too often, we believe that life's tests involve suffering - how we overcome difficult challenges. Hizkuni presents another of life's tests. At times, we are tested precisely when things go well. When we succeed, will we properly acknowledge it as a gift from God? When we have time on our hands, will we seek to intensify our commitment to God by studying Torah and doing more to fix the world?

This, in fact, is the force of Moshe's words at the end of his life, "And Jeshurun (Israel) waxed fat, and kicked." (Deuteronomy 32:15) In other words, when we have everything, when things are going very well, we often kick and forget God, who is the cause of all our successes.

Thus, the manna was a test. Not because it caused us to suffer, but because it made life easy. In contemporary times, when the Jewish people are living

in relative prosperity, will we remember that it's precisely now, with manna falling from heaven, that we face a most challenging test? © 2005 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI ARON TENDLER

Rabbi's Notebook

What would you be willing to sacrifice if you were guaranteed that your children and grandchildren etc. until the end of time would live without disease, pain, worry, and strife? Think about it. Would you accept a lifetime of pain and persecution in exchange for your decedents having the utopian contentment of the messianic era? Would you give your right arm in exchange for it? How about giving up eyesight, hearing, and taste?

Let's up the ante: A lifetime of pain, persecution, and uncertainty in exchange for world redemption. Meaning: If you accept the personal pain and persecution you are guaranteed that every living person on the face of the earth, now and forever, will enjoy the freedoms of spiritual gain and physical comfort. Would you do it?

What if it meant that you, your children, and grandchildren would have to suffer but your great grandchildren and all subsequent generations would be gifted with the joys of redemption? Would you choose suffering for you and your children if it guaranteed world redemption?

Let me be a little clearer. I am not suggesting that the actual suffering and persecution would be the compensation for redemption. Suffering in exchange for personal or world redemption is not part of the Jewish belief system. Suffering is definitely a part of G-d's system of reward and punishment; however, that means that it is the sinner who must suffer not someone else. It is antithetical to the Torah to suggest that one person can suffer and be punished on behalf of another. Each of us is accountable to G-d for our own actions. Therefore, I am not asking if you are willing to exchange suffering for redemption. Instead, I am asking if you would accept a lifetime of suffering for you and your children if that is what it would take for the world to attain redemption?

Let's say that a country bent on enslaving our nation for mercenary purposes would dominate the USA. Without any foreseeable escape a prophet whom we all believed to speak the word of G-d tells us that the occupation and enslavement will last 200 years. During that time many of us will die, many of our children will lose their sense of personal destiny and identity, and our lives will be miserable. Over the course of those 200 miserable years only a relatively small number of us Americans will manage to hang onto the ideals of democracy and freedom that are the legacy of our nation. However, we know that at the end of those 200 years, those of us who manage to survive will witness the miracle of all miracles. We will witness an overnight

reversal of all tyranny, persecution, and slavery, and the world will somehow realize that democracy, personal rights and freedom, are the unalienable rights of every human. The truly evil will self-destruct and those capable of change and redemption will accept and follow the teachings of the few who remembered the meaning of truth and justice. Would you accept such a scenario if the guaranteed redemption was as absolute as G-d Himself?

Before, during, and after Moshe accepted the mission of leading the Jews from slavery to freedom he was conflicted by a fundamental and theological contradiction. The Covenant Between The Halves (Bris Bain Habsarim) stated that the children of Avraham and Sarah would be in "a land not theirs, they would be enslaved and persecuted for 400 years." When G-d approached Moshe at the Burning Bush and told him that it was time for the redemption only 210 years had passed since Yakov's descent to Egypt. That meant that 190 years still remained on the enslavement and persecution clock.

The Shem Meshmuel on Parshas Shemos referenced the Pesikta Rabbasi 15:8. "When he went and said to the Jews, "You will be redeemed in this month", they replied, "Moshe Rabbeinu (our teacher), how can we be redeemed? Did not G-d say to Avraham that the exile would last for 400 years? Only 210 have passed!"

The Shem Meshmuel goes on to explain that in truth the time of redemption had not yet arrived. However, the Jews had sunk to the 49th level of impurity (distance from G-d) and had G-d waited any longer to redeem them there would not have been anyone to redeem! Therefore, G-d sent Moshe 190 years earlier than planned to take them out of slavery.

As I have shared with you in past editions of the Rabbi's Notebook, my Grandfather Zt'l in Darash Moshe Parshas Vaeyra gives further insight into this same concept. In the first verse of Vaeyra G-d answered Moshe's complaint that his mission had proven a failure. G-d contrasted Moshe to the Avos and said, "They only knew Me by the name Shakai whereas you will know Me by the name G-d." My Grandfather Zt'l explained that the name G-d describes G-d in His capacity of mercy while the name Shakai describes G-d in His capacity of setting absolute limits to all things. Basically, G-d explained to Moshe that in His capacity as Shakai He had promised the Avos that He would one day redeem their children in a manner that was absolute. It would be what we commonly refer to as the "Geulah Shelaymah—the Complete Redemption." That promised redemption is the redemption that we pray for in Aleinu, "To complete the world with the kingdom of Shakai." When it will arrive, that redemption will never be reversed. It will be the messianic era and the prelude to Olam Habah—The World To Come.

My Grandfather explained that G-d's promise to the Avos was that their children "would be in a land not

theirs, be enslaved and persecuted for 400 years." At the end of the 400 years they would be redeemed with the Geulah Shelaymah! After the 400 years all persecution would end and the world would recognize the primacy of their children as the chosen teachers of G-d's will and word. They would emerge from slavery as the promised "kingdom of priests and holy nation!" Never again would there be exile, persecution, ignorance of G-d, and unwarranted hatred!

However, G-d could not wait till the end of the 400 years. (2:23-25) "And their cries rose up to G-d...and G-d listened and He remembered His promise to the Avos... G-d saw... and knew..." G-d knew that if He waited the entire 400 years He would not be able to keep His promise to the Avos. Therefore, manifesting His attribute of mercy, approaching Moshe with the name G-d, G-d said to Moshe, "Go take My children out of Egypt."

(Note: Concerning prophecy: Prophecy is irrefutable; however, there are many ways for a prophecy to be fulfilled. Although G-d had to save the Jews 190 years earlier than preferred, the Bris Bain Habsarim was completed at the time of the Exodus. Starting with the birth of Yitzchak on Nissan 15, 2048 and ending with the Exodus on Nissan 15, 2448, the 400- year prophecy was completed. The first 190 years of the prophecy encompassed the time when Yitzchak, Yakov, and Yakov's children lived in Canaan but were technically "strangers in a land not theirs." (The land of Canaan did not legally belong to the Bnai Yisroel until Yehoshua led them across the Yarden (Jordan).) The remaining 210 years in Egypt fulfilled the prophecy of enslavement and persecution. Had the Jews been able to keep their connection with the legacy of the Avos and Imahos while they were in Egypt they could have stayed in Egypt for the complete 400 years. They would have then accomplished the final redemption for themselves and the rest of the world. Unfortunately, Mitzrayim failed to do their part in advancing the ultimate redemption and the Jews themselves proved too weak to survive Egypt.)

From my Grandfather Zt'l, the Shem Meshmuel, and the Pesikta Rabbasi it is clear that the exodus happened earlier than it should have. It is also clear that there were those in Egypt who were as conflicted and concerned about the "early dismissal" as Moshe. I would like to suggest that Moshe's opponents, such as Dasan and Aviram, were among those who were more than conflicted by Moshe's early arrival. They were a small but powerful and vocal group of popular leaders who would have preferred to take their chances at surviving Egypt and would have chosen not to be saved! They would have preferred to wait out the 400 years, no matter what the cost! They were the ones who would have chosen to answer my opening question with a resounding, "Yes! We are prepared to sacrifice everything if we are guaranteed that in 190 years we will accomplish the final redemption for our children, our

nation, and the world! We do not want to follow you to the Promised Land at year 210! As far as we are concerned to do so is an unmitigated disaster of such proportions that it makes insignificant any suffering and persecution we must still endure! To leave Egypt now means missing out on attaining the Geulah Shelaymah (complete redemption). It is worth the sacrifice of ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren if we accomplish redemption for all of humanity!"

I would further like to suggest that this approach answers a question in this week's Parsha that bothers most everyone. © 2005 Rabbi D. Siegel & www.torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“**T**he nations heard and were seized with trembling.. all the inhabitants of Canaan melted... The Lord will reign universally and eternally" (Exodus 15:14, 15, 18).

If the Egyptian experience was the most seminal in the development of the nation of Israel, then the splitting of the Reed Sea (Yam Suf literally translated is Reed—not Red—Sea) was the climactic zenith of that major historical event. The Song of the Sea has been memorized by Jewish children in Day Schools from time immemorial, and we even recite it as part and parcel of our daily, Sabbath and Festival Morning Prayer Service. And what emerges with exquisite clarity from this magnificent paean of praise to G-d is that our message of freedom is meant not for Israel alone but also for the entire world; Pharaohs, despots and even more localized communal rulers must understand that only one Lord rules the world and all of His children must be free! That is the point of the verses quoted above.

And if the Jewish people was born—albeit in miniature but certainly in potential—with the "Covenant between the Pieces" (Genesis 15) when Abraham, the founder of our faith-family—nation, was promised progeny and a land with borders, then it would be correct to say that the Israelite people was reborn as a nation with a mission to the world when we emerged from the Reed Sea freed from slavery, unscathed from harm, and inspired with a message for the world: (Birth or rebirth is always associated with water: the fetus is surrounded by amniotic fluids, the mother's "water breaks" as a sign of imminent birth, and therefore conversion as well as baptism features immersion in water). Indeed, the Song of the sea concludes with a vision of our planting a seat for the Divine, a Temple to the Lord, on the mountain of our inheritance (15:17,18), the very Temple towards which our Prophets tell us that the Gentile nations will rush, and will learn from our Torah the message of G-d's design of universal peace, freedom and tranquility (Isaiah 2, Micah 4).

Paralleling our national birth and rebirth is the birth and rebirth of Moshe Rabbenu, Moses the greatest

prophet of our people, Moses the one individual who understood and communicated G-d's eternal Torah to Israel and the world. And if we study carefully Moses' emergence onto the stage of history, the parallels to the miracle and message of the splitting of the Sea will become inspiringly apparent.

The initial birth of Moses is described in the first four verses of the second chapter of the Book of Exodus: A man from the house of Levi takes a wife from the house of Levi; she conceives and gives birth to a son, whom she hides (from the Egyptian police) for three months. When he couldn't be hidden any longer, he was placed in an ark smeared with clay and pitch, and the ark was set afloat "in the reeds" (besuf) of the Nile River; his sister Miriam was stationed nearby to see what would happen.

The re-birth of Moses begins when Pharaoh's daughter goes down to bathe in the Nile, her maidens walk along the river, and "she sees a basket among the reeds (hasuf); she sends her maidservant," takes the Hebrew baby, takes pity on him, and allows Miriam to find a Hebrew wet-nurse for him.

Pharaoh's daughter has not given birth to Moses, but she does save his life! And in saving his life, she endangers her own life. After all, her father Pharaoh has ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be cast into the Nile; in rescuing this Hebrew infant, she was defying her father's decree. History confirms that totalitarian despots never hesitated to execute their closest family members who dared rebel against them. Indeed, the Netziv (Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, author of the HaAmeck Davar Biblical Commentary) suggests that once Pharaoh's daughter saw the floating ark, and suspected the existence of a Hebrew baby within it, she sent away her closest maidservant (Exodus 2:5) so that when she-Pharaoh's daughter—would rescue him, no one would witness the event to inform her father of her crime (the Bible had already testified that her other maidservants had left her to walk along the edge of the Nile). Pharaoh's daughter emerges as the courageous heroine of the moment!

This fortunate rebirth concludes with the giving of a name: "And the lad grew, and she (the wet-nurse, Yoheved, his biological mother) took him to Pharaoh's daughter; he became for (Pharaoh's daughter) a son and she called his name Moshe. And she said, 'It is because I drew him out from the water' " (Exodus 2:10). Once again, I believe the Netziv provides the truest interpretation of this verse. The Egyptian word Moshe means son (Hebrew ben); Pharaoh's daughter names him "son," her son, because she earned her motherhood by her having risked her life for him. Since she drew him forth from the Nile River, in defiance of her father's orders, she could claim him as her son.

At this point in the narrative, there is no verbal connection whatsoever between the name Moshe and the Hebrew verb meshitihu, to draw out; after all, the name is Egyptian and the verb is Hebrew. However, the

Writer of the Bible is clearly making reference to the double-entendre inherent in the name: Moshe the son (in Egyptian) will also draw forth (Moshe, in Hebrew) his people, the Israelites, from Egyptian servitude as well as from the Reed Sea. Just as the daughter of Pharaoh drew forth (and saved) the Hebrew child from the reeds of the Nile River, so will the adult Moshe draw forth and save his nation from the Reed Sea; and he who learned the courage to rebel against evil totalitarian laws of servitude from an Egyptian princess will communicate a Torah which will eventually teach the entire world to have the courage to be free—even if it means putting your life on the line! © 2005 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI YITZCHOK MEIR GOODMAN

National Council of Young Israel

THEN Moshe and Bnai Yisroel sang this song to G-d. (15:1) The Midrash Shmos Rabbah (23:4) comments on this verse: This is as it is stated "She opened her mouth with wisdom and the law of kindness is on her tongue" (Proverbs).

From the day G-d created the world until Yisroel stood at the sea, we find no man who recited "song" to the Holy One - Adam, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, did not recite Shirah, and when the sea split for them, Bnai Yisroel immediately recited Shirah

This Midrash interprets the verse from Proverbs as referring to Bnei Yisroel, and "opening" the mouth as doing something entirely new in history - Shirah. Elsewhere in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 94a) we find that King Chizkiyahu, a potential candidate to be the Messiah, was disqualified because he did not sing Shirah after he was saved miraculously from a huge attacking army. This leads to an interesting question. Why were our forefathers not condemned for this same reason?

We might suggest using an idea, found in many volumes, called a "tzinor". This is the concept that great people develop a new holy dimension - a new or revolutionary level of Mitzvah - and this becomes a "channel" for the idea to spread further, and even to develop to still higher levels. The one who conceives the new idea is like a pioneer, who sets a precedent - while others who follow are simply continuing on a path already trodden.

A classic example might be Avraham, who created in his time the new tzinor of hachnosas orchim - inviting strangers into one's home for food and shelter, without receiving any payment at all. We can see how this must have been a revolutionary idea in his time. Surely, many people must have thought he was either foolish or insane. To this day, it is his children especially who are tuned to this tzinor - to the amazement of gentiles all over the world. (They are the children of

Noach, and did not inherit this quality, so it seems so strange to them.)

Crossing the sea on dry land, Bnei Yisroel and Moshe created a new tzinor - singing praises to G-d - something never done before, as the Midrash said. We cannot criticize those who did not create a new tzinor. Our forefathers were satisfied with building altars and thanking G-d in their own way. We cannot criticize them for not creating the tzinor of Shirah, just as we do not criticize scientists through the centuries for not creating air travel or developing space travel to the moon. But once the tzinor of Shirah was created, we may indeed condemn King Tzidkiyahu for not following this example, which he was fully aware of from his knowledge of the Torah!

With this concept we can now also appreciate, on a simple level, the introductory word in our quoted text, "THEN", since this is a special moment in Jewish history - the creation of a new tzinor at that awesome moment.

Nevertheless, we recognize King Dovid, not Moshe, as the great singer of Israel. This can only be because he must have created a new tzinor for Shirah - and indeed he did. For he was the first who sang Shirah to G-d even in times of trouble and tribulation. Within his first ten Psalms, there are already two such Psalms - one when he was fleeing his own son Avshalom, who was planning to kill him. The other, when Bat-Sheva had a stillborn after her first encounter with Dovid.

This tzinor is surely the one that helped countless Jews sing "Ani Maamin" even as they were led to the gas chambers in the last century. In view of the sad fact that most of our history has been in Golus and tragedies, the tzinor of Dovid was more fundamental to Jews for their survival - giving them the ability to dream, to hope, and to sing, even in sorrow and misfortune. Perhaps that is why the prophet Yirmiyahu informs us that eventually, Dovid himself will return as our Moshiach (Yirm. 30:9). (Yirmiyahu does not speak of Moshiach Ben Dovid. Thus, on Shabbos morning, we say in the Kedushah "al yedai Dovid Moshiach Tzidkecha.")

Based on the famous Talmudic dictum which calls upon us to imitate G-d in His ways - "As He is merciful, be thou merciful. as He buries the dead, thou too bury the dead, etc.", it may be argued that each pioneer who creates a new tzinor actually does not truly create it, but is the first to draw it down from the Heavens - for G-d is the ultimate Creator of every tzinor. Indeed, while Bnei Yisroel presented the world with a new tzinor at the crossing of the sea, G-d created song with the Torah itself which Moshe calls Shirah (Devarim, 31:19). Hence, had Yisroel crossed the sea after receiving the Torah, no true tzinor would have been fashioned then. Since it occurred before receiving the Torah, this song becomes the first song of the people and rates being considered the creation of the tzinor of Shira to G-d. *The above essay is an extension of a*

Torah thought in my recent volume on Shmos - "And There Was Light" (Targum) © 2005 National Council of Young Israel

THE SALANT FOUNDATION

Parsha Insights

by Rabbi Zvi Miller

Upon hearing the concerto for the first time, the young pianist was greatly inspired. He purchased a copy of the score and practiced unceasingly until he mastered it. Soon he played each note of the concerto with intense passion. Yet, no matter how perfect his rendition and regardless of how deeply he identifies with the beauty of the music—he will never be considered the composer.

After the miraculous division of the Red Sea that saved Klal Yisrael from their Egyptian pursuers, Moses led the men of Israel in singing a Prophetic song of praise to G-d—the Az Yashir. Miriam the Prophetess was greatly moved by the holiness and beauty of Moses' song. After the men completed their singing of the Az Yashir, she gathered the women of Israel and sang her version of the song. The Torah also records the words she uttered— which were exactly the same as the song of Moses.

The Torah contains no superfluity—every letter comes to teach us a law or ethical lesson. If so, why did the Torah repeat the song twice? The usual way of the Torah would have been to indicate through an extra letter that the women repeated Az Yashir?

In the eyes of Hashem, Miriam's song of praise was as original as the song of her brother. Her deep emotions of thanksgiving, outpouring of praise, and spirit of holiness that filled her soul made it 'her song'.

In the spiritual dimension, creativity is not limited to the innovator of thought, act, or feeling. Anyone who moves his or her heart to be enamored and enthused with any existing innovation is credited by HaShem - and validated - as the initiator of the idea.

Implement: Recite with feeling: "HaShem is my strength and my song, and He is my salvation."

[Based on Chachmah U'Mussar the Alter from Kelm—Rav Simchah Zissel] © 2004 Rabbi Z. Miller & www.torah.org



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