

## פרשת בשלה

### SUMMARY:

Bnai Yisroel leave Egypt by a circuitous route, following Hashem's pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Pharaoh leads his army in pursuit, coming into sight near the Red Sea. Hashem reassures Bnai Yisroel. At Hashem's command, Moshe raises his staff and splits the sea. Bnai Yisroel walk between the walls of water on dry land, reaching the opposite shore at dawn. The Egyptian army attempts to follow, but, at Moshe's command, the mighty walls of water crash down upon them. The treasures of the palace, brought along by Pharaoh, are washed up on the shore. The Jews sing "Oz Yoshir", a prophetic song expressing their gratitude to Hashem. They vow to glorify Him forever.

For three days Bnai Yisroel traveled through the wilderness without water. A mild complaint brings a miraculous supply of water at Marah, and a promise from Hashem that if Bnai Yisroel will fulfill the Torah faithfully, they will never suffer the afflictions of Egypt.

After one month, the supply of dough taken from Egypt is used up. Bnai Yisroel complain that they left a land of plentiful food and now have none. The next morning, sandwiched between two layers of dew, the Jews find a new and unusual food they call manna. For the next forty years, this miracle food falls daily. Any, left overnight, rots. On the sixth day, a double amount falls, sufficient for that day and for Shabbos. Manna left over from Friday to Shabbos does not spoil. For forty years, the manna testifies to the greatness of Shabbos.

The people travel to Refidim. There is no water. Hashem instructs Moshe to strike a rock and water gushes forth for the entire nation. Because they asked for water inappropriately, the arch-enemy Amalek appears. Yehoshua leads the nation in battle, and, with Moshe's prayers, inflicts heavy casualties. The Torah notes that the battle between Hashem and Amalek will be fought in every generation.

This Shabbos, on which we read Parshas Beshalach, is called "Shabbos Shira" because it contains the "Oz Yoshir" (Song of Praise), as stated above. This song of thanks has been incorporated into our daily morning prayers (Shacharis).

### BEHOLD I WILL RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN...THAT I MAY TEST THEM; (16:4)

Commentators differ as to the reason for the test of the manna. Some say it was to see if the Jews would continue to be observant when given everything on a "silver platter". Others say the test was given for just the opposite reason-whether or not the people could learn to become totally dependent on G-d. The question was would they realize that not a single day could pass without a deep need for Him to provide even their very basic needs. Thus, in the best of times and in the worst of times, the human response must always be the same---seek and find G-d in every situation.

### BEHOLD I WILL RAIN BREAD FROM HEAVEN; (16:4) AND THOU SHALL SMITE THE ROCK AND THERE SHALL COME WATER OUT OF IT: (17:6)

Although in the normal course of events G-d causes bread to grow from the ground and water to fall from the heavens, in this case He reverses the process, causing water to come from the round (the rock) and bread to fall from the heavens. This is done to demonstrate the omnipotence of Hashem and to teach that those who trust in Him have nothing to fear. Many of our Shabbos customs relate to the manna. The cover we put on top of the Shabbos challah as well as the tray underneath them, reminds us that when the manna fell it was enclosed between two layers of dew. We place two challos on our Shabbos table because when the people gathered the manna on Friday, and measured it in their tents, they found a double portion, for no manna fell on Shabbos (16:22). On Erev Shabbos, Friday, we cook and bake everything we need from Friday evening through Saturday night. Furthermore, our Rabbis instituted the '*seudah shelishis*' (third meal), on Shabbos afternoon (eaten between *mincha* and *maariv*, the afternoon and evening Prayers) because the word "today" is repeated

three times in the verse; And Moses said “Eat that today, for today, is a Sabbath unto the Lord; today you shall not find it (manna) in the field” (16:25)

AND THE B'NAI YISROEL WENT UP ARMED FROM EGYPT (13:18): The “Toras Moshe” explains the word “armed” to mean armed with the bones of Joseph that Moses took out of Egypt, suggesting that the greatest weapon of the Jewish people is the merit of their ancestors. However, Rashi explains that when the Jews left Egypt, they literally armed themselves with all kinds of weapons. If that’s the case, then why didn’t the Jews, who numbered 600,000 (males, ages 20 and over), stand up and fight the Egyptian Army, rather than cry to G-d for help? The Mechiltah on this portion offers an explanation. The Jews separated into four groups when they saw the Egyptians coming against them. One said to fight, one said to jump into the sea, one said to return to Egypt, and one said to shout and try to scare them. The point is that when the Jews are divided, all the weapons in the world can’t help them and the only recourse is to pray to G-d. Then, after seeing the splitting of the Red Sea by G-d, the Jews were able to sing a song of praise “as one people, with one heart.”

ALL THE SICKNESS WHICH I PUT ON EGYPT I WILL NOT PUT ON YOU, BECAUSE I AM G-D YOUR HEALER (15:26): The Malbim comments that even though G-d may cause pain and suffering to the Jews, it is not for the same purpose as in the case of Egypt. The sole reason for the plagues in Egypt was punishment; for the Jews, the purpose of pain is to heal them spiritually. In the same way that a doctor might cause some suffering to a patient to cure him, so G-d, our doctor, may have to cause the Jews some pain when they need spiritual help. Using this approach, many of the recent terrible disasters of the Jewish people, although unexplainable to our satisfaction, can be seen and interpreted in a new light.

AND GO FIGHT AGAINST AMALEK (17:9): When the Jews were standing at the Red Sea, G-d told Moses to tell the Jews – “G-d will fight for you, and you keep quiet.” But in this case, Moses is told to fight the enemy. For what reason? The Pardes Yosef makes a basic differentiation between the two cases. In the former, the Jews were fighting to save their lives, and therefore were allowed to rely solely on G-d. In the fight against Amalek, the confrontation was not just of physical survival, but of religious ideals as well. When fighting for Judaism, one is not allowed to depend solely on G-d; one is obligated to fight to the best of his capabilities to guard his faith against the eternal enemy Amalek. The Jews must fight to protect G-d’s name, which will not be complete until this foe is completely vanquished.

AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY (SHABBOS), SOME OF THE PEOPLE WENT OUT TO GATHER WOOD ... AND G-D SAID TO MOSES, HOW LONG WILL YOU REFUSE TO KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS AND LAWS? (16:27-28): Moses was included in this chastisement even though he himself didn’t go out and profane the Sabbath, because he didn’t try to stop the Jews from committing the sin. The concept of “arayvus”, or responsibility, is again stressed in this sentence. It is not enough for us to be law-observant Jews and hide in our own corner, we must seek out everyone to educate them in the laws of the Torah, for they are our responsibility.

AND MOSES SAID, THIS IS THE THING WHICH THE L-RD COMMANDETH, FILL AN OMER OF IT TO BE KEPT FOR YOUR GENERATIONS: THAT THEY MAY SEE THE BREAD WHEREWITH I HAVE FED YOU IN THE WILDERNESS WHEN I BROUGHT YOU FORTH FROM THE LAND OF EGYPT (16:32): The Rabbis say that this measure of manna was kept to teach future generations the qualities of trust and confidence in G-d, so that they might never neglect the study and the observance of the Torah on account of economic difficulties. If G-d was able to sustain a whole people in the wilderness for forty years, surely He will be able to sustain any individual who adheres to His Torah.

AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT WHEN MOSES HELD UP HIS HAND ... (17:11): The Talmud questions whether the upraised and lowered hands of Moses could be the factors which determined

victory or defeat during the battle of Amalek. Our Sages explain that it was only when the hands of Moses stretched toward the Heavens, symbolizing the people's trust in the Almighty, that G-d helped them. When the hands fell down, indicating loss of hope and dejection, defeat followed. Samson R. Hirsch (19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany) adds that it was Aaron and Hur, representing the people, who supported the hands of Moses. When the people recognized that the Almighty was their own G-d, as well as the G-d of Moses, their spirits and trust were sustained, and they became victorious.

AND MOSES TOOK THE BONES OF JOSEPH WITH HIM ... (13:19): "Atzamos" (bones) means "essence". Thus the meaning is "Moses took the essence of Joseph and made it part of his own personality." Joseph was able to forgive his brothers despite their wicked treatment of him, and later he loved and took care of them. Moses, too, throughout forty years of leadership, continued to love and intercede for his brethren despite their burdensome and weary complaints.

THIS IS MY G-D AND I WILL BEAUTIFY HIM ... (15:2): The word "v'anveihu" means "and I will beautify him," and is derived from "n'vei", which means "dwelling place". Rabbi S. R. Hirsch (19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany) teaches that this passage says: "This will be my G-d ... henceforth I will make my whole existence a Temple of His Glorification and of His Revelation ... I will beautify my character and personality, and then I will be a fitting receptacle in which the Diving Presence can dwell."

THIS IS MY G-D AND I WILL GLORIFY HIM (15:2): On a simple level this means that the Israelites accepted G-d as their sovereign and acknowledged their duty to praise Him. On another level, however, our Sages explain this verse as a directive to perform every mitzvah (Divine commandment) in the most handsome way, thus truly glorifying G-d. The Talmud instructs us, for example, to "make a beautiful Succah and an attractive Tallis." The Torah does not approve of our fulfilling mitzvos in a careless manner, but rather encourages us to use our aesthetic talents to beautify the service of G-d and thereby inspire others towards love and awe of the Creator.

THE L-RD IS A MAN OF WAR AND THE L-RD IS HIS NAME (THE G-D OF MERCY) (15:3): It would seem incredible that after witnessing the greatest salvation in all history, the Jews would so soon lose faith in G-d's commitment to them. S.R. Hirsch explains that the Jews had learned that G-d was extraordinarily near at moments of great danger and crisis. But it was another matter to think that He could be depended on for the ordinary requirements of everyday life, which might be considered too small and petty for His intervention. By providing the people with drinkable water, G-d taught us that we should ask His mercy in every aspect of our lives.

A REST DAY A HOLY SABBATH UNTO THE L-RD IS TOMORROW ... (16:23): The Sabbath, which forms the basis of Judaism, is here introduced in connection with the Manna, which was a daily miracle for 40 years. The concept of the Sabbath, however, represents a complete cessation of all creative work, just as G-d ceased His work after six days. Since the Manna was a fresh creation every morning, it could not be given on the Sabbath. Therefore G-d provided a double portion on the sixth day, in preparation for the day of rest. Many of our Sabbath customs relate to the Manna. The double portion of the Manna is the reason for our using two challahs on the Sabbath table and the cover we put on top of them, as well as the cloth underneath them, reminds us that when the Manna fell it was enclosed between two layers of dew.

## **HAFTORAH JUDGES 4:4-5:31**

Just as the Jews sang a song of praise and thanksgiving when their evil Egyptian oppressors drowned at the crossing of the sea, the Haftorah contains Devorah's song, which she composed after the

death of the wicked general Sisera. The relationship between the Jews and Hashem follows a cyclical progression during the period of the Judges – faithfulness with its concomitant salvation and independence followed by a rejection of their unique mission and destiny with its usual result of a loss of prosperity and sovereignty. The events of the Haftorah occur at a time when Yisroel was being oppressed by Jabin, King of Canaan and his general Sisera. The most accurate translation of Sisera's name is "the silencer". He received this appellation because he used his nine hundred chariots to *silence* any attempted rebellions. His policy to confiscate all weapons, to the point that "neither shield nor spear, neither defensive nor aggressive weapon were to be seen among the forty thousand of Israel" (5:8) allowed for the ruthless oppression of the Jews, which included constant abuses and violence (Rabbi S.R. Hirsch).

### **SABBATH SHIRAH THE SABBATH OF THE SONG**

In the Sidrah B'shalach, we are told of the actual departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. We are told of the great miracle of Kerias Yam-Suf, when the Red Sea was cleft asunder, and the children of Israel walked through it on dry land, while the pursuing Egyptians were drowned in it. Here it is also where we read the Song of Moshe, or the Song at the Sea (Shiras ha-Yam), and for this reason this Shabbos is called "Shabbos-Shira."

Our Sages have much to say about those great events related in the Sidrah B'shalach. Here are some of their sayings:

*And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes.....and the children of Israel cried unto G-d (Ex. 14:10).*

Rabbi Berechiah said, Pharaoh did more to bring the children of Israel closer to G-d than a hundred fast days and prayers. How so? Because when Pharaoh pursued the children of Israel at the head of the Egyptian army, and the children of Israel realized their danger, they knew that only G-d could help them. So they lifted up their eyes to heaven and prayed to G-d.

*And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground (Ex. 16 : 22).*

It should have said, "upon dry land in the midst of the sea," for if they went into the midst of the sea, how could it be on dry land, and if they went on dry land, it should have mentioned it earlier. From this we learn, our Sages say, that they actually stepped into the sea, and it was not before the water reached up to their noses that the sea was divided for them.

Thus when Moshe told them the word of G-d to jump into the sea, they did so, and it was after they showed such great faith that the miracle happened.

*Then sang Moshe and the children of Israel this song (Ex. 15 : 1).*

Since the time G-d had created heaven and earth, until that moment, nobody had sung a song of praise to G-d. When G-d created Adam, he did not sing unto G-d; G-d saved Abraham from the burning furnace, but Abraham did not sing unto G-d; G-d saved Isaac from the altar on which he was bound, but Isaac did not sing praises to G-d; Jacob was saved from the wrestling angel, from Esau, from Shechem, but neither did he sing praises to G-d. Only when the children of Israel were saved from Pharaoh - then did Moshe and the children of Israel sing unto G-d. Said G-d, "This is what I have been waiting for."

Thus our Rabbis remind us that we must never forget to express our gratitude to G-d for all His mercies and favors.

*And Moses said unto them: It is the bread which the L-rd hath given you to eat." (Ex. 16 : 15).*

After the children of Israel left Egypt, and even before they received the Torah, there were a few things they had to learn. One of them was that G-d is their Provider. The children of Israel had seen G-d's might and majesty in Egypt and at the crossing of the Red Sea. But did He care also for each and every person separately?

The manna showed them that G-d did.

The children of Israel learned to lift up their eyes to the heavens, and never were they disappointed. G-d did not fail them once during the forty years of wandering through the desert.

Together with the manna the children of Israel received the first laws of the holy Sabbath day. They learned that on the holy Sabbath day the manna would not come down, but that G-d would provide enough on Friday to take care of the Sabbath also. They learned that they must prepare everything before the Sabbath, and that no cooking or baking was to be done on the holy day, so that they would be free to worship G-d and study His laws on that day. He who has faith in G-d need not worry about the loss of profit during the day of rest. Besides, the real profit gained through observing the Sabbath day properly is infinitely more than any money given up on account of the holiness of that day.

**TU-BISHVAT**  
**NEW YEAR FOR TREES**  
**Wednesday, February 8**

One of the tractates of the Mishnah is called Rosh Hashanah. The first Mishnah of this section tells us of four "New Years." Two of them are well known: Rosh Hashanah on the first and second days of Tishrei, and Rosh Hashanah for Trees, on the 15th of Shevat.

In ancient days, when our people Israel dwelt in our own land, this day was of great importance for the Jewish fruit-grower. It marked the beginning of a new season for fruit. Fruits grown before the 15th of Shevat were "old fruits"; fruits grown after the 15th of Shevat were "new fruits." This distinction was important when it came to giving away a share of the fruits to the Priests and Levites, in accordance with the commandments of our Torah. The Priests and Levites had no farmland or orchards of their own, for they had to devote all their time to the service of G-d and the teaching of the knowledge of G-d to their people. Therefore, the Torah commanded that a certain portion of the produce of the land be given to them. The fruit grown before the 15th of Shevat, could not be used in lieu of the share to be given away of the new fruits grown the 15th of Shevat. Thus it was made certain that the Priests and Levites received their due share of the fresh fruits of the season.

Nowadays, we observe this day by eating fruit, not forgetting, of course, to make the blessing. It behooves us to eat on this day fruit grown in the Land of Israel, especially fruit which had not been eaten yet in this season, so that the additional blessing "Shehecheyanu" could be made, and grace after eating. By making the blessings, we acknowledge G-d as the Creator, and express to Him our gratitude for His goodness in providing us with our needs. Only when we make a blessing on the fruit, can the tree that has grown it, really feel a pride in its fruit and be satisfied that it has done its duty. For the sake of the blessing that we make over the fruit, G-d will bless the trees with abundant fruit, so that we may all enjoy them.

It is written in the Torah, "For man is like a tree of the field". Our Sages tell us that men are indeed like trees in many respects, and that there are many things which men can learn from trees.

One of the things which we learn from trees is that they always grow; as long as they are alive, they grow. Even in the winter, when trees appear to be asleep, their roots are busy under the soil, long before the fresh leaves and new shoots appear; what appears to be an interruption in the process of growth is only a pause to gather new strength for further growth, to produce new and fresh fruit every year. That is why the world of plants and vegetables is known in Hebrew by the word -- "growing".

If a tree is constantly growing, surely a human being should be constantly growing. A tree can only grow physically, in its roots, stem, branches, leaves and fruits. A child grows both physically and mentally. As he grows physically, getting bigger and stronger, his mind develops; his character develops; he acquires more knowledge, and his daily conduct improves. A time comes when a man stops growing physically, but his mental and spiritual development continues. But young or old, it is not in yards and inches that the real person is measured, but in his progress in learning and in using his knowledge in everyday life and conduct.

For us Jews the real measure is that of advancement in Torah and Mitzvos---these are our roots and fruits. In these we must grow constantly. No matter how fully "grown" we may think ourselves today in matters of Torah and Mitzvos, we must grow at least a little more tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow must be better still. There is always room for improvement, and the time is always ripe for it.

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

#### **Fruit of the Tree**

1. Before eating fruit grown on a tree, the blessing "*Borei Pri Ho'etz*" must be said.
2. Having eaten of the fruit a quantity the size of half an egg or more, grace should be said also after the eating: It begins "*Borei Nefoshos*."
3. If the fruit being eaten is one of the five, by which the Land of Israel was praised, namely: grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates and dates, then having eaten of it the size of half an egg or more, the grace after eating should be "*Al Ho'etz V'al Pree Ho'etz*."
4. If the fruit is eaten during a meal, after which grace will be said in any case, there is no need to say the special grace after the fruit, though the blessing before eating the fruit is said.
5. Before eating of any fruit for the first time in the season, the blessing of "*Shehecheyonu*" must be said before the blessing over the fruit (both blessings before eating).
6. On the 15th of Shevat, Tu Bishvat, (the New Year of the Trees), which occurs this year on Wednesday, February 8, it is customary to eat lots of fruit, especially the kinds with which the Land of Israel was praised namely: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates