

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Beshalach



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Torah Wellsprings - Beshalach

Worthy of Kriyas Yam Suf

About Kriyas Yam Suf, Chazal tell us that, keviyachol, it was hard for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to perform this miracle for the Yidden. The Rashbam (Pesachim 118.) explains that the splitting of the sea was an incredibly great miracle. It wasn't hard in a literal sense because nothing is too difficult for Hashem. There isn't a thing that Hashem can't do. The expression of "hard," קשין, is used merely to express the magnitude of the miracle of kriyas Yam Suf.

There is, however, another meaning to this expression. Hashem set up a system of how He wants to lead the world. One aspect of the system is justice, midas hadin, that the prosecuting malachim have a right to prosecute. This is what occurred as Bnei Yisroel approached the Yam Suf.

The malachim said ואלו ואלו עובדי עבודה זרה, "Both the Egyptians and the Yidden worship avodah zarah, so why should the Yidden be saved and the Mitzrim perish?"

The Midrash expresses it even more: The malach of Mitzrayim proclaimed, "Master of the world, You do everything according to truth and justice, and the Mitzrim worship idols (and deserve punishment), but so do the Yidden! The Mitzrim sin with *arayos* (adultery), but so do the Yidden! The Mitzrim kill, but so do the Yidden!"¹

It states, לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי, "to save a nation from the midst of a nation." The Jewish nation wasn't noticeably different from the Mitzrim. It wasn't clear they should be saved.

These claims made it hard keviyachol for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to save the Jewish nation with the miracles of kriyas Yam Suf.

What saved them? How was midas hadin silenced, and why was the Jewish nation saved with miracles? We will write three explanations:

(1) The Or HaChaim HaKadosh zt'l writes that the sea split in the merit of bitachon. The Jewish nation marched into the raging sea with bitachon that Hashem would perform a miracle for them. This merit silenced the midas hadin. It now became clear that the Jewish nation deserved this miracle.

Hashem said to Moshe (14:15), מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי, דְּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּסְעוּ, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them travel." The Or HaChaim explains that Hashem told Moshe that he shouldn't daven now for salvation. Hashem said, "I also want to save Bnei Yisrael. You don't have to daven to Me about that. The problem is that midas hadin says the Jewish nation isn't worthy of a miracle. Therefore, my counsel is דְּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּסְעוּ, tell Bnei Yisrael to travel into the sea. They did so. They trusted in Hashem and marched into the sea. Their bitachon proved their worthiness, and the miracles occurred.

(2) The Pele Yoetz (*Elef HaMagen, Bishalach*) says their merit was their carefulness from having chametz.

Klal Yisrael is very cautious when it comes to the *issur* of owning or eating chametz on Pesach. The Pele Yoetz says that this stringency dates back to the first Pesach,

1. The Meor Einayim writes that the Yidden didn't actually worship avodah zarah, chas v'shalom. It is just that their emunah wasn't perfect.

celebrated in Mitzrayim. In this merit, the kitrug was silenced, and Hashem split the sea before Bnei Yisrael.

This is based on the Gemara (*Brachos* 20:), which discusses a contradiction in the pesukim. One pasuk states (*Devarim* 10:17) אִשׁר לֹא יִשָּׂא פָנִים, "Who will show no favor,"- that Hashem does not show favor, while another pasuk states (*Bamidbar* 6:26), יִשָּׂא ה' פָּנָיו אֵלֵינוּ, that Hashem does favor, and that Hashem forgives and does kindness for us, even when we don't deserve it. So, is it יִשָּׂא or is it לֹא יִשָּׂא? Does Hashem grant us compassion and forgiveness even when we aren't worthy or not?

The Gemara says that the malachim questioned Hashem, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied that when Klal Yisrael serve Hashem beyond the letter of the law, Hashem judges them favorably and forgives them, even when they don't deserve it.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to the malachim, "Shouldn't I judge them favorably? I wrote in the Torah (*Devarim* 8:10), וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ, וּבִרְכַתְּ, that *birchas hamazon* is said when one is satiated and full, but Yidden are *machmir* and they say *birchas hamazon* even after eating just a *kezayis* or a *kebeitzah!*"

So, for going beyond the letter of the law, Hashem judges us favorably.

The Pele Yoetz explains that the same occurred at kriyas Yam Suf. The prosecuting malachim said the nation doesn't deserve miracles and kriyas Yam Suf. But the nation was *machmir* with the prohibition of chametz,

so Hashem favored them and split the sea for them.²

(3)We can also say that the Yidden's merit was that they didn't mix with the goyim in Mitzrayim.

Chazal tell us that the Yidden in Mitzrayim didn't change their language, clothing, and names, and they were redeemed from Mitzrayim due to this merit. The Meshech Chachmah (ד"ה ואתם בו) explains that although they weren't perfect in their deeds (as Chazal tell us, they worshipped avodah zarah), they maintained their identity as Yidden. This was their merit to leave Mitzrayim.

We could add that this was also their merit to be worthy of kriyas Yam Suf.³

So, in review, we've seen three reasons the nation merited the miracles of kriyas Yam Suf, even if their deeds weren't perfect.

(1)The Or HaChaim writes that it was in the merit of their readiness to go into the sea because they trusted in Hashem's salvation.

(2)The Pele Yoetz writes that their extreme caution with chametz caused Hashem to have compassion on them and to split the sea for them.

(3)The Meshech Chachmah explains that their chumros to maintain their Jewish identity made them worthy.

The Merit of Torah

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21) says that the sea said to Moshe, "Hashem created man on the sixth day of Creation, and I was created

2. The *rasha* of the *Haggadah* asks (*Shemos* 12:26), מַה הָעֲבוּרָה הַזֹּאת לָכֶם, "Why do you do this work?" The Pele Yoetz explains that the *rasha* is asking why are you so *machmir* on Pesach? Why do you go beyond the letter of the law?

We tell the *rasha*, אִילּוּ הָיָה שָׁם לֹא הָיָה גּוֹאֵל, "If you were in Mitzrayim, you wouldn't be redeemed." We were redeemed because of our chumros and for going beyond the letter of the law.

3. The Meshech Chachmah writes that we have many chumros on Pesach, more than the rest of the year because it is because of the chumros of the Yidden in Mitzrayim to live separately as Yidden, which was their merit to leave Mitzrayim.

on the third day of Creation. I was created first! Why should I listen to Moshe and split before Bnei Yisrael?"

"Hashem placed His right hand beside Moshe's right hand... and the sea split."

Hashem's right hand represents Torah as it states (*Devarim* 33:2), מִיְמֵינוּ אֵשׁ דָּת, "From Hashem's right hand, He presented the fiery Torah..." Or HaChaim explains that Hashem placed His right hand by Moshe's hand to show that Moshe has the merit of Torah. When the sea saw this, it split.

This is because the sea must do the will of those who study Torah.

It states (*Shemos* 14:27) וַיֵּשֶׁב הַיָּם לִפְנוֹת בֹּקֶר לְאִיתָנוּ, "Towards morning, the sea returned to its strength."

The letters לאיתנו spell לתנאו, to the *tnay*, to the condition that Hashem made with the sea. Hashem made a condition with the sea that it must split before the Jewish nation. The Or HaChaim adds, "Hashem made a condition with all creation that they must be submitted to Torah and to those who toil in it, to do whatever [the Jewish nation] decrees on them." Therefore, when the sea saw that Moshe had the merit of the Torah, it split before Bnei Yisrael.

Miracles Beyond Nature

So, the prosecuting malachim's claim that the Yidden didn't deserve kriyas Yam Suf was refuted by the Yidden's merits. The sea's objections were also overruled because Yidden had the merit of the Torah, and the entire creation is obligated to do the will of those who study and keep the Torah.

But there remained yet another issue, which made kriyas Yam Suf, keviyachol, difficult for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The problem was that Hashem leads the world according to the laws of nature. So, how did the Jewish nation merit a miracle beyond nature?

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l* teaches: When one serves Hashem according to his nature, Hashem leads him according to the rules of nature. But when one goes beyond his nature, Hashem reciprocates and performs miracles for him beyond the limitations of nature. When the Yidden were at the seashore, they served Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, beyond their nature, making them worthy of kriyas Yam Suf.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 36:) states, "When Yisrael were at the shore of the Yam Suf, a debate among the shevatim emerged. One shevet said, 'I will be first to go into the sea,' another tribe said, 'I will go first.' While this debate was taking place, Binyamin's tribe stepped forward and jumped into the sea. Therefore, Binyamin merited that the Shechinah resided in his portion [in the Beis HaMikdash]."

Other Midrashim say that Nachshon ben Aminadov was the first to jump into the Yam Suf. When the water reached his nostrils, he shouted, הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי כִּי בָאוּ מַיִם עַד נַפְשִׁי, "Save me, Hashem, for the waters have reached the soul," and the sea split.

Either way, the sea split in the merit of *mesirus nefesh* because when we serve Hashem beyond nature, with *mesirus nefesh*, Hashem performs miracles for us beyond the rules of nature.

Rashi (*Shemos* 12:6) writes that for the Jewish nation to leave Mitzrayim, they needed mitzvos, so Hashem gave them the mitzvos of korban Pesach and bris milah. The Avnei Nezer asks why a mitzvah wasn't required to merit kriyas Yam Suf. He answers that the Jewish nation served Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, and when there is *mesirus nefesh*, no other merit is needed.

The Tzemech Tzedek of Lubavitz *zt'l* referred to Shvi'i shel Pesach (the day we read the Shirah) as Rosh Hashanah for *mesirus nefesh*." The same applies to Shabbos Shirah.

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* taught that the word א"ז from אִזְיִר hints at the two days a year we read the Shirah. The letter ז"י is

gematriya seven, alluding to Shevi'i shel Pesach, and אל"ף, can be translated as to teach or to study (אלופך בינה), alluding to Shabbos Shirah when we learn about *kriyas Yam Suf*. These are days we commemorate the *mesirus nefesh* of the Jewish nation, which earn us miracles beyond nature.⁴

Chazal tell us, "Even a maidservant at the Yam Suf saw greater revelations than the *Navi Yechezkel ben Buzi*." This teaches us the power of serving Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*. In a moment, a *mesirus nefesh* Yid is elevated from the lowest to the highest levels.

Mesirus nefesh doesn't necessarily mean one risks his life to do Hashem's will. Instead, Mesirus nefesh means to go out of one's comfort zone and to serve Hashem in ways he never did before.

But how does one reach the level of serving Hashem outside his comfort zone? It all begins with *ratzon* (desire). When you genuinely want to do Hashem's will, you will do so, even when it is hard.

Years ago, a Moroccan king, on his deathbed, overheard two ministers say to one another, "The king's enemies are glad that the king is about to die because when he dies, they will take over the kingdom."

The Moroccan king suddenly became strong and sat up in his bed. He wouldn't permit himself to die. He survived and lived for another three years.

Tzaddikim repeated this story to demonstrate the power of desire (*ratzon*). When a person truly desires something, he will go beyond the limits of his nature to attain it.

The Sfas Emes writes, "A person doesn't do good, and a person doesn't do bad. Even thoughts of *teshuvah* come from Hashem. Don't ask, if so, what do people do? People have *ratzon* and *yegiah*, desire and toil."

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov *zt'l* taught that even a person born with a low *neshamah* can reach the highest levels. It all depends on how strongly he desires and on how hard he tries.

Joy on Shabbos Shirah

After *maariv* on Shabbos Shirah, Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* repeated a question he heard from Reb Yitzchak Vorka *zt'l*. Reb Yitzchak Vorka asked, "Why is this Shabbos called Shabbos Shirah? We generally don't name the Shabbos after what we read in the Torah. Last week's Shabbos (parashas Bo) isn't called 'Shabbos Yetzias Mitzrayim,' and next week's Shabbos (parashas Yisro) isn't called 'Shabbos Matan Torah.' Why then is this Shabbos called Shabbos Shirah?"

Rebbe Bunim answered that it is because the Shirah is written in the *sefer Torah* לבינה על גבי אריה. [Az Yashir is written in the *sefer Torah* in a song format, with large spaces after each phrase.]

Then Rebbe Bunim said with *hislahavus*, "Every Yid must be very happy on this Shabbos!"

The *Ramasayim Tzofim* *zt'l* (Tana d'bei Eliyahu Zuta 16) offers the following explanation:

It is based on the *Shlah Hakadosh*, who says that the ink of a *sefer Torah* represents the *neshamos*, the good deeds, the *emunah*, and the *daas* of the Jewish nation. The white of a *sefer Torah* represents the physical bodies of *Bnei Yisrael*.⁵

4. We received a letter from a couple who was childless for many years, and they decided to do something beyond their nature to merit Hashem's blessings, beyond nature. They threw away their iPhones, which was very difficult for them. It was *mesirus nefesh*, but they prayed that in that merit, Hashem would perform miracles for them beyond nature. They were blessed with a child.

5. יש שישים רבוי אותיות לתורה is *roshei teivos* for "There are six-hundred-thousand letters in the Torah,"

He explains that when we read about yetzias Mitzrayim in the Torah, the typical Yid doesn't experience the joy of yetzias Mitzrayim, and when we read about matan Torah, the average Yid doesn't experience the incredible joy of matan Torah. Tzaddikim do experience the joy, however, the average Yid doesn't. This is why we don't call last Shabbos "Shabbos Yetzias Mitzrayim" and next Shabbos "Shabbos Matan Torah."

However, when we read Az Yashir, every Yid can experience the joy of kriyas Yam Suf. There are many white spaces between the stanzas, which means that the bodies of Bnei Yisrael also experience it. The human mind and heart experience the joy of kriyas Yam Suf. It can therefore be called Shabbos Shirah. It is a joy that everyone can experience.

This is why Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa urged every Yid to be happy on this Shabbos. This is a joy that everyone can relate to.

The Ramasayim Tzofim concludes, "With my own eyes, I saw how Rebbe Bunim zt'l would dance at kabbalas Shabbos of Shabbos Shirah, and he wouldn't do so on other Shabbosim." This is because the joy of this Shabbos is very great, and even the simplest Yid can experience it.

Salvations on Shabbos Shirah

There is no space between parashas Vayigash and parashas Vayichi, which is why it is called a פרשה סתומה, a closed parashah. Rashi (47:28) writes, "Why is this parashah closed? Because when Yaakov Avinu was niftar, the eyes and hearts of the Jewish nation became closed from the tzaros... because they began to enslave them."

When there isn't much white in a sefer Torah, that is a sign of *tzaros*, and the heart and the mind close. This week, the abundance of white spaces (in the Shirah) demonstrates an open mind and happy spirit, freed from all *tzaros*. This occurs on Shabbos Shirah because with kriyas Yam Suf come salvations for Bnei Yisrael, for the individual and the community.

The Beis Aharon zt'l writes, "The Az Yashir contains everything in it: what was and will be. All redemptions are found in the *shirah*. If a person says it with all his heart, with *mesirus nefesh*, according to his level, all his spiritual and physical needs will be attained." This occurs every day when we say Az Yashir with *kavanah*. Certainly, this happens on Shabbos Shirah when we say the Az Yashir or when we listen to it being read in the Sefer Torah. We can merit many brachos and salvations on this Shabbos.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 21:6) asks, it should have stated, ויבקעו הים, that the sea split. Why does it say, ויבקעו המים, that the water split? This teaches us that all waters in the world split. All around the world, wherever there was a body of water, it split.

What was the purpose of this miracle?

The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l explains that water represents *tzaros* and *yesurim*, as it states (*Tehillim* 69:2), הושיעני אלוקים כי באו מים עד נפש, "Save me, Hashem, for the waters have reached the soul." Hashem split all water of the world to indicate that when we read the Shirah, we are saved from all troubles and *yesurim*.⁶

The Chozeh writes that every year, on Shvi'i Shel Pesach and Shabbos Shirah

corresponding to the 600,000 souls of Bnei Yisrael. A sefer Torah is made of white parchment and black ink. The ink represents the *neshamos* of Bnei Yisrael, and the white spaces represent the bodies.

6. There's a Yiddish expression that people bless one another, "Everything should go k'shirah." The intention is, "Everything should work out well for you." The Imrei Emes zt'l said that hinted is, "Everything should be good for you, as good as when we read the Shirah!"

Hashem sends bounty and a lot of compassion to the Jewish nation.

Chazal say that earning *parnassah* and finding *shidduchim* are as difficult as *kriyas Yam Suf*. So, *shidduchim* and *parnassah* aren't matters to be taken lightly. Miracles as massive as *kriyas Yam Suf* are needed for them to occur. The Rashbam writes that the Gemara tells us this, so we should understand the importance of davening for *parnassah* and *shidduchim*.

The Ateres Tzvi writes, "When the sea split, it unlocked salvation for all future generations — for individuals and the Jewish community. Even if the gates of *parnassah* or *shidduchim* are closed, one can pray during this special *eis ratzon* by *kriyas Yam Suf*... and Hashem will save Bnei Yisrael."

Forgiveness

The Chareidim (ch.73) tells a story of a high-ranking officer in Castella, Spain, who was hunting in the forest. While trying to catch a fox, it bit him in the leg. It was a small bite; he hardly felt it at first, but his foot became infected. Three days later, his entire leg got swollen, and his life was in danger. The king's doctors provided expensive remedies but failed to heal him.

Everyone lost hope. He said his final goodbyes to his family, and they cried before him.

One of the officer's loyal servants didn't know about his master's illness, and when

he came to the house to serve the officer, he was shocked to see him in bed, writhing in pain, near death. He asked, "What happened to you? I saw you just three days ago, and you were fine."

The family told him about the fox bite. The servant replied, "Don't worry. With G-d's help, I will heal him."

He ran outside, gathered certain plants, ground them, put the mixture on his master's foot three times, and there was an immediate improvement. Three days afterward, the officer was healed, and he was able to walk.

The doctors were shocked and praised Hashem, Who creates plants with healing powers.

The doctor's expensive medicines didn't heal the officer, but the servant's inexpensive remedies cured the officer.⁷

The Chareidim tells this story to explain that there are also two ways to heal the ailments of the *neshamah*, to free oneself from all sins. There are extremely difficult treatments that one can take to atone for his *aveiros*. He can fast excessively, give large amounts of money to *tzedakah*, and so on. But there are easier paths, too, which heal just as well.

The Chareidim offers six simple cures to remove *aveiros*. His first counsel is to answer *amen yehei shemei rabba* with all one's strength.⁸ The second counsel is to keep Shabbos with all its details,⁹ and his third

Rashi on *אז ישיר משה* writes that these words are written in the future tense, "Then Moshe will sing." This tells us that there will be *techiyas hameisim*, and Moshe Rabbeinu will sing the Shirah again. Perhaps *techiyas hameisim* is hinted here because of all the good we receive from this Shabbos. It can resurrect the dead and bring salvation for the living.

7. Rebbe Dovid Biderman *zt'l* gave a *segulah* for *refuah*:

Take olive oil and say, "The Rambam was a doctor. In his merit, please send a *refuah sheleimah* to *ploni ben ploni*." And light the oil at the Rambam's *kever* when the opportunity arises.

8. The Chareidim writes, "Chazal tell us, whoever answers *amen yehei shmei rabba* will all his strength, even if he has the sin of *apikrosus*, he is forgiven. The Zohar is very stringent that all one's limbs must tremble, and he should answer it in a loud, forceful voice. Whoever accustoms himself to say it this way, is told that his sins are forgiven, if he doesn't return to his foolish ways.

counsel is to say *Az Yashir* with kavanah. Saying *Az Yashir* with kavanah isn't so hard to do, and it will cleanse him from all his *aveiros*.

The Chareidim writes, "The daily *Az Yashir*, make sure to say it out loud, with immense happiness, as if you were actually leaving Mitzrayim. It states, *pasuk* (15:22), ויסע משה את ישראל מים סוף, 'Moshe had Yisrael travel from the Yam Suf...' (the *pasuk* after *Az Yashir*) and the Midrash explains that Moshe הסיעם מעוונותיהם, drove them away from their *aveiros*. Their *aveiros* were forgiven because they said the *Shirah*. Chazal tell us: 'Whoever experienced a miracle and praises Hashem, all of his *aveiros* are forgiven.' Hashem commanded us to say the *Shirah* every day, as it states (15:1, at the beginning of *Az Yashir*), ויאמרו לאמר, and Reb Shimon bar Yochai explains that this obligates us to say *Az Yashir* every day with immense joy just like the first time it was said. If one does so, he receives the same *segulos* as the first time it was said."¹⁰

The Chida (Tziporen Shamir 2:24) writes, "the Zohar praises immensely the saying of *Az Yashir* at the end of the *pesukei d'zimra*, and tells its secrets, stating that it creates a great *nachas ruach* for the Shechinah. Therefore, we must say it with immense joy and sweet voice. One should imagine that he is standing on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the Mitzrim are drowning, and he is saved. This is known to be *mesugal* for atoning *aveiros*."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (51:17, quoting a *Zohar*) writes, "Say *Az Yashir* joyously and imagine that today you are crossing the sea. When one says it with joy, all his sins are forgiven."

The Chareidim writes a fourth *segulah* for attaining *kaparos avonos* (atonement) and that is to be *mevater* because Chazal say, "Whoever is *maavir al midosov* (he is *mevater* for others) all of his sins are removed."

The Chareidim writes, "A person should rebuke himself and say, 'Why should you suffer *yesurim* in this world and the next because of your sins? It is better that you suffer from the disgrace your fellow man bestows on you, and you don't answer back. Be happy with these *yesurim* because this will be your *refuah* for your soul..."

His fifth counsel is *hisbodidus*. The Chareidim writes, "Go to a place alone, where people don't see you, and raise your eyes to Heaven, to the One king... And as he turns to face Hashem, Hashem will look at him, and they will be connected."

The sixth counsel is to listen with desire to the *mussar* of a *chacham* who gives *drashos* on *yiras Shamayim* and tell ideas of *agadata* that draw people's hearts. Chazal tell us that this atones for *aveiros*.

These six counsels will remove *aveiros* in pretty easy ways. As we wrote, one path is to say *Az Yashir* with joy as he imagines himself going through the Yam Suf on dry land. When one does so, all of his *aveiros* will be forgiven.¹¹

9. The Chareidim writes, "Chazal say, 'Whoever is cautious and swift to keep Shabbos with all its details and conditions, even if he worshiped *avodah zarah*... he is forgiven."

10. The *Chareidim* writes, "Therefore, I accustomed myself to say it with the tune used when reading the Torah."

11. The *Zohar* (Bo 40:) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy when Yidden [say *Az Yashir*]. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gathers all the *malachim* and tells them, 'Come and listen to the story and praises My children are saying. They are happy that I redeemed them.'"

The Rebbe Reb Shmelke of Nickelsberg *zt'l* hardly slept. (His mother said, "I have two children: One never says *kriyas Shema she'al hamitah*, and one never says *birchas hamazon*." She meant that her son Rebbe Shmelka hardly slept and her son the *Hafla'ah* barely ate.) Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* once hosted Rebbe Shmelka, and he wanted Rebbe

Believe in Yourself

It states (14:31), ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו, "They believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant," Rebbe Tzaddok HaCohen (*Tzidkas HaTzaddik* 154) writes that Moshe represents all Yidden, and the pasuk is telling us that the Jewish nation believed in the greatness of the Jewish nation. He writes, "Just as one must believe in Hashem, one must believe in *himself*. This means he must believe that Hashem wants *him*. He must believe that Hashem has pleasure when he serves Him. ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו means they believed that Hashem desires them and derives pleasure from the good that's in them."

There is nothing more important to Hashem than us, the Jewish nation. It states (*Devarim* 14:1), בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם, "You are Hashem's children!" and there is nothing more important for a parent than his children. Similarly, there is nothing more precious to Hashem than the Jewish nation.¹²

It states (*Tehillim* 106:7), וימרו על ים בים סוף, "They rebelled by the sea, at the *Yam Suf*." The Gemara (*Pesachim* 118:) explains that they said, "We are leaving the *Yam Suf* from one side, and the Egyptians are leaving the *Yam Suf* from another side." As they walked through the *Yam Suf*, they feared the *Mitzrim* would also be saved, and they would soon catch up to them.

After all the wonders that they saw, why did they have these worries?

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zy'a*, answers that although they believed in Hashem, they lacked belief in themselves. They didn't think they were worthy of experiencing salvation while the *Mitzrim* would be destroyed.

This commentary seems to be unlike the lesson we saw above from Rebbe Tzaddok HaKohen, who explained that ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו means the Jewish nation believed in themselves.

But it isn't a contradiction because just as there are endless levels of belief in Hashem, there are infinite levels of belief in the greatness of Bnei Yisrael. The Torah says ויאמינו בה' ובמשה עבדו, that at *kriyas Yam Suf* the Jewish nation attained belief in their greatness, but this doesn't mean that they didn't have room for improvement. It is always possible to recognize even more profoundly and clearly how unique Bnei Yisrael is to Hashem. Their lack of awareness made them think that the *Mitzrim* would also be saved.

We learn from this that no matter what degree of *emunah* you have in Bnei Yisrael, keep discovering more because Hashem's love for the Jewish people has no bounds.¹³

Shmelke to sleep well because he believed that Rebbe Shmelke would serve Hashem better when his mind was well rested. Rebbe Shmelka agreed to Rebbe Elimelech's request.

In the morning, at the *tefillah*, Rebbe Shmelke reached very high levels, and the entire congregation became inspired together with him. When they said *Az Yashir*, people were raising the hems of their clothing because they imagined themselves in the sea and didn't want their clothes to get wet.

After the *tefillah*, Rebbe Shmelka said to Rebbe Elimelech, "Sleep is very good, but who has time for it?" According to another version, he said, "Sleep is very good, but who can risk it?" (because you might sleep too long).

This story demonstrates that when we say *Az Yashir*, we should imagine ourselves crossing the *Yam Suf*.

12. The *Orach l'Chayim* (*HaAzinu*) of Zlotzchv *zt'l* teaches: (*Devarim* 32:2), כי דור תהפכות המה, the Jewish nation has the power to turn over worlds, and to attain all their needs, the problem is בנים לא אמון בם, they don't believe they have this strength.

13. Once, Rebbe Dovid'l Lelover *zt'l* was collecting money together with the *Yid Hakadosh* of Pshischa *zt'l*.

Praising Hashem and Salvations

Certainly, a theme of Shabbos Shirah is to sing praises to Hashem.

One of the gains is earning salvation.

Reb Shlomo Fisher of Bnei Brak celebrated the engagements of two of his daughters in one year. One daughter was 32, the other was 29. This is what happened:

Reb Shlomo remembered that he had never made a *kiddush* for these two daughters. One was born on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, and the other was born three days before Rosh Hashanah. These are busy times, and he didn't manage to organize a *kiddush* for them. He thought that perhaps because there wasn't a *kiddush* for his daughters, they were having difficulty finding their *shidduch*. So, one year on Simchas Torah, he bought *chasan Bereishis*, which customarily comes along with hosting a *Kiddush*, and he dedicated that *kiddush* to thank Hashem for his daughters' births (thirty years earlier).

A week after the *kiddush*, both of his daughters became *kallos*!

One explanation for this miracle is the *brachos* he received from people for his daughters. The Midrash (*Koheles Rabbba* 3:3)

states that at a bris, Reb Yehoshua ben Chalafta saw the *malach hamaves*, the angel of death, and the *malach hamaves* was sad. Reb Yehoshua ben Chalafta asked him about this, and the *malach hamaves* replied, "I was ordered by heaven to take the soul of this child, but since everyone was praying for him and blessing him, כשם שנכנס לברית כן ינוס כשם שנכנס לברית כן ינוס, לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים, the *gezeirah* was annulled."

Or, perhaps Reb Fisher merited this miracle because he praised Hashem for giving him these two girls, and praising Hashem brings salvation. As stated in the *Shirah*, עזי וזמרת י-ה ויהי לי לישועה, "My strength and my praise is Hashem, and I had my salvation."

Praising Hashem and Olam HaBa

Avodas Pnim (letter 11 by Reb Aharon Yosef Luria *zt'l*) tells the following *mashal* to encourage people to say *brachos* over food:

There was a food establishment that didn't permit the workers to eat from the foods that were being prepared. If someone ate, the worth was deducted from their paycheck.

However, they could prepay a certain sum to buy the right to eat food as they

At one home, Rebbe Dovid remained inside for a long time while the Yid Hakadosh waited outside. Finally, when Rebbe Dovid came out, he apologized for the delay and explained, "I saw a lot of *yiras Shamayim* in that home; I simply couldn't leave."

"What *yiras Shamayim* did you see?"

"A young man works in that home together with his elderly father. The old man made a mistake in the business, and his son angrily said to his father, 'If I didn't fear Hashem, I would kill you.' When I heard that he feared Hashem, I couldn't leave. I wanted to be around this special Yid with so much *yiras Shamayim*."

Hashem only sees the good of Bnei Yisrael, as it states (Bamidbar 23:11) לא הביט און ביעקב ולא ראה עמל בישראל, "He doesn't look at the iniquity in Yaakov..." and Rebbe Dovid'l Lelover did the same.

He focused on the good and didn't want to see the bad.

The Gemara says, גוי ששבת חייב מיתה, "A non-Jew who keeps Shabbos deserves death." The Chidushei HaRim *zy'a* taught that it is therefore important to do *teshuva* on Friday before Shabbos arrives so that only the Yid in us keeps Shabbos, and the goy in us, which we adapted in *galus*, shouldn't be in us when we keep Shabbos.

work, and then the value of their noshing wouldn't be deducted from their payment.

The *nimshal* is: When one derives pleasure from this world, that pleasure will be deducted from his reward in Olam HaBa. However, if a person says a *brachah* and praises Hashem before he eats, he has paid upfront. Therefore, it won't be deducted from his eternal reward in Olam HaBa.

The Avodas Pnim concludes that if it weren't for the option of praising Hashem, one would be advised to refrain from partaking in the pleasures of this world because who wants to experience pleasure in this world if it detracts from his Olam HaBa? But when we praise Hashem, the future reward will not be reduced.

A similar lesson is stated in *Shma Yaakov* (*Beshalach*, written by the father of the Maharit Algazi zt'l). He writes, "When a miracle happens to a person, he loses his merits, as it states, (*Bereishis* 32:11) קטנתי מכל החסדים, 'I became small because of all the kindness...' However, if he praises Hashem, his rewards won't be deducted."

Chazal (*Brachos* 54) say, ארבעה צריכים להודות, "Four people must praise Hashem." They are (1) those who crossed a sea, (2) or a desert, (3) those released from jail, and (4) those who recuperated from an illness. Why does it state צריכים להודות *must* praise Hashem? A more common phrase is חייבים להודות, "They are obligated to praise." The *Shma Yaakov* answers that since a miracle was performed for him, he *must* praise Hashem. Otherwise, he will lose reward in Olam HaBa.

Chazal say, "Whoever says *Perek Shirah* every day will merit Olam Haba." *Perek Shirah* lists the praises animals say to Hashem. Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa zy"l asks: The praises of humans are certainly greater than the praises of animals. Why doesn't

Chazal also tell us, "Whoever says *Az Yashir* every day, he is a *ben Olam HaBa*"? If, for saying the praises of animals, one receives Olam HaBa, we should certainly be rewarded with Olam HaBa for singing the songs of humans.

Rebbe Bunim answers: *Perek Shirah* isn't the praises that animals say. They are the praises that people say when they fall to low levels and become like animals. If they praise Hashem from that lowly place (because they believe that Hashem still loves them) then these praises are very precious to Hashem. Because of these praises, they are worthy of being *bnei Olam HaBa*.

Praises and Prayers

There is a form of tefillah of praising Hashem where one intends to plea to Hashem. For example, in *Shemonah Esrei*, we say רופא חולים, praising Hashem for healing the ill. One can say these words and intend a plea to Hashem that Hashem heal someone whom he knows is sick.

The benefit of such a prayer is that the malachim won't interfere. When one requests, malachim may come and claim that the person doesn't deserve this salvation, and they prevent the tefillah from going up to heaven. But they can't stop praise from going up before Hashem. Hashem listens to the praise and understands the request intended behind the words, and He brings healing and salvation.

This process can be done with all praises to Hashem. One can secretly intend a prayer, and the tefillah will go up with the praise.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev-Teves* 4:139) teaches that this form of tefillah is alluded to in the *passuk* (*Tehillim* 18:4) מהולל אקרא ה' ומן אויבי אִוֹשֵׁעַ. This can be translated, "With my praises, I pray to Hashem, and that's how I earn my salvation."¹⁴

14. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l said that those who praise Hashem merit a long life. He derives this from (*Tehillim* 115:17) לֹא הַמֵּתִים תְּהַלֵּל יְיָ, "The dead don't praise Hashem...." So this indicates that those who do praise Hashem will merit life.

It is also beneficial to daven after praising Hashem. We do so with pesukei d'zimra. We praise Hashem before Shemonah Esrei, which helps our requests be answered.

Also, before Shemonah Esrei, we say the brachah of גאול ישראל, praising Hashem for taking us out of Mitzrayim. The Yerushalmi (*Brachos* 1:1) explains that after we praise Hashem, Hashem is near, and now we can ask all our requests.

The Joy of Praising Hashem

We say in Az Yashir, עם זו קניית, "This nation You acquired."¹⁵

How did Hashem acquire us? The halachos of kinyanim, acquisition, are spelled out in Gemara and Shulchan Aruch. Which method did Hakadosh Baruch Hu use to acquire the Jewish nation?

The Imrei Emes zt'l teaches:

The Gemara (see *Kidushin* 22:) teaches that when a slave works for someone, this demonstrates that he is a slave to that person. So by working, one can be acquired to the person for whom he works. (This is called *kinyan chazakah*). The Gemara adds that if a slave carries someone, this can also make him a slave to the person he is carrying, for it is the way of a slave to carry his owner.

The Imrei Emes zt'l explains that keviyachol we raise Hashem when we serve Him and praise Him, as we say in Az Yashir, וארומומך, "I will elevate you." Keviyachol, we raise Hashem (with our service to Him), which shows that we are Hashem's servants. This is how Hashem acquires us.

The women danced at kriyas yam Suf, as it states (15:20) states, ותקח מרים הנביאה... התף בידה, "Miriam, the neviah, Aharon's sister, took a drum in her hand, and all the women came out after her with drums and with dances."

The men sang Shirah, but they didn't dance.

Only a few weeks afterwards, the men danced at the *egel*, but the women didn't. Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l explains that the women danced by the Yam Suf, so they didn't end up dancing by the *egel*. The men didn't dance at the Yam Suf, so they danced at the *egel*.

In other words, when you are happy with praising and serving Hashem, you won't seek joy and happiness elsewhere. But when you aren't happy with your avodas Hashem, you will seek pleasure and joy elsewhere.

This is because everyone needs joy, and if it isn't acquired through Torah and mitzvos, one might seek it elsewhere. This is one reason we must bring joy into our avodas Hashem. It will protect us from the urge to find joy in other places where we shouldn't.

The tribe of Levi also didn't sin with the *egel*. This is explained because Levi played music in the Beis HaMikdash. They were occupied with happiness, inspiration, music, and joy, and when there is joy, one doesn't seek it elsewhere.¹⁶

The Purity of *Emunah*

We discussed above from the Chareidim methods in attaining atonement for sins.

15. The *Yesod v' Shoresh HaAvodah* (3:7) discusses Az Yashir and writes, "עד יעבור עמך ה' 'Until Your people pass through...' become extremely happy that we are the nation Bnei Yisrael, chosen from the seventy nations... When you say עם זו קניית, "This nation You acquired," think of Rashi's explanation that קניית means חבבת, 'You love them more than all nations,' and become extremely happy."

16. The Chareidim discusses the mitzvah to love Hashem and writes (ch.9), "It is the way of those who love to sing... When one loves Hashem with all his heart, he will sing before Hashem like Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang the Shirah..."

This is especially beneficial during Shovavim, when we seek to cleanse ourselves from our sins and gain a clear slate.

The Or Lashamayim (*Bo*) writes, "In early generations, the *tikun hanefesh* (rectification from sin) came from afflictions, but in this generation, close to Moshiach, the atonement is easier. One doesn't need afflictions. The rectification is by having *emunah* in Hashem, the Creator of the world."

Similarly, Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l said, "We are now in the days of Shovavim. Chassidim and *anshei maaseh* would immerse themselves in *avodas Hashem* during these days. They would fast, say many *selichos*, etc. But I think the primary emphasis should be on having *emunah* because when one establishes *emunah* in his heart, he has everything."

The Yesod HaAvodah (quoted in *Toras Avos, Emunah u'Bitachon* 53) explains the *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 5:1) ...אם תמצאו איש... שוטטו בחוצות ירושלים...מבקש אמונה ואסלח לה "Walk about in the streets of Yerushalayim...if you will find a man... who seeks *emunah*...I will forgive her." The *pasuk* teaches that it is sufficient to be מבקש אמונה, someone searching for ways to strengthen one's *emunah*. That is sufficient to attain atonement.¹⁷

The Purity of Accepting the Yoke of Heaven

Another approach to attain purity in Shovavim is to embrace the yoke of

Heaven because that is the greatest *siguf* (affliction). People want to do, think, look, and say whatever they want and whenever

they want. Accepting the yoke of Heaven means to do, think, look, and say solely what Hashem wants. It robs a person of his freedom, and that is the greatest *siguf*, even harder than fasts and the like, and it purifies him immensely.

The Shem MiShmuel (*Hoshana Rabba* תרע"ד) writes, "My grandfather from Kotzk zt'l said that it is easier for the body to do all kinds of afflictions rather than to accept the yoke of Heaven. There is no greater affliction for the body than to live under the yoke of Heaven and to do all one's deeds according to the Torah."

There used to be a *shlacht*-house (a place where cattle are *shechted*) on the outskirts of Bnei Brak. Reb Yaakov Landau zt'l gave the *hechsher*.

The animals were *shechted* lying down, tied down with rope. If the animals broke free from the ropes, there were metal poles around the area. The *shochet* could escape from between the polls, but the cattle, which is bigger, couldn't pass.

One day, Reb Yaakov Landau came to watch the *shechitah* from close. People told Reb Landau that it was dangerous for him to be so close to the animals. "The *shochet* is young. If the animal breaks loose, he can dash to safety. But what will you do if the animal breaks loose? You can't run. What will protect you?"

Reb Landau replied, "But I can't give a *hechsher* if I don't watch the *shechitah* from close up," and he went inside to watch the *shechitah*.

17. Rebbe Moshe Kobrin zt'l said that a person who never forgets Hashem won't forget Hashem in Gehinom, either. And when he remembers Hashem in Gehinom, the fires of Gehinom won't harm him.

And in this world, when one remembers Hashem, the fire of the yetzer hara won't burn in him.

Reb Sholom Teumim writes (*Or Torah Bo*, p.141), "I heard a holy tzaddik tell a relative that when one endures some kind of distress or hardship - money or other issues, r'l - he should say 'Ribono Shel Olam! You created me and gave me life; I trust solely in You. I have nowhere to turn to for my aid other than You...!' If you daven in this manner, you will be protected and guarded against all harm and tzaar. This is tested."

What they feared occurred. When the *shochet* took out the knife for the *shechitah*, the ox quickly stood up and broke free. The *shochet* ran for his life to safety, and the animal ran wildly within its confinement. Throughout this time, Reb Landau remained calm and gazed at the animal until it calmed down.

People asked Reb Landau how he remained calm at that time. He replied, "Someone who is afraid of Hashem isn't afraid of an ox. And if you are afraid of an ox, that means you aren't afraid of Hashem."

The *pasuk* says (*Shemos* 1:17), ותראנה המילדות את האלקים, "The midwives feared Hashem." The Noam Eliezer of Skulen *zt'l* explains that one can only have one fear. The midwives (*Shifrah* and *Puah*) knew that they could fear either Hashem or Pharaoh. Therefore, they increased their fear of Heaven so they won't be afraid of Pharaoh.

And when one fears Hashem solely, he will accept the yoke of Heaven. And as we are explaining, that is the greatest *siguf* and the utmost purifier.

Parashas HaMon

The Meor Einayim (*Likutim* ד"ה כשרצה) writes, "All salvations can be found in the Torah... For example, if someone needs food, his salvation is concealed in *parashas hamon*. Whoever needs *parnassah* should read *parashas hamon* daily, and he will attain *chesed* from *parashas hamon*. Similarly, all other matters are in their place, in the Torah."

Every Shabbos, for twenty-two years, Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Raminov *zt'l* would teach lessons in *parashas hamon* to bring *parnassah* for Bnei Yisrael.

It is also repeated in the name of Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Raminov *zt'l* that reading *parashas hamon* on Tuesday of *parashas Beshalach* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

The Chidushei HaRim writes in a letter: "Rosh Chodesh Nisan, 5612: I thought of an idea that I should make a *chiddush* in *parashas hamon* each day, and thereby my *parnassah* will come from the Torah. As the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 97:3) states, פרנסה בכל יום, every day has its *parnassah*..." and he wanted to draw his *parnassah* from the *Chidushei Torah* on *parashas hamon*.

Parnassah and Hishtadlus

Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 1:5) states, טוב, לאמר... פרשת המן, "It is good to say...*parashas hamon*." The Mishnah Berurah (1:13) explains, "It isn't sufficient to say the words. One must think about what he is saying and recognize Hashem's wonders. It states there (16:18), המרבה לא העדיף והממעט לא החסיר, 'Whoever gathered much did not have more, and whoever gathered little did not have less.'¹⁸ Thereby, we understand that doing a lot of *hishtadlus* doesn't help at all. The Yerushalmi says that whoever says *parashas hamon* daily is guaranteed that he won't ever lack *parnassah*."

The Tashbatz quotes this Yerushalmi and adds ואני ערב, "I guarantee it."

Rebbe Moshe Lelover *zt'l* owned a store where he sold salt. Someone opened another salt store on the opposite side of the street. Rebbe Moshe wasn't afraid that this would take away his *parnassah*.

Once, the competitor slept in, and Rebbe Moshe knocked on his window and said, "Come quickly. People are already waiting for you in your store."

18. Rashi (16:17) writes, "Some collected a lot of *man*, and some collected a little, and when they came to their homes, they measured what they collected and discovered that the person who collected a lot didn't have more than an *omer* for each member of his tent, and the one who collected a little didn't have less than an *omer* per person. This was a great miracle that happened with the *man*."

This is because Rebbe Moshe believed that no one could take away the *parnassah* he was destined to receive. Even a competitor can't take away the money that is due to him.

The Yesod HaAvodah would tell his chassidim who were merchants that they should come late on market day. In this way, he trained them to believe that *parnassah* comes from Hashem and that working more hours won't increase the *parnassah*.

When the Or HaChaim lived in Morocco, he taught the community that it is sufficient to work Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday and to devote the rest of the week to studying Torah. He assured them that with a three-day workweek, they would earn the same amount of *parnassah* as when they worked the entire week.

They followed his counsel and saw that it was true.

When the Or HaChaim moved to Yerushalayim, the Moroccan community gradually returned to working a full week. But they admitted that this didn't increase their *parnassah* at all.

Rebbe Shmuel of Lubavitch *zt'l* asked someone, "You're a Yid, and you know about Shabbos. Why do you work on this day?"

He replied, רבי, שבת איז א פעטע שטיקל, "Rebbe! Shabbos is a fat piece." He earned a large salary on Shabbos and didn't want to give that up.

The Rebbe replied, "The halachah of מוזר כלב (*Devarim* 23:19) means that if you receive a sheep in exchange for a dog, that sheep may not be sacrificed as a *korban*. But it is specifically when a sheep came in exchange for a dog. That is when it is forbidden to sacrifice the sheep as a *korban*. However, if one receives a sheep in exchange for a donkey (or any other animal), he may sacrifice the sheep. Why is that? This is because when a dog sees a fat piece of meat, he forgets his loyalty to his master and is interested only

in the meat. The dog's disloyal attitude is so disgusting that even its exchange cannot be sacrificed as a *korban*.

"Think about whom you resemble when you are disloyal to Hashem, and you run after *fat pieces*."

The Shach (1621-1662, one of the primary commentaries on *Shulchan Aruch*) was supported by his father-in-law for the first few years after his *chasunah*. When the father-in-law's commitment to financial support concluded, he said to his illustrious son-in-law, "Market day is approaching. Here's some money. See what you can do with it."

The Shach took the money and was highly successful.

Another market day was approaching. The father-in-law said, "You did so well last time. I'm sure you will do well this time, too."

The Shach responded that the *yetzer hara* gives scholars initial success in order to draw them into the world of business and away from Torah study. And after the *yetzer hara* succeeds in pulling them away from Torah, the *yetzer hara* causes them to lose their money, too. They are left without Torah and wealth.

He said that this is alluded to in this week's *parashah* (15:9): אמר אויב ארדוף אשיג. The *אויב*, enemy, is the *yetzer hara* (because our greatest enemy is the *yetzer hara*). The *yetzer hara* says, ארדוף אשיג, that he will capture *talmidei chachamim* in his trap. How will he do that? אהלק שלל, The *yetzer hara* distributes wealth to the *talmidei chachamim*. He has the *talmid chacham's* initial attempt in business to be very successful, and now he invests a lot of his time and efforts towards becoming wealthy. And then, אריק חרבי תורישמו ידי. The translation of אריק is to empty, and תורישמו is from the root רש, poor. Now that he has fallen into the *yetzer hara's* trap, the *yetzer hara* empties his pockets and makes him poor. And now he loses out on both worlds.

There were three very wealthy merchants, baalei tzedakah, in Istanbul, and almost everyone admired them. However, the smaller merchants in the same field felt that the monopoly of these tycoons in the market didn't allow them the chance to make a living. They told Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* their complaints. They said, "They take away almost every opportunity we have to earn *parnassah*."

Reb Chaim Palagi corrected them, " No one can take away your *parnassah*. Hashem gives each person the amount of money that is destined from heaven. And it is even possible that they are helping you out in your *parnassah*. It is possible that in the merit

of *tzedakah*, everyone in Istanbul receives *parnassah*."

The smaller merchants weren't appeased.

Eventually, the three philanthropists closed their businesses and moved to Eretz Yisrael. The smaller merchants rejoiced, thinking they would now succeed in their business.

But within a year, the smaller merchants lost all their money. They saw it as Reb Chaim Palagi had told them: The wealthy people weren't taking away their *parnassah*. They had *parnassah* in the merit of the tzedakah those philanthropists gave.

They discovered that Hashem gives *parnassah*, and everything is in His hands.