



פרשת בשלח
Parshat Beshalach

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HUMANLY POSSIBLE
RABBI DOVID KIMCHE

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ABBY ROSENTHAL ('23)

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ ('21)

YAAKOV EISENMAN ('20)

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יָבֵא בֵּין מַחֲנֵה
מִצְרַיִם וּבֵין מַחֲנֵה
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי הָעֵנָן
וַחֲשֹׁךְ וַיָּאֵר אֶת
הַלַּיְלָה וְלֹא קָרַב זֶה
אֶל זֶה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה

“And He came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Yisrael, and there were the

cloud and the darkness, and it illuminated the night, and one did not draw near the other all night long” (Shmot 14:20).

In describing the dramatic scenes in the build-up to the splitting of the sea, the Torah tells us that as the Egyptian army approached, Hashem sent His protective cloud -- which until now had lead them at the front -- behind the Jewish people, to act as a barrier between them and the hostile Egyptian army. The Torah further tells us that וְלֹא קָרַב זֶה אֶל זֶה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה -- “they did not approach

one another the entire night.”

Rashi offers the simple interpretation of the pasuk. The ‘they’ refers to the two enemies -- the Egyptians and the Jews. The Jewish People could not be touched. The midrash (quoted in Gemara Megilla) gives another layer of allusion in the pasuk. The specific words זֶה אֶל זֶה were used on purpose and they are evocative of another time in Nach where we find these words: famously, in Yeshaya chapter 6, the Malachei Hashareit came together to ascribe *kedusha* to Hakadosh Baruch Hu:

וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל זֶה וְאָמַר קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ
קְדוֹשׁ ה' צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ

“And one called to the other and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.”

In connecting this phrase, the midrash says something fascinating: our pasuk tells us that

וְלֹא קָרַב זֶה אֶל זֶה כָּל הַלַּיְלָה - the Angels did not come together to sing *shira*, a song of praise. We understand that the *malachim* are constantly serenading Hashem, but in this case they fell silent. Why?

The midrash says that the angels wanted to sing *shira* when Bnei Yisrael did, but they were prevented by Hashem:

אמר להם הקב"ה, מעשה ידי טובעים
בים ואתם אומרים שירה

“My handiwork [the Egyptians] are drowning in the sea and you want to sing *shira*?” This was not the right time to sing *shira*, at a time when human beings were suffering. Which begs the obvious question...

When Bnei Yisrael safely made it through the Yam Suf and saw all the open miracles which Hashem had just performed for them, they burst into song. This was the great *Shirat Hayam* -- a poetic, prophetic masterpiece, which occupies a central place in our parsha. The question must be asked: if the angels were clearly prevented from singing *shira* at this time, why, then, were Bnei Yisrael allowed? And not only were they not prevented, they were celebrated for doing so! How can we explain this double standard?

The Oznayim Latorah, Rav Zalman Sorotskin, offers a fascinating insight. His starting point is a gemara in Brachot 59b, which discusses different brachot a person would make. The gemara says that if it were to happen that one would receive both good and bad news at the same time, one would recite ‘Hatov VeHameitiv’ and ‘Dayan HaEmet’ (the brachot on good news and bad news, respectively) together. What may appear at first glance as a contradiction is not, explains Rav Sorotskin. Human beings are able to assimilate two different and contradictory emotions at the same time. We are able to feel both emotions, and that is not a contradiction. This is in contradistinction to angels who -- as we understand them -- are singular beings, with singular missions. Angels are not humans, and they do not have human emotions. Angels are able to feel only one emotion at a time.

Back to our question. The angels were forbidden to sing *shira*, yet Bnei Yisrael were allowed to. The answer falls into place nicely. Indeed, there was an element of regret here -- the Egyptians, for all the evil they perpetrated, were human beings. That they were dying was to be noted. Angels, singular beings, do not have the capacity to feel that regret and sing *shira*. They were told to forgo the *shira* and experience the sadness. Human beings, however, have this capacity, to experience the tremendous joy and gratitude to Hashem on the one hand, and still feel the strains of the human trage-

dy playing out at the same time. We were allowed, and even encouraged, to sing *shira* at this time. It was our humanity which allowed for it.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TIME

ABBY ROSENTHAL ('23)

In this week's parsha, Beshalach, there is an extra emphasis on time and the time of day when events took place. Some examples include when Moshe told the Jews the instructions for the *mun*:

עָרַב וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי ה' הוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵמִצְרַיִם
מִצְרַיִם. וּבִקֶּר וַיֵּרְאִיתֶם אֶת כְּבוֹד ה'

“...in the evening, you will know that it was Hashem who took you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see his glory...

Why is this so crucial to the pesukim? As we know, the Torah doesn't leave extra words in it, so what importance does this have? Even more pronounced are the many references to time (morning and night, Shabbat and weekday) in the story of the *mun*. They must not leave leftovers for the following day, collect double on Friday, and gather their portion in the morning. Why is this emphasized?

One approach we can take is that in last week's parsha, Parshat Bo, the first mitzvah, Rosh Chodesh, was given to the Jewish people as a nation. Slaves don't control their own time, but free people do. Since in Parshat Beshalach, the concept of time is still very new to the Jews, perhaps time requires emphasis. Newly-free people are just learning to manage their own time, and the Torah explains that many people struggled with these instructions.

We see a similar emphasis on time throughout Yetzi-at Mitzrayim. At the end of the Pesach seder during Nirtzah, we sing Vayehi Bachatzi Halaila, which ends every line with the word “*halaila*,” — “the evening.” When we read this on Pesach night, we recall that, although Hashem made wondrous miracles at night, we were in a dark time of slavery. We are freed “*be'etzem hayom*” in the middle of the day, the *mun* is collected in the day, and the Torah is received in the day.

In freedom, there is an emphasis on morning to show the brightness of how the Jews were in a better place.

Hashem was looking out for the Jews then, which shows that, even in life today, when it might seem like Hashem's actions are being unclear, we have to recognize that He is only doing it to benefit us and look after us. Shabbat Shalom!

RIGHT DIRECTION

ASHIRA MEYEROWITZ ('21)

In Parshat Beshalach, the Jews left Egypt with the Egyptians pursuing them into the Red Sea. However, there were many different routes that Hashem could have directed Bnei Yisrael, so why was the route through the sea necessary? Couldn't Hashem have killed the Egyptians in another way? One explanation is that the ten plagues were not enough to punish the Egyptians, but also that the Egyptians must be killed for their actions. They were killed through the sea crashing on them because they had the audacity to chase the Jews and they, therefore, set up their own punishment.

Another explanation states that the Egyptians were known to openly defy Hashem, so in order to show that Hashem's powers are not limited, the Egyptians were killed through a monstrous miracle. Additionally, the purpose of the plagues was to demonstrate that Hashem controls the world, which is seen when the Nile River was turned to blood. The Egyptians denied Hashem's capabilities and, as a final proof to demonstrate Hashem's power and control, Hashem killed the Egyptians using their own error as the cause for another punishment.

In addition, Hashem took the Jews on a strange route out of Egypt because Bnei Yisrael and Egypt needed to understand that the Jewish people were divinely protected. If the Jews left in a simple way, they would likely question if Hashem was protecting them throughout their journey. Although today we do not have miracles as noticeable as the splitting of the sea, Hashem still protects us throughout each of our personal journeys.

THE ANTIDOTE TO AMALEK

YAAKOV EISENMAN ('20)

After the truly epic Kriyat Yam Suf and the joyous celebration that followed, Bnei Yisrael find themselves once again exposed to the cruelties of a foreign na-

tion. Amalek then ambushes the Jews at the end of Parshat Beshalach, and Moshe instructs Yehoshua to choose men to go to battle. As Bnei Yisrael fight Amalek, Moshe raises his staff, which he previously used to perform miracles in Egypt, towards the sky. Incredibly, the pesukim say:

וְהָיָה כִּכְאֹשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְכִכְאֹשֶׁר יִנִּיחַ יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבֵּר עַמְלֵק

“Then, whenever Moshe held up his hand, Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed” (Shmot 17:11).

At first glance, it seems like Moshe is simply performing another powerful miracle to weaken Amalek, but Rashi explicitly points out that this is not so. He quotes the mishna (Rosh Hashanah 29a) which tells us that Moshe's hand did not fight the war. Rather, when he raised his staff, the Jewish soldiers looked upward to *shamayim* and opened their hearts to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The mishna makes a direct reference to tefillah and explains that the Jews only prevailed after they davened to Hashem.

Daily tefillah has always been a pillar of Jewish life. But tefillah is not just another obligation we have to check off. It is an incredible gift that can and should be used constantly. There is a story of a Jew who grew up non-religious, but whose family was spiritual in nature. She would often see her mom mumbling to herself while doing the dishes or such, and when she asked her mom what she was doing, her mother responded, “I'm talking to God; I'm having a bad day.” This is an attitude we should all have towards tefillah: Hashem is always with us, waiting to hear us call out to Him.

When used properly, tefillah can be a powerful force, as we see from this week's parsha. In his book, *Teachings*, Rabbi Asher Brander speaks about the role of tefillah in our battle against Amalek. He discusses how Amalek, who are the descendants of Esav, have one central motive: remove every last trace of God from this world. What makes Amalek so fundamentally evil is the serpentine method by which they undermine our sense of what is *kadosh* and what is not. In fact, the gematria of “Amalek” is equal to that of the word “*safek*,” which means doubt. Rabbi Brander explains that tefillah is the greatest weapon we have to fight against Amalek, because it solidifies our belief that Hashem is ever-present and that He is the source of *kedusha*. Through tefilla, we create a personal relationship with

Hashem, who helps us fend off the bad influences in our lives.

Life can get difficult at times, and we often lose sight of the light at the end of the tunnel. We sometimes feel as though the burden of living a proper Torah life is too much to bear. But, even when we feel we are losing the battle, we must remember that we always have Hashem to guide us, to fight our battles, to shed light on that tunnel. All we have to do is look up at Moshe's staff, at *shamayim*, and ask.

We should all be successful in our pursuits to get closer to Hashem, to bring *kedusha* to this world, and merit seeing the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash *b'mheira b'yameinu*. Good Shabbos.

GUESS WHO?

AKIVA ROSENTHAL ('20)

This week's parsha begins, וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעֲה אֶת הָעָם -- "and it came to pass when Pharaoh sent out the nation" (Shmot 13:17). This is followed by a parsha of positivity. The Jews cross the sea and praise Hashem and the Jews start approaching Har Sinai. However, the Gemara Megillah (12a) says that the word וַיְהִי is used to foreshadow negative events. So what was the negative consequence of leaving Egypt and developing our connection with Hashem?

The P'nei Hatorah offers an answer to this contradiction. He says that the Jews were leaving Egypt after over two centuries of slavery and attributed their newfound freedom to Pharaoh instead of Hashem. That explains why the pasuk says, "when Pharaoh sent out the nation", implying that the Jews viewed their situation as an exodus and not a path toward greater lives. The P'nei Hatorah suggests that the negative aspect to leaving Egypt was the Jews' perception of the event, and that, much like Pharaoh and the Jews in Egypt before them, the Jews leaving Egypt didn't believe the miracles done for them were signs of a Greater Being.

This idea is present when the Jews reach the sea. When the Jews are trapped, with the sea in front of them and the Egyptians behind them, they plead to Moshe to return to Egypt and be slaves rather than die in the desert. The Jews still hadn't accepted Hashem as their God and, therefore, Hashem allowed the Egyptians to come back to show that it wasn't Pharaoh's decision to let the Jews go.

Parshat Beshalach teaches us to recognize Hashem's presence in our lives and that no matter the strength of any human, He will allow us to be His people.



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