



אמת דורות



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PARASHAT BESHALACH

Candle Lighting:	4:43 pm
Tzeit haKochavim:	5:36 pm
Hillel Dinner:	6:15 pm
Shacharit:	9:00 am
Sof Zman Kriat Shema:	9:27 am
Sof Zman Tefilla:	10:18 am
Chatzot:	11:59 am
Mincha:	4:25 pm
Shkia:	5:02 pm
Motzei Shabbat:	5:46 pm

Az Yashir

By Rabbi Kaplowitz '02

Parshat Beshalach contains the Shirat ha-Yam – the song sung by the Jewish people after the miraculous salvation from the Egyptians at the Red Sea. This section of the Torah is familiar to us as part of our daily davening. Some of the commentators raise a question in the translation of the first line of the song: Az Yashir Moshe u-V'nei Yisrael et ha-shirah ha-zot... Based on the context and rules of grammar the line is translated: “Then Moses and the Children of Israel sang this song to the Lord.” However the line the Torah uses the future tense of the verb: רישׁי. A literal translation of the verse is “then Moses and the children of Israel will sing the following song to God.” Why does the Torah write in the future tense when it is clearly describing events that have just unfolded – in the past?

The Sefat Emet offers a beautiful analysis of this question. He begins by quoting the Midrash in Shemot Rabbah 23:4. The Midrash asserts that Moshe and B'nei Yisrael are the first people in history to offer a song to Hashem: “From the day God created the world until B'nei Yisrael stood at Yam Suf, we do not find any person that sang a song to

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You Brought Me Out of Slavery... Can I Have Something to Eat Now?

By Jessi Puterman '15

Adapted from a Dvar Torah by Shprintzee Rappaport

Parshat Beshalach sees the Jews leave Egypt and safely cross the Reed Sea, only to complain that they have no water. HaShem gives them water, but then they complain that they have no food. Hashem's response to this is (16:4) “Behold I will rain down Manna upon you in order to test you to see if you will walk in the ways of My Torah.”

This begs the question: How does the Manna test the ability of the Jews to keep the Torah?

A possible explanation can be found by looking to Pirkei Avot. R. Elazar Ben Azariah says (3:21): “If there is no flour there is no Torah”. Basically, a person needs to be physically provided for before she can devote herself to Torah-study. Divrei Chefetz prefers that the Jews' complaint about the lack of water and food was simply an excuse not to accept the Torah. Therefore HaShem was telling them: “Now that I have provided you with your basic needs,

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Parasha in a Box

- Bnei Yisrael leave Mitzrayim
- Pharaoh chases after Bnei Yisrael
- Bnei Yisrael get scared and Hashem splits the sea yes, Hashem is awesome
- The Egyptians follow, but Hashem covered them with the sea
- Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sing a song to Hashem Az Yashir
- Bnei Yisrael complain in Marah and Hashem fixes it
- Hashem gives Bnei Yisrael manna, food
- Bnei Yisrael go to Rephidim and complain that there is nowater and Moshe hits the rock and water comes out
- Amalek comes and fights Bnei Yisrael and Hashem cause Bnei Yisrael to beat them

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Hashem.” Adam did not sing a song when God created him. Avraham did not sing when he was saved from the fiery furnace or from the rulers surrounding him. Yitzchak did not sing when he was saved at the Akedah, nor did Yakov sing a song when he was saved from the angel, or from Esav, or from the people of Shechem. Thus the song sung at the sea created a new paradigm in the way that people worship Hashem – to sing His praises for the kindnesses he has done for us. The Sefat Emet explains this Midrash further. He writes that the significance of a new song is that it “forever carries the possibility of renewal.” With the introduction of this new category of song, B’nei Yisrael carry the hope and faith that God’s kindness and salvation of the Jewish people would last forever. The Az Yashir of Moshe allows future generations to sing new God’s praise for the kindness He has bestowed upon us and will continue to bestow upon us.

The Sefat Emet further explains that the use of the future tense teaches another important lesson about the nature of the song at the sea. He says that the capacity for song of this nature was always entrenched in the souls of the Jewish people. However, before the events of the Exodus from Egypt and the splitting of the sea, the capacity for song existed only in potential. It was not actualized until B’nei Yisrael experienced these dramatic events and were inspired to song.

The song that resulted has become a set text which we recite every day as part of our prayers. But we must always remember that at its core it is a personal song, meant to convey the intense emotions and reactions of the individuals who experienced them. The song of the sea also teaches us that our praise of Hashem need not be limited to the prayers we find in the Siddur. Like B’nei Yisrael, our songs must be personal and reflective of our life experiences. The type of song introduced at Yam Suf is a song that is responsive to events in our lives, as we experience them.

Rabbi Kaplowitz beat out Nachshon to be the first person into the Yam Suf



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you have no excuse but to keep My Torah.”

Another explanation also looks at Pirkei Avot, this time (6:4): “This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure....” In other words, the way of Torah is not to become involved with worldly pleasures. The Midrash tells us that the Manna could taste like anything a person wanted, so it might be that in giving the people Manna, HaShem would be able to tell what the Jews chose it to taste like, and then He would be able to determine whether or not they could keep His Torah. Those who made the Manna taste merely like bread with salt demonstrated that they were worthy, but those who made it taste like delicacies proved unworthy.

Finally, another explanation is given by the commentary Ben Porat Yosef who says that it is easy to fear HaShem when one is poor and hungry because one naturally feels more helpless and more likely to reach out to HaShem in times of trouble. The challenge is whether a person can be G-d-fearing when she has everything she needs. Thus, Hashem was providing for the Jews to see if they would keep His Torah even in a state of contentment.

The Gemara (Pesachim 118) says: “Man’s sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Reed Sea.” Why? Well, R. Yisrael M’Gustenin says that at the Reed Sea, the Jews were trying to come up with solutions to their problem. The last thing they would consider was that their salvation could come from Hashem. Similarly, a person usually views her sustenance as coming from a human source, such as the employer who gives her her paycheck, or Jason, who provides her stir fries. It tends to be more difficult for a person to remember that his sustenance really comes from HaShem alone.

Jessi took her BOO Buddy to South Africa

Oy Vey: Complaints and a Lesson in Leadership

By Sophia Rifkin ‘14

I don’t really have any deep ideas to share or complex commentaries to bring forth, I would just simply like to talk about Moshe’s role as a leader during this week’s parsha. Here we are, newly freed from slavery, one would think that a people finally saved from 210

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years of bondage would be filled with joy, appreciation, and praise. That is not quite the case. Let’s do a quick recap of this week’s parsha. First we’re trapped by the Yam Suf, we cry out in uncertainty and regret, the sea splits and we’re led safely across to the other side. We take a slight pause to sing a song of praise to the Lord. The last note of the song ends and we immediately complain of thirst at Marah. Moshe throws wood into the river and miraculously turns the waters from bitter to sweet. Next we complain of hunger. Hashem gives us manna and slav - matter solved. Next we have the whole Massah U’Merivah incident where we again complain of thirst. Moshe hits the rock and an endless stream of H2O flows forth for the Jewish people - end of that matter. Finally we end with the whole war with Amelek.

Yes, my summary may be a little dramatic and oversimplified, but what general theme constantly appears? Complaints. Everywhere Bnei Yisroel goes, we seem to complain. I in no means am trying to put down that generation because we learn that even their maidservants reached a level that the greatness that even preceding prophets could not approach. I do think, however, that we should highlight these complaints of Bnei Yisroel in order to learn a lesson about leadership. Ah Moshe, he is the backbone of the Jewish people, he is the triple bond holding the Bnei Yisroel molecule together, he is the man. I think that this week’s parsha really reveals his character and strength as a leader. Even though he was faced with a people who constantly doubted him and Hashem, to a point where even he cries out “What shall I do for this people? A bit more and they will stone me!” (17:4).

Moshe really steps up as a leader. He teaches the people how to act, how to appreciate Hashem, and most importantly he demonstrates the level of compassion needed to lead a nation. Never does Moshe throw in the towel and give up, regardless of the repetitive complaints and doubts, he stands strong and unwaveringly supports the people. We should all learn from Moshe the tools needed to be an effective leader. One must not give up, one should feel compassion and use that depth of feeling to help those he is leading. Sometimes a little mussar is necessary, but never scold, and never lose hope. Hopefully we can all try to incorporate the lessons we learn from Moshe to make us all more effective leaders and better human beings.

Sophia is caller of the week at Phone-a-thon

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The Mitzvah of the Week: The Flipside of Honesty

By Daniel Kasdan ‘13

Last week we discussed the importance of honesty, citing the verse “distance yourself from falsehood” (Shemot 23:7) as the source for this mitzvah. Yet, as pointed out to me by Mr. Barry Wolfson, there is also a flipside to honesty. There are times when—from a Torah perspective—we are not only allowed to lie, but even encouraged to lie. Let us explore this further.

Arguably the most obvious example of permissible lying is when it involves saving a life. Per the gemara (Sanhedrin 74a), pikuach nefesh (literally, “life saving”) overrides all other mitzvot (see *ibid.* for exceptions to this rule). Indeed, we find this idea throughout the Tanach.

In the opening chapter of Sefer Shemot, Pharaoh orders the Hebrew midwives to kill all sons that are born to Jewish women. But due to their impeccable Yirat Shamayim, the midwives disobey the Egyptian tyrant. When Pharaoh then questions them regarding their actions, they respond: “The Jewish women are not like Egyptian women [...] before the midwife comes to them, they have already given birth!” (Shemot 1:19). Yet, as Rabbi Joseph Telushkin points out, the very next pasuk emphasizes that G-d rewarded the midwives for their actions.

Whereas the Hebrew midwives took the initiative in lying to Pharaoh, there is a case in Tanach where Hashem explicitly instructs someone to lie. After Hashem tells Shmuel HaNavi that he is to anoint David as king of Israel in place of the wayward King Shaul, Shmuel is quite reluctant: “How can I go? Shaul will find out and kill me!” (Shmuel Aleph 16:2). So Hashem reassures Shmuel by telling him to take a cow and say to those who question him: “I have come to sacrifice to Hashem” (*ibid.* 16:3). While this is not an outright lie (after all, Shmuel did indeed end up offering this sacrifice), he nevertheless omitted key information. As we

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suggested last week, the Torah's intention in telling us to "distance" ourselves from falsehood (rather than simply refraining from lying) may be to underscore that misrepresentation is as bad in G-d's eyes as a formal lie. Thus, consistent with our interpretation of the verse in Shemot, Hashem indeed instructed Shmuel to lie while on his mission to anoint David. As Rav Telushkin beautifully points out, Hashem could just as easily have chosen to protect Shmuel without having the prophet tell a lie, but He nonetheless specifically told him to create a cover story. The lesson here is simple: saving a life overrides the Torah prohibition against lying.

In what other circumstances does the Torah permit one to lie? Stay tuned next week to find out. Have a good shabbos!

Emunah

By Eitan Cooper '13

This week we read one of the most important perakim in all of Torah.

At the start of chapter 14, Bnei Yisrael do not fully believe in Hashem. The closest statement of belief was found in Shemot 4:31, where we are told that Bnei Yisrael believe that Moshe and Aharon have seen G-d. Despite the miracles the Jewish people have seen, the text has not made any explicit statement about their faith in G-d.

But at the end of chapter 14, we are told that Bnei Yisrael believe in G-d and fear him. The text goes out of its way (14:31) to tell us that Bnei Yisrael not only believed in Moshe, but also in Hashem. The pasuk affirming this is very familiar to us; it is part of our liturgy and we (hopefully) read it every day.

What happened? What made Bnei Yisrael suddenly have faith?

The answer seems stunningly obvious: They saw Pharaoh's entire army die at the edge of the sea, while they successfully made it to the other side. After such a miracle, it would be impossible not to believe in G-d.

But this isn't incredibly convincing. After all, it's definitely not the first time they have witnessed the hand of G-d. The Jewish people have seen frogs, hail, locusts, the death of the first born, and much more. The better question to ask is this: How is the crossing of the sea a different miracle than everything else before it?

To find the answer, let's look back at one of the only other places that faith in G-d is mentioned in the Torah: The story of Avraham. In some ways, Avraham had it made. He had a one-on-one relationship with G-d, and had constant conversation with him. Yes, G-d tested Avraham. And yes, Avraham must have been challenged by the fact that he was the only guy around who believed in one G-d. But ultimately, his faith came easy. In fact, in Bereshit 15:6 we are told that Avraham believed in G-d just by looking at the stars ("Vehemin bahashem vayachsveveha lo tzedakah")

Bnei Yisrael are another story. Peshat (the simple reading) of the exile from Egypt shows us that G-d wanted to make his name known to the Egyptians. Almost nowhere in the text do we see an indication that G-d is performing these miracles in order to make Bnei Yisrael believe in him.

Of course, we believe that G-d actually did care about making Bnei Yisrael believe in him. But maybe this wasn't so obvious to the Jewish people. Unlike Avraham, who felt that G-d wanted him to have faith, Bnei Yisrael may not have felt that the wonders of the plagues were intended to make them believe in G-d. This is why the crossing of the sea was different than everything before it. Finally, Bnei Yisrael realized that G-d wanted them to believe in him.

To have faith, we must believe that G-d wants us to have faith in him. This is why Avraham had it so easy. And this is why Bnei Yisrael had a hard time, at first. It was not until they felt actively loved by G-d, and saw that yetziat mitzrayim was really about them and not about showing off to the Egyptians that they truly believed in G-d.

The next time you say az yashir and the verses leading up to it, remember that the path to true emunah starts in recognizing that it's not only your teachers that want you to believe in G-d, but also G-d who wants you to believe in G-d.

Eitan is really excited about his thesis topic - ask him about it

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