

The Narrow Bridge

גשר צר מאוד

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Beshalach

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CELEBRATING SMALL SUCCESSES

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

The occasion of Tu B'Shvat always falls around the time of Shabbat Parshas Beshalach. We must therefore ask ourselves whether this is purely incidental, a random feature of the Jewish calendar, or if perhaps there exists some deep connection between the celebration of Tu B'Shvat and the story told in this *parsha*.

Tu B'Shvat marks the transition point from the dead of winter to the anticipation of springtime. In Israel, it is this time of year when the earliest buds appear on trees. And the Gemara in Maseches Rosh Hashanah (14a) comments that this date was chosen as the "new year for trees" because יצאו רוב גשמי שנה - the majority of the winter rains have already fell, and thus the trees are now nourished from the current year's rains. We might say, then, that the occasion of Tu B'Shvat celebrates nature's triumph, its surviving the harsh winter. As the first buds appear on the trees, and we look forward to the eventual blooming of spring and the emergence of all the produce it brings, we breathe a sigh of relief and feel grateful that the trees have made it through another winter. There is still plenty of winter left, and the trees are still largely bare, but nevertheless, we look at the early budding with joy and gratitude. We celebrate the moment, even as we know that the final goal - the nourishing fruit and vegetation - has yet to be attained.

In Parshas Beshalach, we read of *Bnei Yisrael's* exhilaration after crossing the Yam Suf. After centuries of exile and persecution, and after finding themselves trapped against the ocean, they were, once and for all, free. As the subsequent *pesukim* tell, there were still numerous difficult challenges awaiting them. They would need to deal with the harsh desert conditions, and wage wars against bitter enemies such as Amalek, before reaching the Promised Land. But they paused there on the shore to appreciate and celebrate the moment, to be thankful and gratified over their present triumph, and to give praise to Hashem, singing the שירת הים. There were still long weeks of "winter" ahead, but they celebrated the "buds" of the present moment.

Research has shown that a typical youngster is praised or encouraged approximately 30,000 times in his or her life by the age of 18. However, the vast majority of these praises and words of encouragement are given until the age of 3. Infants receive praise for every developmental "achievement" - for rolling over, for crawling, for speaking, for walking, for being toilet trained.

But later, youngsters seldom receive praise for their small achievements. Too often, praise is reserved for only major accomplishments - for an outstanding grade on an exam, for winning first place in a competition, for going well above and beyond what would normally be expected.

Tu B'Shvat, and the שירת הים, teach us of the importance of celebrating the small successes, the early "buds" that appear well before the final product is ready. We should praise our children even for the small successes, for their minor accomplishments.

And for ourselves, too, we should pause and feel gratified over whatever small successes that we achieve, in whatever area of life it is.

Whether it's getting up on time for *minyan* one morning after weeks of struggle, getting through a difficult *daf* of Gemara, losing a couple of pounds, or any other small achievement - we should accustom ourselves to celebrating, even as we acknowledge the long journey that still lies ahead.

Indeed, every year we hold a festive event, Simchas Torah, to celebrate the completion of the annual Torah reading cycle. After learning just a single *masechta*, we hold a joyous *siyum* celebration, even though there is still so much left to learn. In fact, Rav Moshe Feinstein *paskened* that a person who has just begun learning Gemara and exerted a great deal of work and effort to complete just a single *daf*, can celebrate a *siyum*.

We should not wait until reaching the finish line to celebrate. Instead, we should feel genuine joy and satisfaction over every small success we achieve - and this will encourage and motivate us to continue onward to the next step, to the next goal, to the next step in our journey toward excellence.

EQUIPPED FOR THE CHALLENGE

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"And it was when Pharaoh sent the people that G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Pelishtim, although it was nearby, for G-d said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt.'" (13:17)

Why does the Torah use the word ויהי when describing *yetzias Mitzrayim* if the word ויהי has negative connotations (Megillah 10b)?

The word ויהי has negative connotations because the word יהי is future tense, "it will be," and the letter ו, when used as a prefix, changes the tense from future to past; hence ויהי, "and it was." When the future looks so bleak that you want it to be in the past, that is something negative.

The opposite is the word והיה, "and it will be," where the word היה is past tense and the prefix ו changes it into the future; hence והיה, "and it will be." When the past was so good that you wish it to be repeated in the future, that is positive.

So, what negative aspect of ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם is being alluded to with the use of the word ויהי?

The Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yehudah Zev Segal, explains that we see that Hashem took *Bnei Yisrael* on a circular route so that they should not become disheartened if they should have to fight a war. It is axiomatic that Hashem never gives us a challenge that we cannot overcome (Avodah Zarah 3a).

If the straight path would lead us to war, and Hashem didn't lead us on that path because it would be too difficult for us, it means that the circular path was one on which we could overcome any obstacle that would be placed in our way, and it would not be too difficult for us.

There would be challenges, but ones we would be able to overcome, because challenges by definition are conquerable.

So, if we went on the circular path, it meant that we could overcome any challenge we'd encounter, and yet we find that *Bnei Yisrael* nonetheless often complained to Hashem.

Several times, they complained about the lack of water; they grumbled about the lack of meat, so Hashem sent the quail, etc. *Bnei Yisrael* did not seem to overcome the challenges that were presented to them.

That is why the verse states, ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם. The Jews were led out of Egypt in a way that showed that Hashem is looking after them and does not challenge them with a challenge they cannot overcome. However, they did not understand this and complained, hence ויהי. (L'titecha Elyon, p. 225)

SUSTAINED BY FAITH

Reb Yitzchak of Vorka

"And it was when Pharaoh sent the people that G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Pelishtim, although it was nearby, for G-d said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt.'" (13:17)

It can be very difficult, with the human mind, to comprehend all the persecutions and other difficulties the Jews had to withstand.

It is the faith in G-d, "Who gives strength to the weary," that sustains the Jews in the Diaspora.

ROUNDABOUT PATH

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And it was when Pharaoh sent the people that G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Pelishtim, although it was nearby, for G-d said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt.'" (13:17)

Pelishtim (פלשתים, Philistines) is similar to *mephulash* (מפולש, opened), which refers to G-d opening up and revealing His light.

When a person leaves behind his material life in search of G-dliness, G-d's light will be too great for him to receive and absorb it all at once.

Therefore, he must go "around" the "*Pelishtim*" - i.e., take a circular rather than a direct route to reach his intended goal. In this way, he will be able to enter the "Holy Land" - to enter holiness. (Likutey Halakhot VI, p. 78)

The path to the Holy Land - to holiness - is fraught with obstacles. A person must learn to overcome his doubts and confusions and clarify his intentions and goals. Then he merits to enter into holiness. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 232)

PROTECTED BY THE RIGHTEOUS

Chasam Sofer

"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt. Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him." (13:18-19)

The verse states that the Jewish people were armed when they left Egypt. What exactly were their weapons?

Yosef's remains, which they took with them, for a righteous man's merit serves as a shield for his people and "the righteous are even greater in death than they were in life."

ARMED FOR BATTLE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt." (13:18)

Although the Jews were leaving Egypt unchallenged, they took weapons with them, for their redemption was not yet complete. They would have to face other enemies in their journey to the Promised Land and conquest of it.

In contrast, after the Messianic Redemption, no nations will oppose goodness and justice. Therefore, the whole world "will beat their swords into ploughshares" (Yeshayahu 2:4) for there will be no more need for weaponry.

The same difference applies to the spiritual dynamics of the Egyptian and Messianic redemptions, respectively. At the Exodus from Egypt, evil was temporarily subjugated, but it continued to exist. It was therefore necessary for the Jewish people to be "armed" spiritually as well as physically - to be on guard against evil and wary of it. This will continue to be the case until the final Redemption. Goodness does sometimes gain the upper hand, but caution against evil is always necessary. Only in the Messianic Era will G-d "wipe the spirit of evil off the face of the earth" (Zechariah 13:2), fully refining the world and transforming it into good. There will then no longer be any need for spiritual "weaponry" either.

In the meantime, as we continue to contend with evil, our awareness that the battle will soon be won keeps us inspired and properly directed. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5716, pp. 537, 542) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

EMULATING THE LEADER

Toras HaMoreh V'HaTalmid

"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt. Moshe took Yosef's bones with him." (13:18-19)

The Hebrew term *atzmos* (remains; lit., "bones") is related to *atzmius*, the Hebrew for "essence" or "(good) character traits." Hence, the *pasuk* can be interpreted to mean that Moshe took "with him" the good qualities of Yosef, learning from Yosef's example how to lead a people and satisfy them in times of hunger.

IT'S ALL HASHEM

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt." (13:18)

Our translation follows that of Rashi, who renders מושיׁם as "armed," but this leaves us with the question of why the Jews took weapons with them. Since they had benefited from so many outstanding miracles until now, surely they could rely on Hashem to protect them even if they did not have weapons.

From this, however, we can learn a fundamental principle that applies to every aspect of life:

One should not think that a miracle consists simply of doing nothing and watching his enemies fall before him. Instead, one must know that however much effort is put into accomplishing one's goals, and however much success his efforts appear to bring him, it is really Hashem Who does everything. In any battle one fights, Hashem is the only Warrior and the only Victor.

This, then, explains the seeming paradox that the Jews took weapons with them into the Wilderness but so little food.

Even though they trusted in Hashem to protect them, they still had to make a show of defending themselves and for this they needed weapons. As to food, however, they knew they could not hope to bring enough food to sustain them through the long trek across the desert, and they had no choice but to expect that once their food ran out, Hashem would feed them through miracles.

Therefore, they opted to take nothing, except for the remnants of the matzah they had baked, and that only as a precious reminder of the *mitzvah* they had been given to do.

ESSENCE OF OUTREACH

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt. Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him." (13:18-19)

The Hebrew word for "bone" (*etzem*) also means "essence." The Jewish people were about to embark on a journey through a desert whose barrenness and perils were a reflection of its spiritual desolation. In order to be able to survive this journey, Moshe ensured that the Jewish people were accompanied by the essence and spirit of Yosef.

Yosef's essence is expressed in his name, which means "May He add," for when he was born, his mother Rochel prayed, "May G-d add for me another son" (Bereishis 30:24).

This wish includes the desire to welcome the estranged Jew back into the fold. In a more general sense, it includes the desire to transform all mundane reality into the vehicle for holiness it was originally intended to be.

The odyssey of exile is likened to a journey through a barren, perilous desert (see Yechezkel 20:35). In order for us to persevere through periods of spiritual desolation, we must take our cue from Yosef's essence. We must strive to bring even the most distant and rebellious individuals back to the fold, showing them that they are truly G-d's beloved children.

When we remain true to this objective, we are assured that in the end, no Jew will be left behind. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 85-89) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

WEAPONS OF FAITH

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

"And the Children of Israel were armed when they went up from Egypt. Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him." (13:18-19)

In the beginning of Parshas Beshalach, the Torah tells us that *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt armed. According to one interpretation brought by Rashi, this means that the nation was armed.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the Rosh Yeshiva of Brisk, explains that this should not be taken literally, to mean that *Bnei Yisrael*, who had just been freed from centuries of slavery, had weapons with them. Rather, this description of *Bnei Yisrael* must be read in conjunction with the next *pasuk*: ויקח משה את עצמות יוסף עמו - Moshe took Yosef's remains (literally, "bones" - עצמות) with him out of Egypt, in fulfillment of the promise that Yosef's brothers made to him, that they would bring his remains to Eretz Yisrael. The word עצמות can be read as עצמיות - Yosef's essence. When *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt, they brought with them the inspiring model set by Yosef, who was taken to Egypt as a slave at the age of seventeen, and yet managed to retain his piety, his commitment to his beliefs and ideals. Yosef serves as an inspiring example of resilience, of strength, of resisting temptation and negative influences, of unshakable devotion to Hashem. This essence of Yosef accompanied *Bnei Yisrael* as they left Egypt, and this has remained with our nation throughout the millennia ever since.

Rav Soloveitchik explains that this is the "weapon" that *Bnei Yisrael* took with them from Egypt. The greatest weapon in our national arsenal is the עצמות יוסף, the steadfast faith and commitment which Yosef displayed, as did countless generations of righteous Jews throughout the ages.

Of course, we need to take appropriate measures for our physical safety. We need, love, support and pray for the brave soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces. At the same time, however, our most powerful "weapon" that has enabled us to survive for thousands of years is the עצמות יוסף, the essence of Yosef, our unbreakable *emunah* and unwavering commitment to Torah.

THE TZADDIK'S TORAH

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Moshe took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the Children of Israel swear, saying, 'G-d will surely remember you, and you shall bring my bones up from here with you.'" (13:19)

Two arks traveled side by side in the desert: the Ark with the Tablets and the ark (i.e., coffin) of Yosef. (Tanchuma, Beshalach 2)

Moshe, who brought the Tablets down from Har Sinai, represents the Torah. Yosef represents the *tzaddik*. Each is dependent on the other. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 65a)

TZADDIK REQUIRED

Rebbe Nachman

"Moshe took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the Children of Israel swear, saying, 'G-d will surely remember you, and you shall bring my bones up from here with you.'" (13:19)

Moshe represents *da'as* (higher perception). Yosef corresponds to the *tzaddik*. This indicates that a person's mind is incomplete without the counsel of the *tzaddik*. (See Likutey Moharan I, 211)

HUMBLE ESSENCE

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

"Moshe took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the Children of Israel swear, saying, 'G-d will surely remember you, and you shall bring my bones up from here with you.'" (13:19)

This verse seems to lessen the significance of Moshe's *mitzvah* by suggesting that he was forced to bring Yosef's bones since the Jews had sworn not to leave Egypt without them. If Moshe was only doing what he had to do, then, why did the Sages (Mishnah Sotah 1:9) say that it was the merit of this *mitzvah* that won for Moshe the unique honor of being buried by Hashem personally?

It seems, therefore, that this passage is not intended to tell us about Moshe's *mitzvah*, but rather to explain why Yosef merited to have Moshe himself attend to his remains.

Certainly, Yosef did not suspect that later generations would be so ungrateful as to ignore his wishes. The Sages (Sotah 13b) made this point by asking, "Would Israel not have attended to Yosef had it not been for Moshe," implying that it is wrong to harbor such a suspicion. But if Yosef was so certain that he could rely on them, why did he have to adjure them?

The answer is that Yosef was so humble that it never occurred to him that Israel owed him any gratitude for doing what was, after all, just what he had been sent to Egypt to do; it was his humility that made him feel it was necessary to make them swear to attend to his remains.

In return for this humility, Yosef had the honor of having his remains personally transported by the Jews' great liberator himself, who was also his equal in humility and who may, indeed, have learned his humility from none other than Yosef. Thus, the Sages (Sotah 20:2) say that Moshe took Yosef's עצמות, his "essence" - meaning his humility - עמו, "with him" - to be a part of his own character, and indeed to surpass Yosef in this trait.

Thus, far from lessening the worth of Moshe's *mitzvah*, this passage reveals Yosef's greatness that earned for him the merit of having his remains transported by the Jews' great leader and liberator.

It also shows us Moshe's humility, for which he merited to be buried by Hashem Himself.

HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

“Speak to the Children of Israel and let them turn back and encamp in front of Pi HaChiros - between the Migdol and the sea - in front of Baal Tzefon; you shall encamp opposite it, by the sea.” (14:2)

Throughout the entire time in the desert, the Jewish People unquestionably followed the Clouds of Glory. Yet, in this instance, Hashem instructs Moshe to inform the Nation where they are heading. Why specifically now was there a need to notify them of their destination?

Rav Shteinman suggests that the purpose of telling them where they were headed was really only in order to explain *why* they were heading there. Specifically, since their route appeared to lead them back toward Egypt, this could have led the Jewish People to a moment of panic and despair. Therefore, Moshe was instructed to inform the Jewish People where they were headed and for what purpose - namely, to entice Pharaoh to chase after them, but not to return to the place of their subjugation (Rashi).

Although their confusion would have only been short-lived, Hashem did not allow them to experience even a moment of anguish.

Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz possessed this degree of sensitivity - avoiding unnecessary pain of others even for a moment. One example of this occurred when he stood up in the middle of a Rosh Yeshiva's discourse, placed his hat on the *shtender*, and walked out of the room. Sitting in the front row, this strange display was witnessed by everyone present who were even more confused when the Rav returned a few minutes later, sat down, and returned his hat to his head.

Later, when the Rav's behavior was questioned by his close students, he answered that the reason he left the room was because he needed to use the facilities. But he was concerned that if the Rosh Yeshiva saw him leaving, he would perhaps think that Rav Baruch Ber did not value what was being said. And even though Rav Baruch Ber would have returned a few minutes later, demonstrating that this was not the case, for those few moments the Rosh Yeshiva may have been hurt.

“Therefore,” concluded Rav Baruch Ber, “knowing that I always wear my hat, it would have been clear to the Rosh Yeshiva that not only was I not going far, but I was planning to return very soon!”

If we have ever been upset or embarrassed by others, we know that regardless of whether the act was corrected at a later time, the pain we experienced at that moment was very real. And even when the entire episode was shown to be a misunderstanding, it still takes significant effort to heal our emotional wounds.

Consequently, we must be so careful when it comes to others' feelings: not just to treat people kindly, but to enhance our sensitivity to their concerns and apprehensions.

MAINTAINING OUR DIGNITY

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“And the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned regarding the people, and they said, ‘What is this that we have done that we have sent away Yisrael from serving us?’” (14:5)

After the Jews left Egypt, Pharaoh and his people had a change of heart, proclaiming, “What have we done, that we sent the Jews from serving us?” (14:5). How could they possibly regret releasing the Jewish people, especially after all their suffering from the plagues inflicted on them? Rashi attributes the Egyptians' change of heart to all the gold and silver that they lent the Jews before they left. Wouldn't losing slaves be more financially disastrous than a few pieces of jewelry? Why are the Egyptians focused on all the wrong reasons?

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig suggests that the Torah's insight into human psychology might explain the Egyptians' behavior. When a person realizes that they've acted foolishly, they will go to great lengths to save their self-respect. Pharaoh and his people literally drove themselves to death because of their poor self-esteem. Our self-worth and dignity often dictate our actions, whether we realize it or not, and our *parashah* highlights the value and need for proper self-awareness and good mental health for us all.

STAGES OF REDEMPTION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Egypt pursued them and overtook them, encamped by the sea - all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and army - by Pi HaChiros before Baal Tzefon.” (14:9)

The Exodus from Egypt was only a partial redemption, since the Jewish people had not fully eradicated and transformed the evil within them. Hence, the Egyptians - the physical manifestation of their inner drive for materiality - could still pursue them.

We continue this struggle toward redemption from materiality. This battle is waged in stages, for attempting to completely transform and rehabilitate evil all at once can be overwhelming and may lead to failure.

Rather, we begin with a theoretical but absolute rejection of evil - even if that means fleeing from it. Afterwards, we refine ourselves step by step.

For this reason, when the Messianic redemption occurs, it will not be necessary to flee. The redemption will be the result of our struggles and achievements to refine ourselves and the world throughout the long years of history. Therefore, physical matter itself will have been prepared and readied for elevation and there will be no danger of it “pursuing” us. (Tanya, chapter 31; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5737, p. 193; Hitva'aduyot 5744, vol. 3, p. 1511) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

PURSUED BY CULTURE

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

"Egypt pursued them and overtook them..." (14:9)

Pharaoh changed his mind, yet again, after allowing *Bnei Yisrael* to leave, and he mobilized an army to chase them. The Torah tells, וירדפו מצרים אחריהם - "Egypt pursued them" (14:9).

It is perhaps worth noting that the Torah speaks not of the Egyptians (מצריים) pursuing *Bnei Yisrael*, but rather of "Egypt" (מצרים) chasing after them. Surprisingly, the Torah mentions the country, the nation, rather than the Egyptian troops.

I would humbly suggest that the Torah might be alluding to an additional threat that *Bnei Yisrael* faced at that time. They were pursued not only by Pharaoh's army, but also by "Egypt," by everything the country represented - its paganism, its moral depravity, its debased lifestyle. After having spent over 200 years in Egypt, *Bnei Yisrael* needed to break themselves free from this influence, from the values and beliefs in which they had been submerged for generations. And so, as they left Egypt, they were chased by מצרים, by the culture and lifestyle to which they had grown accustomed.

Baruch Hashem, we are not "pursued" by people. Even with the troubling rise of anti-Semitism in recent years, we generally live in peace and security, without anybody threatening us. We are, however, "pursued" by the United States, by American culture, by our society's beliefs, values and norms. Even as committed, observant Jews, the influence of "מצרים," of the surrounding culture, threatens to distort our priorities and lead us to compromise our principles.

The Orthodox Jewish world is plagued by many of the same ills that affects the rest of American society, such as the obsession with materialism, superficiality, superstition, and so much more. We must be wary of the values and lifestyles that are "chasing" after us, and always remember that we are to abide by the Torah's principles and ideals, without ever abandoning them in favor of those of American society.

GOING BEYOND NATURE

Reb Michel of Zlotchev

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

When we serve Hashem according to our nature, Hashem leads us according to the rules of nature. But when we go beyond our nature, Hashem reciprocates and performs miracles for us beyond the limitations of nature.

When the Jewish nation were at the seashore, they served Hashem with *mesirus nefesh* beyond their nature making them worthy of *krias Yam Suf*.

BROUGHT CLOSE BY FEAR

Zohar

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

When the Jews are in distress, they remind themselves of the existence of Hashem. They cry out to Him in prayer and the Almighty has mercy on them and punishes the enemy.

That is what occurred at that time. They stood in front of the sea and saw its waves going higher and higher. They turned around, saw the Egyptian army and its arsenal coming toward them, and became frightened. At that point, they remembered Hashem and "cried out to Him."

Who caused them to get close to Hashem? "And Pharaoh brought himself close." (Zohar 47)

POWER OF DESIRE

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

The Torah records the regret that Pharaoh and the Egyptians felt after having freed the Jewish people from Mitzrayim. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky (Emes L'Yaakov) wonders how the Egyptians could have such short-term memory loss.

Did they forget about the *makkos*? Didn't they remember the destruction of their homeland culminating with the death of all the firstborns? How could Pharaoh and the Egyptians have possibly forgotten about all of their suffering and instead regret letting the Jewish people go?

Rav Yaakov explains that the Torah is teaching us that when a person has an intense desire to do something negative it can corrupt their ability to make logical and reasonable decisions. While it is clear to any observer that the Egyptians' pursuit of *Bnei Yisrael* was a poor decision, their relentless yearning to enslave the Jewish people prevented them from recognizing their ultimate demise. Essentially, their will to harm *Bnei Yisrael* overpowered their ability to see things clearly.

If this is true when it comes to doing something negative, the same is certainly true when wanting to do something positive. If a person really wants to accomplish something, nothing can stop them. "When there's a will, there's a way."

We must do our part to channel our motivations and determinations and not allow anything to stand in our way. Let us identify positive goals for ourselves and ensure that we fulfill them. With this attitude, we are sure to achieve great things and improve the world around us.

AFTER TROUBLE STRIKES

Avnei Ezel

“And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d.” (14:10)

Pharaoh drew Israel toward repentance. (Midrash)

The threat of annihilation at the hands of Pharaoh’s host put the fear of G-d into them, arousing them to repentance. The fact that it took Pharaoh and his army to make them repent and they had not done so earlier struck fear into the Jews’ hearts. They “cried out to Hashem” at the thought that they had repented only when they saw Pharaoh and his army in hot pursuit behind them.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTH

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelewitz

“And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d.” (14:10)

The same principle applies to each person in his battle against the evil inclination. If a person views himself as inferior and feels excessive guilt, he will not even try to fight against his negative impulses. Since he does not believe in himself and his abilities, he feels utterly discouraged.

Our task is to view ourselves in an elevated manner. Internalize the knowledge that you have great potential. Be aware of your strengths and know that when you are resolved to be victorious over your impulses, you will succeed.

CAPITALIZING ON CHALLENGES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“And when Pharaoh drew near...” (14:10)

The Midrash offers another interpretation: By chasing them, Pharaoh drew the Jews nearer to G-d, as evidenced by their crying out to Him when they saw the Egyptian army approaching. Indeed, it is often opposition that awakens our deepest reserves of energy.

When we are confronted with a challenge, we should view it as an opportunity for spiritual growth rather than try to avoid it. Comfort and contentment can cause us to lose sight of priorities, weakening our sense of urgency in our Divine mission. Physical or spiritual adversity can shock us out of this indifference, undermining our self-assurance and affording us the opportunity to advance in our relationship with G-d by breaking through the obstacle. (Torah Ohr 61c; Sefer HaMa’amarim 5721, pp. 257-258) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

PRAYERS CARRY WEIGHT

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d.” (14:10)

A poor and disheveled woman walked into a grocery store. She approached the owner of the store behind the counter in a most humble manner and asked if he would allow her to charge a few groceries.

She softly explained that her husband was very ill and unable to work, she had seven children and they needed food. She would do whatever it took to pay him back if he would just allow her to buy on credit this time.

The grocer, a big gruff man, scoffed at her request and suggested that she leave his store if she lacked the money. Visualizing her family’s needs, she pleaded again. “Please, sir, I will bring you the money as soon as I get it.” The grocer was not the compassionate sort and threatened to have her forcibly removed if she did not leave on her own. The woman was crestfallen and looked around the store for assistance of any kind.

A well-to-do customer who overheard the conversation said that he would cover the cost of whatever she needed. But the grocer decided to have a little fun first.

“Alright. I’ll tell you what,” he said to her, “put your grocery list on the scale and whatever your list weighs, I will give you that amount in food.”

The woman at first didn’t understand. But after considering it over for a moment, she reached into her purse, took out a piece of paper and scribbled something on it. She then laid the piece of paper on the scale carefully with her head bowed.

The grocer stared in amazement as the scales tipped and remained down. He had no choice but to put the groceries on the other side of the scale. The scales did not balance, and he continued to put more and more groceries on until the scales could hold no more. And it still wouldn’t balance!

Finally, he grabbed the piece of paper off the scales and looked at it with wide eyes. It was not a grocery list at all; it was actually a prayer which read, “Please Hashem, You know my needs and I am leaving this in Your hands.”

The stunned grocer gave her the groceries and stood in awed silence as she thanked him and left the store. The wealthy customer handed him a fifty-dollar bill and said, “This should cover it. And believe me, it was worth every penny!”

It wasn’t until later that day that the burly grocer discovered that his scale was actually broken and only one side would go down. But he did understand, all too well, that only Hashem knows the full weight of a heartfelt prayer!

ONE NATION, ONE SOUL

Avnei Nezer

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

The Hebrew word for "were advancing" is singular to demonstrate that the Egyptians were marching with one mind and as one person. (Rashi)

In the case of the Jews ("and there Israel encamped" - Shemos 19:2), Rashi comments "as one person and with one mind" - the reverse of his statement that the Egyptians were pursuing the Jews "with one mind and as one person."

This reversal indicates that by nature the Jews are as "one person" and their shortcoming is only that they still do not act "with one mind." Other nations, by contrast, are disunited by nature, and it is only when they join "with one mind" in a concerted effort for the sake of working for one cause that they become as one person.

REVEALING OUR INNER RESOLVE

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"Behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

When the Children of Israel saw the sacrifices the Egyptians made to pursue them, they cried out to Hashem to grant them the strength of purpose to combat that of the Egyptians.

Hashem responded by saying, "Go forth" into the sea and that will show your intent and strength to sacrifice your lives. That in itself will show your power.

DAILY MIRACLES

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"Behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

There are different types of miracles that Hashem performs for the Jews.

One type occurs when the Jews cry out in prayer and supplication, as at the *Yam Suf*.

Then there are miracles that are performed without the Jews' knowledge. They are not aware of the problem and do not plead or cry out. It is not until after the catastrophe that the realization comes that Hashem has performed a miracle. These miracles are daily occurrences.

SEA OF CONFUSION

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

Each and every person will find himself in the same predicament throughout his lifetime. Spiritual exile corresponds to "Egypt" and the willingness to draw close to G-d represents one's personal exodus from impurity to purity. A person wants to serve G-d, he wants to cross the sea of barriers before him. But the barriers are many and he feels closed in on all sides. The only solution is to cry out to G-d.

The waters of the sea stand before us, threatening to engulf us. Evil thoughts abound, threatening to overwhelm us. But the Jews who had faith and trust in G-d went into the waters - they faced those thoughts, doubts and confusions head on, and the waters split for them. In the same way, the "waters" will open for anyone who wishes to draw close to G-d. (Likutey Halakhot V, p. 131a-132a)

NO MORE RUNNING

Baal Shem Tov

"And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d." (14:10)

Leaving Egypt was insufficient, because Egypt came out with them. To what is this comparable? To one who relocates in order to flee internal pain or distress, only to discover that wherever he goes, his internal condition accompanies him. It is like a woman hoping to quiet her labor pains by hurrying to a different location, only to realize that the pain is still with her.

Rather, our only solution is to cry out to G-d and ask Him to remove the cause of our suffering, as it is stated, "From the straits [*meitzar*] I called G-d: G-d answered me with a vast expanse" (Tehillim 118:5).

This is the deeper significance of the verse, "The Egyptians were advancing after them." Mitzrayim, Egypt, is related to meitzarim, troubles and distress, which like the Egyptians, tend to follow a person who attempts only a physical escape.

Recognizing this truth, The Children of Israel cried out to G-d, praying for a permanent solution. They were subsequently informed, "As you have seen the Egyptians today, you shall no longer continue to see them for eternity" (ibid., v. 13), meaning, the troubles that you experience at present will be permanently solved.

BATTLING BASENESS

Reb Chanoch of Alexander

“And when Pharaoh drew near, the Children of Israel lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians were advancing after them. They were very frightened, and the Children of Israel cried out to G-d.” (14:10)

While the Children of Israel were in Egypt, they were surrounded by wickedness and disgraceful values. At the sea, they saw a base people coming at them. They had hoped that when Hashem took them out of Egypt, all that had been done away with. However, they realized that that part of their lives might not be over and so they “cried out to G-d.”

Moshe said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of Hashem that He will perform for you today; for that which you have seen in Egypt today, you shall not see them ever again!” (14:13).

That means that Hashem would help destroy the baseness that had been carried with them. “Hashem will do battle on your behalf, and you shall remain silent” (14:14).

WATCHING WITH CONFIDENCE

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“Moshe said to the people, ‘Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of Hashem that He will perform for you today; for that which you have seen Egypt today, you shall not see them ever again!’” (14:13)

This week’s *parashah*, Beshalach, is filled with miracles, transitions, and complaints.

The Jewish people’s inaugural complaint involves their fear of being overrun by the pursuing Egyptian army, to which Moshe responds, “Stand firm and watch...” how G-d will save us (14:13).

The word used to instruct the Jews to stand firm is “*hityatzvu*,” a word seldom used in the Torah. Why would it be important for us to stand firm while G-d fights our battle, and what’s the significance of that special word?

Rabbi Forman explains that the word “*hityatzvu*” was used when Miriam stood watching him by the river to see what would happen to Moshe. Her actions demonstrated her trust that things would work out despite the perilous risk to Moshe’s life.

There’s a difference between mindlessly observing something and knowingly watching while having strong conviction about a certain outcome. Moshe’s message was not only to have faith in Hashem but to teach the Jewish People to have steadfast faith in the result.

When we encounter struggles in life, G-d reminds us, through one word, to have not only faith but also belief that G-d will help us through them. Just watch.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Reb Dovid of Chernobyl

“Hashem will do battle for you, and you shall remain silent.” (14:14)

This is a reference to our decorum in the synagogue. G-d will do battle with Satan for you on the condition that, at the time for prayer, in the synagogue, you will conduct yourselves properly and not speak unnecessarily.

POWERFUL SACRIFICE

Avnei Nezer

“Hashem will do battle for you, and you shall remain silent.” (14:14)

When the Jews prepared to leave Egypt, they were required to perform a commandment, namely, to slaughter the Paschal lamb. But when they came to the *Yam Suf* they were not required to carry out any activity but only to remain silent. This teaches us that when the spirit of self-sacrifice for G-d is present, nothing else is needed. The strength and merit deriving from that spirit are more effective than any action.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey!” (14:15)

According to the Midrash (Mechilta, Beshalach 5; Sotah 37a), the sea had not yet split when G-d told the Jews to enter it. The people hesitated until the prince of the tribe of Yehudah, Nachshon son of Aminadav, jumped in. Only then did G-d tell Moshe to raise his hand and split the sea.

Nachshon knew that G-d had instructed the people to travel to Har Sinai to receive the Torah. He was therefore unfazed by obstacles. If he had to jump into the sea in order to reach Har Sinai, so be it. Thus, in his merit, the sea split.

Nowadays, as well, we have been informed that since we stand at the threshold of the Messianic Redemption, our sole task is to proceed forward toward that goal. If it appears to us that obstacles still remain, let us learn from Nachshon to proceed nonetheless; in this merit, the obstacles will disappear. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 135-136) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

STEADY PROGRESSION

Mishmeres Itmar

“Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey!” (14:15)

This is a lesson in spirituality. One should not remain on one level but must constantly reach for higher goals.

HASHEM IS READY TO HELP

Kozhnitzer Rebbe

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey!'" (14:15)

The first letters of the Hebrew words spell out the word *emes*, "truth." Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me?" - you know the truth that I am ready to help.

"Speak unto the Children of Israel" - ask them if they are ready to help themselves, and salvation will automatically come to them.

PUTTING IN THE EFFORT

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Lift up your staff and stretch out your arm over the sea and split it." (14:16)

The splitting of the *Yam Suf* was a miraculous and supernatural event. Yet there had to be a natural action to "ignite" the miracle: G-d instructed the people to journey forward and Moshe to lift his staff over the water. G-d always demands some human act first and only then does He perform miracles.

This is because events that occur without our involvement do not truly affect us. Only when we expend some effort do we appreciate G-d's miracle. The same applies in all areas of life. Asking for G-d's blessings is not sufficient; we must make some effort that can serve as a conduit for the blessing. (Hitva'aduyot 5742, vol. 2, pp. 561-562) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

ABHORRING ARROGANCE

Reb Chanoch of Alexander

"Lift up your staff and stretch out your arm over the sea and split it." (14:16)

The Almighty abhors arrogance. The Midrash relates that when Moshe and the Children of Israel came to the sea, Moshe asked the sea to split. The sea said with a sense of arrogance, "I am older than you, for I was created before you." At that point, G-d became annoyed and said to Moshe, "Lift up your staff and split the sea."

SURPASSING THE ANGELS

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev

"The angel of G-d who had been going in front of the camp of Yisrael moved and went behind them." (14:19)

As is known, on account of their holiness, angels are more exalted than the Jewish people. But when G-d shows the Jewish nation His love, they are loftier than the angels.

At the splitting of the *Yam Suf*, G-d expressed His love for the Jewish people despite their flaws, and in this sense the Jewish people surpassed the angels.

This is the deeper meaning of the verse "The angel of G-d who had been going in front of the camp moved and went behind them." This alludes to the fact that the angels, who normally stood on a higher spiritual rung than the Jewish people, stood lower than them at the splitting of the *Yam Suf*, since there G-d demonstrated His love for the Jewish people.

TRANSFORMING DARKNESS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And there were the cloud and the darkness - and it lit up the night..." (14:20)

The words "it lit up the night" imply that the darkness itself became a source of illumination. (Yom Tov Shel Rosh HaShanah 5666, p. 227; BeShaah SheHikdimus 5672, vol. 2, pp. 934-942, vol. 3, pp. 1323-1328)

Spiritual darkness - the apparent absence of Divine revelation and clarity - exists only from our limited perspective. From G-d's perspective, "night is as bright as day, and darkness as light" (Tehillim 139:12). Darkness is a challenge we are meant to overcome and thereby reap the benefits that are gained by overcoming it.

One way we can approach this challenge is to ignore the darkness by focusing on the light. This will dispel the darkness, even if it is seemingly much greater than the little light we possess. This strategy will suffice to carry us through the dark periods of life.

But the ultimate objective is not merely to dispel the darkness but to transform it into light, by turning its negativity into a positive force in our lives. When we succeed in this, the resultant light is infinitely brighter than the light that was shining all along. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

WHEN TO CELEBRATE

Yeshuas Malko

"The camps did not approach each other all that night." (14:20)

The ministering angels wanted to sing a hymn. But the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: "Do you want to sing a hymn while the work of My hands is drowning in the sea?" (Talmud Bavli, Arachin)

While an operation is being performed on someone who is dangerously ill no hymns are sung, because the operation, although it is necessary, is always dangerous. Only when it has been successfully completed may we rejoice. In this vein, G-d said to the ministering angels:

"Now, while the work of My hands is in the sea, there is certainly no cause for rejoicing. It had to be done for evil cannot go unpunished, but it is painful to Me and it would be wrong to sing hymns of praise now. Only after the operation has been completed, when the wicked have all been destroyed, may you rejoice at the victory won for justice and righteousness."

NO SONG FOR THEM

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"It came between the Egyptian camp and the camp of Yisrael... The camps did not approach each other all that night." (14:20)

The simple understanding of this *pasuk* is that the camp of the advancing Egyptians was unable to draw close to the camp of Bei Yisrael. The Gemara (Megillah 10b), however, through a homiletic interpretation of the word "*karav*," describes a different scenario whereby the angels in Heaven were unable to "offer up" (*l'hakriv*) special praises: "The Heavenly angels desired to sing praises. Said the Holy One Blessed Be He, 'The works of My hand are drowning in the sea, and you want to say praises?'"

We find, though, that in later years, the soldiers of the wicked general Sancherev perished as a result of Hashem, "opening up their ears, (whereby) they heard the song of the Chayos and died" (Sanhedrin 95b). Why did these soldiers die in this "exalted" manner while the Egyptians suffered an ignoble death? Furthermore, why were the holy Chayos permitted to sing during the time of Sancherev, whereas they were forbidden to do so at the time of the Splitting of the Sea?

The answer, as presented in the name of the great R' Shmuel Shmelka Hurvitz of Nickolsburg zt'l, is that although the angels really intended to destroy the vast army and myriad chariots of Pharaoh by the pure holiness and intensely divine sweetness of their angelic voices, Hashem did not want the Egyptians to get off so easily. He told them, "The works of My Hand are drowning in the sea" - a reference to the thousands of precious Jewish baby boys, who were brutally drowned in the waters of the Nile as a result of Pharaoh's wicked decree - "and you want to say *shirah*?" - and you wish to let them die peacefully with your songs? No, said Hashem, I have much worse in store for them. They will receive their punishment, measure for measure, dying a horrible death by tossing and turning and drowning in the sea.

EFFORTLESS EARNINGS

Rebbe Nachman

"Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and Hashem moved the sea with a strong east wind all the night, and He turned the sea to damp land, and the waters split." (14:21)

Earning a livelihood is as difficult as the Splitting of the Sea (Pesachim 118a). But when a person engages in honest business dealings, he can earn a living easily.

Having tuned into the resonance of "love," this Jew is also in tune with the unforced dynamic of the sea as it returns to its natural state. Therefore he, too, can earn a living in an effortless, unforced manner. (See Likutey Moharan I, 210)

"Towards morning, the sea returned to its strength" (Shemos 14:27) - "morning" corresponds to Avraham, and thus to kindness and love. When a religious Jew engages in business honestly, he fulfills the *mitzvah* to "Love G-d" (Devarim 6:5) in the sense that he "makes G-d beloved to others," since they associate his religiosity with ethical behavior (Yoma 86a).

INGRAINED GRATITUDE

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"And the waters split." (14:21)

As Moshe raises his hand over the sea to split it (14:21), the Midrash tells us that the waters split after seeing Yosef's remains. If the sea was ordered to split, why would it only split after it saw Yosef's remains?

The K'sav Sofer explains that, theoretically, G-d could have created a miracle by having the Jews defeat them in battle. However, having been guests in Egypt many years earlier, the Jewish people owed the Egyptians gratitude for their initial hospitality. The proof that Jews are motivated by gratitude can be found in the story of Yosef and Potiphar's wife. Yosef could have easily overpowered her and taken back his garment, but that would have disrespected Potiphar's wife. Yosef was willing to take the fall because he was grateful for her hospitality in bringing him into her home.

Yosef's behavior shows us that Jews are naturally grateful - which leads to many appropriate responses and actions - which enabled the sea to accommodate them when the Jews needed the help and a quality that continues to empower us today.

PLEADING FOR SALVATION

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and Hashem moved the sea with a strong east wind all the night, and He turned the sea to damp land, and the waters split." (14:21)

The sea saw and fled. (Tehillim 114:3)

What did the sea see? The coffin of Yosef. (Bereishis Rabbah 87:8)

The entire night that the Jews waited by the sea, the prosecuting angels disparaged them to G-d, claiming they weren't worthy of salvation. Only in the morning, when the sea saw the coffin of Yosef, did it split before the Jews. In other words, the merits of the Patriarchs caused the sea to split. Yet these merits were well-known even at night, so why didn't the sea split then?

The answer is that G-d waited the entire night for the Jews to express themselves before Him in prayer. When they finally began to beseech G-d in the morning, He answered them.

So too, each person must work to open his heart before G-d, even a little bit, in order to merit salvation. G-d has abundant redemption in store for a person - He just waits for him to make an effort to receive it through Torah, prayer and good deeds. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 23a)

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

“Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and Hashem moved the sea with a strong east wind all the night, and He turned the sea to damp land, and the waters split.” (14:21)

Bnei Yisrael were saved through the miracle of the splitting of the sea, which allowed them to cross safely to the other side, while G-d brought the waters down on the Egyptians, drowning them.

We find different depictions among the commentators of the way in which this miracle unfolded. Rabbeinu Bechaye writes that the water did not split all at once. Rather, with each step forward that *Bnei Yisrael* took, the water right in front of them split, allowing them to proceed one step further.

Rabbeinu Bechaye explains on this basis the description in Tehillim (114:3), הים ראה וינס - “The sea saw and retreated.” The sea “saw,” so-to-speak, each step that *Bnei Yisrael* took, and then responded by retreating a bit further.

To explain the reason for this gradual progression, Rabbeinu Bechaye draws an interesting comparison to the *manna*, of which the Torah tells later in this *parsha*. Each person received just a single portion of *manna* each day. Rather than provide *Bnei Yisrael* with a year’s worth, a month’s worth, or even a week’s worth of food at a time, G-d gave them *manna* in daily rations, such that *Bnei Yisrael* went to sleep each night with absolutely no food in their cabinets.

They could not go to Costco to stock up; they received only a single day’s ration. This system served to develop their trust and faith in Hashem, as they had no choice but to look to Him as their source of sustenance each and every day.

By the same token, Rabbeinu Bechaye writes, *Bnei Yisrael* walked through the sea with the waters raging in front of them. With every step, they were performing a profound act of *emunah*, placing their fate in Hashem’s hand and trusting in His deliverance, thus engendering within themselves a strong foundation of faith.

The Sifsei Kohen disagrees, claiming that Hashem would not have done this to *Bnei Yisrael* - having them fear throughout the process of crossing the sea that they would drown. Rather, the Sifsei Kohen writes, the entire sea split all at once, such that *Bnei Yisrael* had a clear path in front of them.

It occurred to me that these two perspectives may reflect two different realities that we sometimes face over the course of our lives.

Sometimes, Hashem sets a clear path before us. For example, some people’s careers follow a smooth, straight trajectory, as they build and advance without much difficulty.

But at other times, the path before us is far from clear. We cannot see how we will reach our destination, how the problem will be solved, how the money will be raised, how the health condition will be cured, and so on.

In such situations, Rabbeinu Bechaye’s depiction teaches, we need to focus on taking the small steps that are necessary right now. Even if we cannot see the end, we need to continue moving forward, one step at a time, trusting in Hashem to bring us to the destination that we so desperately want to reach.

PROMOTING INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“The Children of Israel came within the sea on dry land; and the water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left.” (14:22)

One of the great miracles of *Krias Yam Suf* was the fact that every tribe had its own private path. Why was this necessary?

On a practical level we can understand that this certainly helped to achieve order and organization among the crowds. But there is a deeper message here.

Rav Uri Weisblum shlit’a, *mashsiach* of Nachlas HaLeviim, quotes Rav Chatzkel Levenstein zt”l, who said that it is not enough for a *bachur* to be left on his own to learn Torah and do *mitzvos*... Just as every blade of grass has an angel that tells it to grow, every person needs someone to help him grow, to watch over him and protect and channel his talents and abilities in a positive way...

The greatness of a person is finding out who he is and developing his individuality to the fullest.

Rav Shmuel Rozovsky zt”l said, “A yeshivah is not a sack of potatoes!” You can’t just throw everyone together into one room and expect them all to learn the same way and succeed.

Chanch l’naar al pi darko - “Educate a child according to his way” (Mishlei 22:6) means that we must educate and cater to the individual needs of every child and help him develop *his* strengths and take pride in *his* accomplishments!

We must all realize that we each have our own unique and individual path in *avodas Hashem*, and that is the lesson we learn from the fact that each *shevet* had its own path through the *Yam Suf*.

RECOGNIZING MIRACLES

Reb Elimelech Lizhensk

“The Children of Israel came within the sea on dry land; and the water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left.” (14:22)

People are impressed only when they see clearly miraculous events. They fail to realize that nature itself is an astonishing miracle in which they can daily witness the greatness of the Guide and Creator of the universe.

Only when we are confronted with an obviously supernatural event do we realize that the providence and the miracles of G-d are present in everyday nature that we are so inclined to take for granted.

This is the interpretation of the above-cited *pasuk*: As for “the Children of Israel,” when they experienced the miracle that they could walk through the sea as on dry land they became aware that they “walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea,” that even if they had been walking on dry land it would have been no less a miracle than if they had been walking through the sea.

CONSTANT MIRACLES

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

“The Children of Israel came within the sea on dry land; and the water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left.” (14:22)

The Torah highlights the famous miracle of the Splitting of the Sea. Hashem saved *Bnei Yisrael* by splitting the *Yam Suf* and allowing them to cross through while drowning the Egyptians behind them.

The Noam Elimelech interprets this *pasuk* very differently. When the *pasuk* states that the Jewish people walked on dry land in the middle of the sea, the Torah is teaching us that *Klal Yisrael* saw Hashem’s hand when walking on the *yabasha* - “dry land” (which is the natural part of the world), in the same way that they acknowledged Hashem’s role in the supernatural miracle of splitting the sea.

He explains that through this experience of the wondrous miracle of *Krias Yam Suf*, the Jewish people not only saw the hand of Hashem in this incredible miracle, but they came to recognize the miracles that Hashem did for them on a daily basis.

The Noam Elimelech is teaching us that we cannot take anything we have for granted. We need to always be appreciative of what Hashem has provided, and continues to provide, for us during our day-to-day lives.

Recognizing the miracles Hashem performs for us each and every day will allow us to be happier people and will help us grow closer to Hashem, Who is the Source of it all.

MIRACULOUS NATURE

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

“And the Children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea; the water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left.” (14:29)

In one verse it says, ויבאו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה - “*Bnei Yisrael* came into the sea on dry land,” placing the sea first. Seven verses later, it says, ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים, mentioning the dry land first. Why the change?

The Chasam Sofer explains that the change is to teach an essential lesson in our approach to nature. He uses an analogy to explain:

There was once a very talented artist who decided to paint a life-size painting of the king’s horse. Using all his skill, he managed to produce a stunning replica of the horse.

Due to its size, the painting was too large to bring inside his gallery, so the artist left it outside by the door.

As he watched from inside the gallery, he noticed that people were walking by and not paying any attention to his masterpiece - the horse. He was so troubled by this that he went outside for a closer look.

He realized that the reason why people were not stopping to marvel at his painting of the horse was because the depiction was so accurate and so lifelike that people thought it was just a horse standing at the door of an art gallery, and consequently, they paid it scant attention.

What did the artist do? He placed a frame around the painting.

People then instantly realized that it wasn’t a horse but a picture, and they started to stop and inspect this marvel of a portrait outside the gallery.

Human nature is such that we are so used to “the dry land” that we pay it little attention and do not marvel at the wonder of Hashem’s creation.

Therefore, Hashem put a “frame” around it in the form of *krias Yam Suf* that forever reminds us of the glory of Hashem’s world.

When we started walking, the ground turned from dry land, which we usually ignore, to dry land within the sea - בתוך הים ביבשה!

From that moment on, we could never look at the dry land as just dry land. It would always be part of the wonder of Hashem’s creation; it became יבשה, dry land that was made special בים - because of what happened at the sea. (Ra’ayonos U’Biurim, p. 87)

All of nature is one big miracle that we tend to ignore. Hashem places a frame around it, and then we start to take notice.

FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT

Reb Naftali of Ropshitz

"On that day, Hashem saved Israel." (14:30)

The letters of the word *"hahu"* [that day] can stand for *ha'shamayim v'et ha'aretz* - the heavens and the earth. As soon as the heavens and the earth were created, Hashem had already willed to make them better for us and to save us.

ATTAINABLE GREATNESS

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

The Kedushas Levi writes that once the Jewish People had experienced such a spiritual elevation that they reached the level of *ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראה יחזקאל בן בוזי*, they then began to realize that it was possible for a human being to reach the level of Moshe Rabbeinu. This is the meaning of the words *ובמשה עבדו* in this *pasuk*. It does not mean that until now the Jews had doubts over the leadership of Moshe Rabbeinu and now, due to the miracle of the splitting of the sea, those doubts had been allayed.

Instead, it means that having been shown what level of prophecy a person can rise to, they now believed that each one of them could reach the level of Moshe Rabbeinu.

This was the point of giving people who didn't really deserve it a taste of what they could achieve. Now, no one doubted what could be attained if they put their minds to it, and the gap between who they were and the level they needed to be on to receive the Torah at Sinai became less daunting.

They were now able to accept the spiritual demands of receiving the Torah because they had tasted, albeit for a brief moment, achieving that level.

The same idea is echoed in the Gemara (Niddah 30a) that tells us that a baby in the womb is taught the entire Torah and then forgets it as he exits the womb and enters the world. If that is the case, what is the point of teaching it all to him?

The answer is so that he has tasted what could be achieved and can now work his way back to making it! (Ma'ayanah shel Torah, p. 69)

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Reb Tzadok HaKohen

"And they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

Just as a person is obligated to believe in Hashem, so must he believe in himself.

FAITHFUL SERVICE

Rabbi Jeremy Finn

"And they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

If *emunah* means faith or belief, then its use seems to be out of place in this *pasuk*.

Rashi tells us that the words *זה א-לי ואנוהו* teach us that the manifestation of G-dliness at *krias Yam Suf* was so clear that every Jew who crossed the sea, even the humblest, could point with his finger and say, "This is my G-d" (15:2).

After the people had seen Hashem clearly enough to "point at Him," where is there room for faith? They know Hashem, they have experienced Hashem. They do not simply believe in Hashem, but rather know of Him clearly.

We see from here that the word *אמונה* does not mean "faith," but "faithful" (see Daas Torah, Bereishis).

Now that they knew Hashem, they undertook to be faithful to that knowledge - even at times when Hashem might seem distant from them, or if they did not see Hashem or hear from Him for the next 3,000 years.

Thus, when we talk about a Jew needing to have *emunah*, we do not mean faith or belief but rather faithfulness to the knowledge handed down over the generations.

This explanation is apparent in the *pasuk* (Shemos 17:11) that describes Moshe holding his hands up during the battle with Amalek, where it says, *ויהי ידיו אמונה עד בא השמש*.

None of the classical translations of the word, such as faith or belief, make sense in this context. Moshe did not believe his hands were there; he knew his hands were there. What it means is that his hands were faithful to him and did the job he needed them to do.

Likewise, when we talk about the need to have *emunah*, it means being faithful to the job that we need to do in perfecting this world through *avodas Hashem*.

INDISPENSABLE FAITH

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

They witnessed the Ten Plagues, the Splitting of the Sea, and their salvation from the Egyptians. They saw the Clouds of Glory surround and protect them in the desert. One would think that when they wished to praise G-d, they would access their knowledge and understanding of G-d based on the miracles He had performed for them. Yet Scripture testifies: "They believed in G-d and in Moshe His servant."

Notwithstanding one's knowledge of G-d, one must have faith. The only real way to attain knowledge of G-d is through faith. (Likutey Halakhos IV, p. 462)

UNSTOPPABLE BELIEF

Gerrer Rebbe

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

By the division of the waters, the virtues of reverence and true faith in Hashem were instilled into *Bnei Yisrael*. By means of these virtues, they were able to overcome insurmountable obstacles.

That is a lesson for all time; namely, that nothing can withstand the unity of genuine reverence and sincere belief.

BELIEVING IN OUR POTENTIAL

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

What is meant by this verse is that at the sea, the Jewish people themselves had attained a profound grasp of Divinity. As the Sages state (Mechilta, Beshalach), "a handmaiden at the parting of the sea saw that which Yechezkel HaNavi did not." They now believed that it was possible for a mortal man to achieve the exalted stature that Moshe had attained.

RIGHTEOUS GREATNESS

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

Why does the Torah place this verse here, immediately after Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore, rather than earlier when Hashem first split the Sea to allow them to pass through? Surely, that was as impressive a display of Hashem's "great hand."

However, if Hashem had merely split the Sea but not slain the Egyptians, that miracle would not have helped the Jews at all, for the enemy would have continued to pursue them. The only thing such a miracle would have accomplished was to display Hashem's power over nature, and this would not have deserved to be described as a "great hand," since the Jews had already seen and believed beyond any shadow of doubt that Hashem had total power over the world.

What they were still not convinced of, however, was that Hashem is totally just and uses His power to rescue the righteous and punish the wicked. Therefore, only when they saw that the great miracle of Splitting the Sea had at the same time saved them and exacted justice from the wicked Egyptians did they recognize that His "great hand" is passing judgment on those who are evil and acting with benevolence to the righteous.

THE TZADDIK'S REVELATION

Rebbe Nachman

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt..." (14:31)

At the sea, a Jewish maidservant witnessed a revelation of G-d even greater than that experienced by the Prophet Yechezkel, who saw the Chariot of G-d (Mekhilta, Beshalach). Due to Moshe's greatness, even the lowest people were able to experience an awesome revelation of G-dliness. (See Likutey Moharan II, 39)

UPGRADING OUR FAITH

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Israel saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt, and the people revered Hashem, and they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

Generally, after seeing something, we no longer need to accept it on "blind" faith. Why, then, after seeing G-d's deliverance, did the Jewish people still need to believe in G-d? The answer is that once they had seen the aspect of G-d that they had previously only believed in - His ability to rescue them - they could then "upgrade" their belief to believing in newer, higher aspects of G-d, which remained beyond what they had seen.

The potential to "upgrade" our faith is infinite. Through the process of spiritual growth, we eventually come to *know* what we currently only *believe* about G-d. We then realize that there is still more to believe about G-d. In this way we perpetually broaden the horizons of our faith and our capacity to relate to G-d on ever higher levels. (Derech Mitzvotecha, pp. 44b-46b) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

BELIEVING IS GREATER THAN SEEING

Chiddushei HaRim

"And they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant." (14:31)

Even though *Bnei Yisrael* saw all the miracles that G-d performed, they still needed faith.

True faith is greater than an actual observation of miracles, for with the power of faith one can see what the eyes do not!

EMPOWERING THE TZADDIK

Degel Machaneh Ephraim

"And they had faith in Hashem and Moshe His servant... Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang this song." (14:31-15:1)

It was precisely because the Jews believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant, that Moshe Rabbeinu was able to sing the *shirah*. For having faith in a *tzaddik* actually empowers and gives strength to the *tzaddik*.

DISPLAY OF AFFECTION

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said as follows: I will sing out to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." (15:1)

Onkelos translates this verse into Aramaic as "He exalted Himself above those who are exalted, and exaltation is His; a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." Why did G-d need this tremendous show of force? Does it not say, "All the nations are as naught before Him; as things of naught and vanity they are regarded by Him" (Yeshayahu 40:17)? He could have decimated them without recourse to any fanfare. Why did He trouble the legions of holy angels to join Him at the sea so that He would be able to perform the miracles amid great fanfare (see Zohar 2:60b)?

In truth, this question is noted in the liturgy recited on the last day of Pesach. The answer given is that on account of His love for the Jewish people, G-d came together with His holy retinue and "confounded the camp of Egypt" (Shemos 14:24), displaying His love for His nation, the Jewish people. This is the underlying idea of Onkelos's interpretation. Although all the exalted are under His dominion, "and He removes kings and establishes kings" (Daniel 2:21), nevertheless, He exalted Himself to heave the horses and their riders into the sea. In other words, G-d behaved in a way that showed that the drowning of Pharaoh's army was a significant matter to Him: He came with a vast army of angels and performed the miracle amid great fanfare. He did so, surely, to demonstrate His affection for the Jewish people. Therefore, we are obliged to sing to G-d, to extol and praise Him for His goodness and love.

SONG OF TRANSCENDENCE

Rebbe Nachman

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said as follows: I will sing out to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." (15:1)

Each type of devotion has its own melody. Faith - which represents silence in the sense of a lack of words, a realm beyond questions - also possesses a melody that transcends all wisdoms. That is the level to which Moshe ascended, a level of Messianic days, when all questions of faith will be answered. Therefore "Az yashir Moshe" (Then Moshe sang) can be translated more literally as "Then Moshe will sing."

This phrase may also be read as "Then Moshe should sing," for Moshe's heart urged and inspired him to sing to G-d (Rashi). And because Moshe attained the level of song, he came to the state of reality of the future, Messianic era. (See Likutey Moharan I, 64:5)

SUSTAINING JOY

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said as follows: I will sing out to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." (15:1)

Joy primarily comes from the heart (Zohar 3:8b). If so, why did the Jewish people need to articulate their joy through speech and song? G-d knows what is in the recesses of the heart, and He knew of their joy. Wasn't it sufficient to express their gratitude in their hearts? The explanation is as follows:

Usually, the joy a person feels ends after a short while. But when a person verbalizes his joy, the joy is intensified and magnified.

When the sea parted before the Jewish people, the Jewish people wished to heighten their happiness and take advantage of being close with their Creator. They did not want it to end, so they brought their jubilation into the realm of speech by singing to increase the delight.

This is the meaning of the words of the verse "They spoke, saying" - they spoke, in order to speak more and more to intensify their joy. Otherwise, the word "saying" is inexplicable, since this word normally indicates saying something to someone else.

In this case, however, since everyone was singing, this sense of the word has no relevance, and therefore the word must be referring to something else, i.e., that they used their speech to increase their joy.

EXULTING IN HASHEM

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said as follows: I will sing out to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." (15:1)

G-d takes pride (גאה, *Ga'oh*) in the Jews when they take pride (גאה, *Ga'ah*) in Him. Thus, "*Ga'oh ga'ah* - He is exalted over the arrogant." (Likutey Halakhos II, p. 148)

"Horse and rider" - this refers to the forces of evil. (Zohar III, 226b)

Ga'oh (גאה, He is exalted) refers to the pride (גאה, *Ga'ah*) G-d takes in the Jews, which happens when the "horse and rider" - the forces of evil - are overcome.

The Jews overcome the latter through "my strength and praise of G-d" - i.e., because we are stubborn and refuse to give in to evil.

Instead, we proclaim: "This is my G-d, and I will glorify Him" (Shemos 15:2) - we exult in G-d and G-d exults in us. (Likutey Halakhos II, p. 78a)

CAUSING HASHEM TO SING

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said as follows: I will sing out to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." (15:1)

Why does the Torah employ the grammatical form "will sing," in the future tense, rather than the expected form, "sang," in the past tense?

We can answer this question based on the Baal Shem Tov's interpretation of the verse (Tehillim 121:5) "G-d is your shadow," that G-d's conduct toward man is similar to a shadow, exactly as the movements of a person's shadow reflect the movements of the person. Similarly, G-d's conduct toward a person reflects the person's own behavior. So when the Jewish people sang after being redeemed from Egypt, G-d also sang, as it were, this same song.

The verb "will sing" can be taken as the causative form, so we may interpret the phrase "Then Moshe and the Jewish people sang" as saying that the Jewish people, through their song, caused "this song to G-d." That is, they caused G-d to sing this song. The verse continues, "They spoke, saying" - implying that "they spoke" in order or to bring about G-d's "saying." Contemplate and understand this well.

FORWARD LOOKING

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Then Moshe and the Children of Israel sang this song to Hashem, and they said as follows: I will sing out to Hashem for He is exalted above all exaltedness, a horse and its rider He heaved into the sea." (15:1)

Why does the *Shirah* begin with words in the future tense: "Az yashir Moshe u'Bnei Yisrael - Then will Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sing"?

Rashi is of the opinion that the *pasuk* is informing us that only after Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish people saw the incredible miracles at the *Yam Suf*, it was "az - then" that they began to sing.

However, Chazal (Sanhedrin 91) explain that the future tense of "az yashir - then they will sing" is specifically intentioned to teach us the lesson of *Techiyas Hameisim* - Resurrection of the Dead. Not only did *Bnei Yisrael* sing at that time, but they "will sing" again after the resurrection!

Yet, the question remains: Why associate the unadulterated joy of *Krias Yam Suf* with the Resurrection of the Dead? Why is it necessary to remind us just then of the sad fate of death?

The Shabbos after the miraculous escape of the Belzer Rebbe, R' Aharon Rokeach zt'l, from the inferno of the Holocaust to Eretz Yisrael, he delivered a *drashah* (lecture) in the big shul in Tel Aviv to the large crowd that came to hear him.

He explained that at the time of *Krias Yam Suf*, in fact, *Bnei Yisrael's* happiness was not complete; only "*chamushim*" - one-fifth of the nation - had merited escaping Egypt.

Sadly, four-fifths of the Jewish people had recently perished during the plague of darkness. The joy of their liberation and the total annihilation of their enemies was tempered by a deep-rooted grief at the fate of their brethren. Of course, they were happy - but it was tinged with a measure of grief over the huge national loss of life.

"How similar," proclaimed the Belzer Rebbe, "is this to our present situation, where a majority of our brothers in Europe have already been wiped out! Here, we are relatively safe, but what of our remaining brothers and sisters left in that dangerous place? How can we feel a true sense of happiness when we know that we have lost so many of our people in the Holocaust?"

However, it was *Klal Yisrael's* firm belief in *Techiyas Hameisim* - the ultimate Resurrection of the Dead - that allowed them to survive.

It was this knowledge that their brothers and sisters would eventually join them in the fullness of days, which enabled them to sing the *Shirah* with the required *simcha*.

GLORIFYING HASHEM

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

"G-d's strength and power to eradicate has been a salvation for me. This is my G-d, and I will beautify him; the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him." (15:2)

Rashi offers three definitions for this word [*v'anveihu*]:

1) According to Targum Onkelos, it indicates the "dwelling" Israel will build for Hashem; namely, the Beis HaMikdash.

2) The Talmud interprets it as "beauty"; Israel promises to beautify the *mitzvos* it does for Hashem, by such actions as building a beautiful *sukkah*, purchasing a beautiful *esrog* or writing a beautiful *sefer Torah*.

3) "I will glorify Him" by singing of His greatness and glory.

Really, though, these three meanings are all interconnected, as we shall explain. In the material world, it is part of human nature for one to want to beautify the objects which are the necessities of life - a home and furnishings, clothing and even food - and to take pride when his efforts are pleasing and pleasant.

By the same token, someone who considers Torah and *mitzvos* to be among the essential needs of life will want to adorn them with as much beauty and to perform them with as much grace as he can. Certainly, he will be careful not to let it seem that he considers them a burden to be endured. And just as one feels an urge to pride himself in his material possessions, all the more so he should feel the urge to boast of the *mitzvos* he does or of the Torah he has acquired, and to praise Hashem for commanding them.

Even though humility requires us to control this urge, we should still feel a strong natural inclination to be proud of our Torah and *mitzvos*, as the prophet said (Yirmiyahu 9:23), “Of this the boaster may boast: Of wisdom and knowledge of Me.” If one lacks this ingrained desire, it is because he does not consider Torah and *mitzvos* as accomplishments worth being proud of.

Thus it emerges that Rashi’s three definitions all stem from the same source, that of Onkelos: Just as we take pride in our physical dwellings, so we should want to make for Hashem a magnificent physical dwelling place, the Beis HaMikdash, and we should also want to apply this same pride to our accomplishments in Torah and *mitzvos*, and to praise Hashem for giving them to us, as well as simply for His intrinsic greatness.

ADMIRABLE ATTRIBUTES

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

“G-d’s strength and power to eradicate has been a salvation for me. This is my G-d, and I will beautify him; the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.” (15:2)

Parashas Beshalach records the song the Jews sang as they escaped the final Egyptian threat. The second line of the song includes the word “*V’anveihu*,” or “this is my G-d” (15:2), which Rashi says could mean “I will dwell with Him” or “I will beautify Him.” Yet another translation from the Gemara (Shabbos 133b) suggests that it combines two words, “*ani*” and “*v’hu*,” meaning that we are one with G-d by imitating Him. Being that this is the beginning of the song as well as a fairly famous phrase that we repeat in davening regularly, shouldn’t the translation of the words be less ambiguous?

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig explains that healthy relationships require respect and appreciation. Deeming something beautiful creates a reverence that’s healthy and works to preserve that affinity. Our question now becomes its own answer, as all these elements of the word are key to preserving not only our relationship with G-d but is a framework for maintaining relationships between people. To admire and imitate the qualities of a loved one is to be one with them, allowing them to shine and appreciating our proximity to their greatest attributes.

FROM TORAH TO PRAYER

Reb Noson of Breslov

“G-d’s strength and power to eradicate has been a salvation for me. This is my G-d, and I will beautify him; the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.” (15:2)

“My strength” refers to the Torah. “Song” refers to prayer. When a person merits to turn his Torah studies into prayers before G-d, asking for help to observe and fulfill that Torah, then “He will be my salvation.” (Likutey Halachot III, p. 100a)

BECOMING AN ABODE

Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch

“G-d’s strength and power to eradicate has been a salvation for me. This is my G-d, and I will beautify him; the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.” (15:2)

An alternative rendering is “This is my G-d, and I will make Him an abode” (the Hebrew verb *anvehu* - “And I will glorify Him” - is related to the noun *naveh* - “abode”).

This means: I will make an abode for Him within my own being; I will sanctify and purify myself so that my body may become a dwelling place for the Holy Presence.

EVEN IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

Skoyler Rebbe

“G-d’s strength and power to eradicate has been a salvation for me. This is my G-d, and I will beautify him; the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him.” (15:2)

One who has complete faith in Hashem will praise Him and sing to Him in times of joy and, G-d forbid, in times of trouble.

That is the meaning of “G-d’s strength and power” - that the Almighty, Blessed is His name, is my strength and my power, and I will praise and sing unto Him in times of trouble, and He will be my salvation; I have faith that He will bring me salvation.

AIDED IN SPIRITUAL WAR

Kobriner Rebbe

“Hashem is a Man of war...” (15:3)

Hashem is with the man who makes war against evil desires and helps him to overpower them.

UNITING TRUTH

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

“Pharaoh’s chariots and army He hurled into the sea; his elite officers were sunk in the Yam Suf.” (15:4)

The Zohar writes that the forces of evil in this world, “Begin with unity and end in dispersion.”

The Sefas Emes, R’ Yehudah Leib Alter zt’l explains that this is precisely what occurred at the Splitting of the Sea. The mighty Egyptian army, feared by the entire civilized world, met their end as a fragmented force, their drowned bodies strewn all over the beach after the sea ejected them. The Jewish People, though, divided into twelve individual tribes crossed the *Yam Suf* and sang *shirah* in perfect unison.

This unity is the key to our redemption, whether thousands of years ago in Egypt, or in the future *geulah* from our bitter exile.

The Mishnah (Eiduyos 8:7) maintains that Eliyahu HaNavi will come before the advent of Mashiach with the intention of “to bring close but not to divide.” R’ Raphael Pelcovitz z”l (renowned rabbi of the “White Shul” in Far Rockaway, NY) wrote: The Hebrew word for truth is “אמת”, comprised of three letters, which are separated by the total spectrum of the Hebrew alphabet; the “א” and “ת” are the first and last letters, and the “מ” is right in the center. On the other hand, the Hebrew word for falsehood is “שקר”, composed of three letters that are right next to each other in the alef beis: ‘ש’ ‘ק’ ‘ר’.

What we may discern from this unusual juxtaposition of letters is that the forces of falsehood, those who wish to distort Judaism and ultimately destroy it, are generally more united in their hatred of Torah, whereas those who champion authentic Yiddishkeit are often hopelessly divided.

The Mishnah teaches us that the solution is not to separate the closely-knit ranks of deception and disrupt the united front of the secular camp, but rather to bring together the letters “ת” “מ” “א” of “emes” - the various factions within the camp of Torah-true Jewry.

CONSUMING WRATH

Meshech Chochmah

“And in Your abundant grandeur You overthrow those who rise up against You; You send forth Your wrath; it consumes them like stubble.” (15:7)

You are so great that it is not even appropriate for You to fight against such base creatures, yet “You overthrow those who rise up against You.” For it is unnecessary for You to perform powerful acts for this purpose.

“You send forth Your wrath; it consumes them like stubble.” Your anger alone is sufficient to consume them. When mortals are angry, they must act in order to destroy the object of their anger, but You need do no more than remove Your Providence from those who rise up against You, and they will be unable to survive.

HIDDEN AND REVEALED

The Ishbitzer

“Who is like You among the powerful, Hashem?! Who is like You, mighty in holiness?” (15:11)

The Talmud (Gittin 56b) changes the vowels of *ba’elim* (powerful) and forms the word *b’ilmim*, meaning “concealed.” In all human experiences, one should keep in mind that there is a hidden Creator. That is the meaning of “Strength and faithfulness are His Who lives eternally.”

Our trust and faith in G-d is in knowing that He is in both all that is revealed and all that is hidden. However, that which is obvious does not need as much faith as that which is hidden. Both the hidden and the obvious are in the Almighty.

WONDER OF PRAYERS

Rebbe Nachman

“Who is like You, mighty in holiness, awesome in praises, doer of wonders?” (15:11)

Because prayer reveals wonders, prayer is itself a wonder. (See Likutey Moharan II, 5:2)

PATIENT LEADERSHIP

Imrei Emes

“You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy abode.” (15:13)

Targum Onkelos translates *nehalta* (“You have guided them”) to mean “bearing” or “carrying” - as in “You have borne with them,” because all guidance involves patience and forbearance.

That is, a leader and guide must bear and forbear.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Rimzei D’Chachmaso

“And Miriam the prophetess, Aharon’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.” (15:21)

Miriam the prophetess dramatically inspired the other women with her praises of the Holy One, blessed be He, and so they all followed her and did likewise.

CHANGING DIRECTION

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“Moshe caused Yisrael to journey from the Yam Suf and they went out to the Wilderness of Shur; they went for a three-day period in the Wilderness...” (15:22)

The Jewish people did not tarry out of greed. They were fulfilling G-d’s commandment to empty Egypt of its wealth. The spiritual dimension of this directive was to salvage all the potentials of holiness present in this wealth.

From this we learn two lessons: First, once we know what our Divine mission in life is, we must be so devoted to it that doing anything else seems unthinkable. On the other hand, as soon as it is clear that it is time to change direction, we must not hesitate. We should apply ourselves to our new mission with the same enthusiasm we gave to our previous mission.

Second, just as the Jews did not want to leave a single piece of Egyptian wealth unelevated, we should desire to bring every last individual closer to G-d. Until we receive a clear directive to focus on something else, we must view every individual estranged from G-d as a priceless pearl waiting to be redeemed from Egypt. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 21, pp. 77-82) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

PATH OF LIFE

Reb Noson of Breslov

“Moshe caused Yisrael to journey from the Yam Suf and they went out to the Wilderness of Shur; they went for a three-day period in the Wilderness, but they did not find water.” (15:22)

Water is a metaphor for Torah (Bava Kama 17a). The Torah is a pathfinder that shows a person which path of life to follow (see Shemos 18:20). When the verse says that the Jews walked for three days without water (i.e., Torah), it implies that they were traveling without knowing which way to go.

Consequently, Moshe instituted the custom of reading the Torah publicly every Monday, Thursday, and Shabbos to ensure that no more than three days would pass before we regain our perspective on the correct path in life.

The three days of public Torah readings represent right, left and center, the different ways a person can walk on a path. Though the main course is the center one, one who strays to the right or left will not veer off the intended path completely. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 216a-217a)

TASTE OF BITTERNESS

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

“They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water from Marah, for it was bitter; that is why it was named Marah.” (15:23)

After crossing the sea, *Bnei Yisrael* journeyed for three days without finding any sources of water. Finally, they arrived in Marah, where they found water - but they were unable to drink it, כי מרים הם - because the waters were bitter and foul-tasting. G-d then commanded Moshe to throw a certain branch into the water, whereupon it became drinkable.

The Kotzker Rebbe offers a remarkable insight into this story, boldly suggesting that when the Torah says, כי מרים הם, it is referring not to the waters, but rather to the people. They could not drink the water of Marah because they themselves were “bitter,” viewing things from a negative perspective. When a person is bitter, then everything he tastes is bitter. If our attitude is negative, then everything we see and experience is bad and worthy of a complaint and protest.

The recently coined term “Missing Tile Syndrome” refers to the natural human tendency when walking into a room to immediately notice and focus upon the missing tiles. Even though the vast majority of the tiles are in place, our attention is instinctively drawn to the spots on the wall that are missing tiles, rather than the rest of the wall. One of the most common obstacles to happiness and contentment in life is this tendency to see only what is wrong, instead of appreciating all that is right. We too often suffer from “bitterness,” fixating on the “missing tiles” in our lives, rather than seeing all that is wonderful, all the many “tiles” that are sitting perfectly in place.

The story of Marah, then, should motivate us to transform our “bitterness” to “sweetness,” to change our perspective, to stop focusing our attention on what is missing, and to instead feel grateful and gratified over all the blessings that we have been given.

SWEETENING BITTERNESS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

“They came to Marah, but they could not drink the water from Marah, for it was bitter...” (15:23)

The words “for it was bitter” literally mean, “for *they* were bitter.” This may be understood to mean that the people, rather than the water, were bitter. In this context, the whole phrase reads, “they could not drink the water from Marah for they were bitter.”

When we are bitter, everything tastes bitter. Only when we ourselves are “sweetened” with the positive attitude fostered by Divine consciousness can the water - as well as everything else in life - begin to taste sweet as well. (Sefer HaMa’amarim 5720, p. 68) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

SWEETNESS OF TORAH

Rebbe Nachman

“...and Hashem showed him a tree and he cast it into the waters and the waters were made sweet.” (15:25)

This tree is the Torah, which is a Tree of Life. With the Torah, Moshe was able to sweeten the “bitter waters.”

SWEETENING BITTERNESS

Chasam Sofer

“...and Hashem showed him a tree and he cast it into the waters and the waters were made sweet.” (15:25)

[G-d] taught [Moshe] a word of the Torah, which is likened to the Tree of Life. The word was that G-d uses the bitter [tree] to make the bitter [water] sweet. (Midrash)

Scholars who engage in Torah study to the exclusion of all other pursuits have a bitter lot because they have no material sustenance - likened to the bitter tree. Merchants, always busy amassing material wealth, are plagued by the bitter realization that they are allowing spiritual things to pass them by, and they lack spiritual contentment - their lot is bitter like the waters of Marah.

But if merchants would support scholars and provide for their needs, the bitterness in both their lives will be sweetened. The scholar will have sustenance and the merchant will derive spiritual satisfaction from providing for the scholar. This is symbolized by Moshe putting the bitter tree into the bitter water.

The “tree” is the Torah - the “Tree of Life to those who cleave to it,” and it is through the study and support of Torah that the bitterness of life can be made sweet.

TEST OF FAITH

Reb Noson of Breslov

“...and Hashem showed him a tree and he cast it into the waters and the waters were made sweet. There He gave them a statute and a law, and there He tested them.” (15:25)

Despite the fact that the Jews witnessed untold miracles in the desert, there were those who continually complained. G-d could have supplied them with water and food before they asked for it, but He delayed these provisions in order to test them: would they respond to their needs with faith that G-d would provide, or would they complain and rebel against Him? We face the same test in every generation. G-d can and will provide, but we must strengthen ourselves with faith.

The spies also demonstrated a lack of faith. G-d told them that the Land was good. Had they kept their faith, they could have entered the Land immediately. But since they lacked full faith, they insisted on inspecting the Land themselves. This blemish caused a forty-year delay in the nation's entry to the Holy Land. So it is with every person. Even with a small display of faith, one can overcome and merit to the truth, to his salvation.

HASHEM THE HEALER

Rabbi Ari Ciment

“If you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and you do what is proper in His eyes, and you listen closely to His commandments and observe all His statutes, then any of the diseases that I have placed upon Egypt I will not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your healer.” (15:26)

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov says: He who does one *mitzvah* acquires an advocate, and if one transgresses, he acquires an adversary. Repentance and good deeds act as shields from the punishment. (Avos 4:11)

1. Presumably, *teshuvah* is referring to the person who does bad things and then truly repents, and *maasim tovim* are referring to the person who does good deeds from the start. Then why does *teshuvah* precede *maasim tovim*?

2. The verse states, “And He said, ‘If you hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and you do what is proper in His eyes, and you listen closely to His commandments and observe all His statutes, all the sicknesses that I have visited upon Egypt I will not visit upon you, for I, Hashem, heal you.’”

Who needs G-d to heal us if we are doing good deeds? Isn't healing only necessary if we develop the sicknesses that He Himself told us that we are protected from if we simply adhere to the *mitzvos*? The *pasuk* then sounds odd: If you listen to G-d, He won't give you sickness, and He is the doctor who heals you!

3. Why do we wish someone “a *refuah sheleimah*” even when he has a terminal disease - and even to someone on his deathbed? Clearly, when he's about to die, he will not

have a *refuah sheleimah*, so why do the deathbed prayers contain such a weird statement?

There are essentially two approaches to understanding the above ethic, and according to each approach, you can best understand the *pasuk* in our *parashah*.

Approach #1: When the Tanna says, תשובה ומעשים טובים, כתרס בפני הפרענות, he is specifically referring to someone who does bad and then repents. The Rambam explains that since “The place where *baalei teshuvah* stand, even *tzaddikim gemurim* can't stand,” i.e., doing *teshuvah* is actually an even stronger greatness than doing good from the start (in some way), so this is why *teshuvah* precedes *maasim tovim*!

Applying this to our *pasuk*: When the Torah says, “If you listen, I won't give you diseases,” the implication is that if you don't listen, you will get diseases. To this second possibility, G-d speaks out that He is the ultimate Healer; even if you don't listen initially, the power of *teshuvah* is there to protect you from the diseases that I place upon you! Even the seemingly insurmountable Egyptian diseases are cured by the ultimate Healer if you do *teshuvah*.

Approach #2: The Rashbam actually says that the Mishnah has a different text, it should really read, תורה ומעשים טובים כתרס בפני הפרענות. According to that text, the Mishnah has nothing to do with *teshuvah* at all. Observing the Torah and doing good deeds prophylactically shields you from punishments/ailments!

Likewise, our *pasuk* here may not have anything to do with *teshuvah*, but is rather denoting the optimal prophylaxis. When G-d says that “He is the Healer,” he may be the Healer in the sense of prophylactically protecting us from the ailments by making sure we follow the commandments. In this sense, the word *rofeh* doesn't necessarily mean “healer,” but rather one who softens, ameliorates, and protects from the burdens of sickness.

This is why we say “*refuah sheleimah*” to even someone on his deathbed and why we say that even a *goses* - one in the throes of death - should have a *refuah sheleimah*, because the word *rofeh* doesn't only mean “to heal” but also to “soften/protect/ameliorate” (*rofeh* has *rafah*, “soften,” as its root)!

Takeaway Messages: If a *rofeh* is defined only as someone who heals, then the *pasuk* אני ה' רפאך is referring to a situation where one initially doesn't adhere to the *mitzvos* and then repents. G-d will heal him or her post-repentance - תשובה ומעשים טובים כתרס בפני הפרענות.

If a *rofeh* is also defined as someone who not only heals but also ameliorates, softens, protects and mollifies, then אני ה' רפאך refers to G-d putting in place a proper *derech* to avoid illness, a regimen of prophylaxis: תורה ומעשים טובים כתרס בפני הפרענות.

Saying *refuah sheleimah* to someone on his deathbed is not a *berachah l'vatalah*. As the doctor, it is not only about healing but also about ameliorating, protecting, or softening! The first doctor in the Torah? Hashem.

SOUL DOCTOR

Chasam Sofer

"I will put none of the diseases upon you that I have put upon the Egyptians, for I am Hashem Who heals you." (15:26)

A family doctor who is not paid by the visit but by annual retainer has nothing to gain when a patient is ill. The work for which he receives his retainer is the preservation of the patient's health so that he should not become ill.

Similarly, G-d is primarily concerned with guarding the health of our soul. This is the reason for all the commandments and statutes that He has given us.

"I am Hashem Who heals you," He declared. "I am the physician at all times, not only when You are ill. Therefore, I will put none of the diseases upon you that I have put upon the Egyptians' but will give you commandments to guard your soul from illness."

REMOVING HINDRANCES

Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold! - I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's matter on its day, so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not.'" (16:4)

Rashi comments: "If they will observe the *mitzvos* connected with the *mann* - not to leave over from it and not to go out on Shabbos to collect it." The *mann* was a "test" that *Bnei Yisrael* needed to pass in order to prove to Hashem that they were worthy to be His Chosen Nation. What was the nature of this test, as represented by the words "*hayelech b'Torasi im lo* - if they will walk in the way of My teaching, or not"?

The Kli Yakar, R' Shlomo Ephraim Luntzitz zt'l, explains that there are two kinds of hindrances that stand in the way of a person involving himself with Torah study. One is internal, and the other is external.

The internal hindrance is nourishment, which, due to its physical character, blocks the mind and prevents it from absorbing Torah, which is totally spiritual. That is why after the Heavenly Cloud purified Moshe from the food he had previously eaten, he refrained from eating for the next forty days that he was on Har Sinai, enabling him to learn the entire Torah during that short period.

The external hindrance is one's constant quest to earn a livelihood, which does not allow a person to relinquish his mundane thoughts and immerse himself in the sea of Torah.

For these two reasons, Hashem fed the *mann* to the generation that received the Torah. Here was a food that was purely spiritual - the same food that sustains the angels - and would not interfere with the Torah that they would learn. At the same time, the *mann* was a food that came to them effortlessly, leaving them free to study Torah diligently and without interference.

For forty years they received spiritual food, without a worry in the world. Now they really had no excuse not to constantly study Torah and grow in it. This was the test that *Bnei Yisrael* faced in the desert.

DAILY SUSTENANCE

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold! - I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's matter on its day, so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not.'" (16:4)

Because the source of one's livelihood comes from a very lofty place, a person is tested in many ways to see if he will conduct his business and use his earnings in a proper manner.

In the desert, the Jews were tested daily to see if they would pray to G-d for their sustenance, the *manna*. Even after the *manna* fell to the ground, they were tested as to whether they would try to preserve some of it for the next day.

The *manna* teaches us that each day has its own blessing. The desire to hoard wealth is extraneous to a person's existence and makes him vulnerable to attack from the forces of the Other Side. However, Shabbos possesses its own blessing (for the *manna* was sent down as a double portion prior to Shabbos), and this blessing protects the person from the Other Side. (Likutei Halakhos III, p. 162)

ALL FROM ABOVE

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold! - I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's matter on its day, so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not.'" (16:4)

Even if we believe that everything is in G-d's hand, we still tend to think that our own efforts also play a role in acquiring our physical sustenance. In contrast, *manna* was not acquired through human effort, and so left no room for such misconceptions. Even so, G-d did not allow the people to collect more than one day's worth of *manna* at a time, for whenever the pantry would have been full, the people would not have felt dependent upon G-d.

On the other hand, G-d did require the people to go out and gather the *manna*, rather than deliver it to their doorsteps. In this way, He prepared them for their eventual entry into the real world. If acquiring the *manna* had not required any human effort, the people would have dismissed it as an isolated miracle, irrelevant to real life. By being required to collect the *manna*, they learned that human effort and G-d's blessings work together.

The *manna* taught us that our sustenance comes from heaven. Even when it appears to be the fruit of our own labor, it is in fact a gift from G-d. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 177-178) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

ALL ABOUT CONNECTIONS

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold! - I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's matter on its day, so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not.'" (16:4)

As the Jews navigate through the desert, rife with complaints for the lack of water and then food, G-d advises Moshe that He will provide bread (*manna*) from heaven (16:4) and that people will receive nourishment enough for one day.

G-d instructs that people must gather "*dvar yom b'yomo*," which means to collect only their daily allotment, but literally means "the daily thing on its day." What is the daily "thing" that G-d alludes to? Why would G-d not simply use the word for food (*ochel*)?

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig suggests that the point of the *manna* was not just to provide sustenance for the people but to build a daily connection between G-d and His newly unified people.

This explains why people were instructed to take only what they needed for that day, so that the next day could offer yet another opportunity for connection with G-d as our provider.

Essentially, then, the "thing" isn't necessarily food at all; it is our daily connection to G-d.

We can now understand that G-d is showing us that eating (and living in the broader sense) is devoid of meaning if not used as an opportunity for daily connection.

WHEN TIMES GET ROUGH

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Behold! - I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's matter on its day, so that I may test him, whether he will follow My Torah or not.'" (16:4)

"And He afflicted you and let you go hungry, and then fed you with *manna*... so that He would make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live." (Devarim 8:3)

The Netziv in Ha'amek Davar explains that Hashem specifically had *Klal Yisrael* experience affliction and hunger and only then fed them *manna* for forty years.

This was to teach them and the future generations a vital lesson. There will be many times in the future when your prospects for *parnassah* may look hopeless. Remember, Hashem imbued us with the strength to know that we are sustained by the His word and our *parnassah* does not come from the work of man. "This (knowledge) is a wondrous benefit in the days of *galus* (exile)."

MIRACULOUS ASSISTANT

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"And it shall be that on the sixth day when they prepare what they will bring, and it will be double what they pick every day." (16:5)

Inasmuch as most types of work are forbidden on Shabbat, G-d miraculously enables us to accomplish on Friday all that we need to do for both Friday and Shabbat.

This is true not only in the quantitative sense, but qualitatively as well: The preparations we make for Shabbat on Friday imbue the food, clothing, and atmosphere of Shabbat with an added measure of delight that it is impossible for us to experience the rest of the week.

The same is true in the spiritual dimension of life. The better we prepare spiritually (e.g., through prayer, Torah study, good deeds) on Friday for Shabbat, the greater the spiritual heights to which we can ascend on Shabbat itself.

This is true of all G-d's commandments. When G-d asks us to fulfill His commandments, He provides us with the power and means to do so, even in a miraculous fashion. (Hitva'aduyot 5749, vol. 2, pp. 255-256) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

EVEN WHEN SATIATED

Reb Naftali of Ropshitz

"In the afternoon you shall eat meat, and in the morning you will be satiated with bread, and you will know that I am Hashem, your G-d." (16:12)

That was the true miracle of the *manna*; for a man to be satiated and still recognize Hashem.

SPIRITUAL EQUALITY

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"The Children of Israel did so: they gathered it, some more and some less." (16:17)

Some people recognized the lofty nature of the *manna* and wished to gather as much of it as possible. Others were less spiritually oriented and were therefore less interested in the *manna*. There were even those who disregarded Moshe's commands and hoarded *manna* for the next day or went out to gather it on Shabbat. Yet G-d provided all of them, from Moshe himself down to the rebel, with the same measure of *manna*.

The reason for this equality was because spiritually, the *manna* was meant to nourish the people's faith in G-d, and this faith is part of the essence of the soul, which is of equal value in each person, regardless of how much his behavior reflects his inner Divine essence. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 26, pp. 110-111)

We, too, must not presume to judge who is more or less deserving of whatever spiritual or physical nourishment we are in a position to share with them. Rather, we should seek to provide for our fellows' spiritual and physical needs unqualifiedly. Even someone who may not appreciate the value of what we have to offer, or might even abuse it, deserves the very best that we can give. (Hitva'aduyot 5745, vol. 2, pp. 1105-1108) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"But they did not obey Moshe and people left over from it until morning and it became infested with worms, and it stank; and Moshe became angry with them." (16:20)

As the Jews are instructed to gather only the food they will need for that day, they are warned not to leave any for the following day (16:19). When some people did not listen and left food for the next day, they found it full of worms, at which point Moshe becomes angry with them (16:20). Why would Moshe be angry with those that left food for the next day? Their breach was dealt with, and its consequences were almost immediate.

We encounter a theme initially introduced by Rabbi Zweig: Moshe was upset that the people did not fully appreciate the opportunity for Divine connection that they were being afforded. The gift of this food was an opportunity to connect with its Creator and appreciate the goodness bestowed unto them. It is this same connection and expression of appreciation for G-d's benevolence that drives our prayers to this day.

When eating becomes more than merely satisfying a physical need, we will truly transcend our lives' physical boundaries and connect to what truly matters.

TRUST IN SHABBOS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Tomorrow will be a day of rest, a holy Shabbos unto G-d." (16:23)

This is the first explicit mention in the Torah of the obligation to observe Shabbos. It is appropriate that Shabbos is introduced in connection with the *manna*, for Shabbos and the *manna* share a common purpose - to underscore our complete dependency upon G-d as the true source of all sustenance.

Belief that human effort is the sole determining factor for success makes it hard to justify giving up a full day's income. Not working on Shabbos is a clear affirmation of our faith that sustenance lies in G-d's hands and that our work is no more than a vessel through which G-d's blessings can flow. (See Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 173-182) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

SHABBOS PREP

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"See that G-d has given you Shabbos." (16:29)

By saying that "G-d has given you Shabbos," Moshe was implying that G-d has given it "to each of you individually" - to every Jewish person. Although the external form of Shabbos observance is the same for every Jew, the nature of the inner, spiritual experience of Shabbos differs from person to person.

The quality of spiritual inspiration we experience on Shabbos is dependent largely on how much effort we expend preparing for it during the preceding workweek. Firstly, this includes physical preparation, ensuring ahead of time that everything is prepared so we are free from physical distractions. Secondly, devoting time during the week to spiritual growth enables us to reap the fruits of this effort on the coming Shabbos in the form of heightened spiritual consciousness. (Likutei Torah 2:2c) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

HUMBLY ABIDING

Reb Yisrael of Ruzhin

"See that Hashem has given you the Sabbath; therefore, He gives you on the sixth day bread of two days. Let every man remain in his place; no man may leave his place on the seventh day." (16:29)

An alternative rendering of this passage is: "...let every man abide below his place..." (*tachtov* - "in his place"; lit., "under him").

This means that it is important that one sit in a place lower than his true entitlement. And "let no man go out of his place"; under no circumstances may one sit in a place higher than the one that is rightfully due him.

IMPACTFUL RIPPLE EFFECTS

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

"And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Pass before the People, and take with you some of the Elders of Israel; and your staff which you struck the river [Nile] take in your hand and go.'" (17:5)

In this verse, Hashem instructs Moshe to stand before the Jewish People holding the staff which he used to strike the Nile River which brought about the plague of blood and frogs (Shemos 7:19 with Rashi and Shemos 8:1).

The issue with this verse is that Moshe did not strike the river with the staff, it was his brother Aharon! (The Midrash [Shemos Rabbah 9:10] relates that Moshe did not strike the river himself due to the gratitude he held for the river which kept him afloat when he was put there as a baby.) If so, how can the verse say that Moshe struck the river?

The Gemara answers that one who causes someone else to perform a *mitzvah* is credited as if he performed that *mitzvah* himself. Thus, although Moshe did not strike the Nile, by enabling Aharon to do so, Moshe himself was credited for striking the river (Sanhedrin 99b).

The importance of enabling, facilitating, and encouraging others to perform *mitzvos* cannot be overstated. In fact, when discussing qualifications to be accepted into the Next World, the Chovos HaLevavos (Shaar Bitachon 4) explains that even someone who lives a life full of good deeds, unless he teaches others about the service Hashem and guides them to perform His *mitzvos*, he is not considered worthy of entering the World to Come!

One of the most remarkable stories which teaches this lesson was told many years ago at the eulogy of a very successful outreach expert Rabbi Dovid Miller (not his real name) who attributed his tremendous success to one unsuspecting yeshivah student. Rabbi Miller was not born religious. In fact, he grew up in Tel Aviv having never met a religious Jew. He was so far from Judaism that Dudu, as he was known, had no qualms about opening a very inappropriate store, and, as many Israeli store owners do, Dudu would often hang around outside his store smoking and watching the world go by. Dudu's life was changed when he was doing just that.

One day, a young yeshivah student passed by his store. His head was down, and he was walking briskly, clearly uncomfortable at his surroundings. Dudu saw this and was shocked. He had never, ever, seen anyone walking past his store and not look in the window. "Actually," he would say when recalling his initial step toward religious life, "most people slowed down, but this kid sped up! I thought he was crazy, and it had to be a religious thing. I didn't understand how religious people could be so abnormal. I was so intrigued that I followed him to his yeshivah and started to ask people what was wrong with this guy... and look where it led me!"

"Just imagine," explained the Rabbi speaking at Rabbi Miller's eulogy, "this oblivious yeshivah student is going to go to Heaven after 120 years, and there will be thousands upon thousands of angels standing to greet him. Seeing the assembly, he'll undoubtedly turn around to see which important Rabbi just came behind him. Eventually he'll realize that these angels are standing for him. But he won't understand why."

"He'll then be told that he is being rewarded for every single *mitzvah* performed by Rabbi Miller as well as everyone who was brought closer to Judaism by Rabbi Miller."

"And you know what?" concluded the Rabbi, "He will then bashfully ask, 'But who is Rabbi Miller?'"

This story gives us a small insight into the reward for leading others toward the performance of *mitzvos* - even when it was unintentional. How much more reward would we receive if we actively seek opportunities to teach others the beauty of serving Hashem and understanding His Torah?

SPIRITUAL RESERVOIRS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Behold! I shall stand before you by the rock in Chorev; you shall strike into the rock and water will come forth from it and the people will drink." Moshe did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (17:6)

We sometimes encounter people who appear too intimidating to inspire. Their spiritual condition is much like a rock: devoid of the spiritual fluid of life, bone-dry and stonehearted.

Apprehensive about attempting to motivate them, we tend to shy away, considering it a futile or even hazardous task.

G-d's response to this scenario is unequivocal: He tells us to approach this individual, who appears as spiritually lifeless as a rock, with our "staff of G-d," our unshakable faith in the Torah and our resolute devotion to it.

The spiritual intensity of our faith - both in G-d and in the G-dly spark within our fellow - will hit home, tapping into the reservoir of "living water" at his core. We will then see his inherent goodness gush forth. (Hitva'aduyot 5744, vol. 2, pp. 868-869) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

SILENCING INNER DOUBTS

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Amalek came and waged war against Israel in Rephidim." (17:8)

The physical attack of the nation of Amalek was the outer manifestation of the spiritual attack of the people's inner Amalek - their doubt regarding G-d's care and involvement in their lives.

This inner Amalek continues to plague us today, attempting to sow doubt and cool our religious fervor. It acknowledges that G-d exists but tries to convince us that G-d is too great to care about the details of our Jewish observance.

Doubt leads to doubt, and eventually our inner Amalek convinces us that G-d is not involved in human life altogether. That, in turn, causes us to abandon our search for G-dliness and spirituality.

Thus, just as the Exodus from Egypt reoccurs in every generation and every day, so does the war with Amalek. Every day, we must silence the voice of doubt that seeks to halt our spiritual progress. Once we successfully leave our inner Egypt and overcome our inner Amalek, we are ready to receive the Torah anew and enter our Promised Land.

Successfully implementing this process of spiritual growth on an individual basis will hasten its collective fulfillment, bringing the world to its Messianic Redemption. (Sichot Kodosh 5739, vol. 2, pp. 144-145; Torah Ohr 84b-85b; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5747-5751, pp. 101-105) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

DESCENT FOR AN ASCENT

Reb Noson of Breslov

"Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim." (17:8)

Rephidim (רפידים) - this represents a *Riphyon* (רפיון, weakening) in their commitment to Torah. (Sanhedrin 106a)

The Jewish people, poised to receive the Torah at Sinai, experienced a weakening in their commitment to Torah that enabled Amalek to attack. G-d then declared a battle with Amalek in every generation (Shemos 17:16), because this phenomenon repeats itself again and again. Prior to any revelation of G-dliness, a person will experience a slackening in his devotions. He must be prepared for this descent and wage the proper battle to overcome "Amalek" so that he merits an ascent, to a revelation of G-dliness. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 55a)

Amalek's main battle plan is to conceal the light of the *tzaddikim*. He does this by convincing people to pursue wealth, honor, immorality, and so on, and thereby turn away from the *tzaddikim*. This battle takes place in every generation and only G-d can truly fight this battle (for He is Eternal). (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 200)

TO IGNORE OR TO FIGHT

Lubavitcher Rebbe

"Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim." (17:8)

Amalek was the second enemy the Jews encountered after they left Egypt. The first was the Egyptians, who pursued them into the *Yam Suf*. There, Moshe said, "G-d will do battle for you, and you shall remain silent." In contrast, G-d told the Children of Israel to fight the Amalekites themselves. This is because the Egyptians stood in back of the Jews; they were not blocking their path to Har Sinai. In contrast, the Amalekites were impeding their progress.

Similarly, whenever we are confronted with adversity, we must determine the nature of its threat: does it stand as a barrier between us and the Torah or is it merely a spiritual nuisance? In the latter case, we can safely ignore it, trusting that G-d will take care of it if we press on toward our goal. If, on the other hand, it is a threat that, like Amalek, stands in the way of bringing spiritual light to the world, we must tackle it head on. - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

STAFF OF WILL

Rebbe Nachman

"Go out to battle with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of G-d in my hand." (17:9)

The "staff of G-d" is a person's will, which every individual can direct as he chooses. (See Likutey Moharan I, 79)

ACT FAST

Rabbi Shlomo Ressler

"Go out to battle with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of G-d in my hand." (17:9)

As Amalek attacks the Jewish people, Moshe instructs Yehoshua to assemble men and battle the next day while "I [will] stand on top of the hill with the staff of G-d in my hand" (17:9). As long as Moshe held up his hands, the Jews prevailed.

Why would Moshe's hands need to be raised for the Jewish people to prevail in battle?

Many commentaries explain that as long as the Jews realize and look to G-d for support, they are victorious, and Moshe raising his hands to Heaven helped remind the people of that perspective as they fought.

Still, why did they need help to remember to look to Heaven?

Rav Avraham Wolfson points to a Targum Yonasan that highlights a beautiful lesson: When Moshe instructs Yehoshua to assemble men for battle, he instructs them to battle "the next day." This delay caused a weakness in the people and required extra support from Moshe.

When we know what needs to be done and we delay, procrastination weakens us physically and mentally. This episode shows us both the unwavering support that G-d provides us when we make efforts toward our goals, and the power of acting promptly on those goals.

STRENGTHENING THE LEADER

Sefas Emes

"And it came to pass when Moshe held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed." (17:11)

But could Moshe's hand wage a battle or lose a battle? This teaches us that whenever the Jews looked up and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed, but if not, they fell. (Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 29)

If Moshe knew that the Jews would prevail only as long as he held up his hand, why did he ever put his hand down?

Moshe's hand was only as strong as his people were steadfast. Whenever the Jews turned their hearts to their Father in Heaven, Moshe's hand was strengthened (the verb *misgavrim*, "they prevailed" [lit., "they were strengthened"], in Rashi's statement refers not to the Jews but to Moshe's hand).

Then Moshe would be able to continue holding up his hand. But whenever the Jews turned their hearts away from the Most High, Moshe's hand dropped.

This teaches us that the repentance and high resolve of a people give strength to their leader, enabling him to act and pray to bring them victory and salvation.

RAISING OUR HANDS

Reb Noson of Breslov

"And it came to pass when Moshe held up his hand, that Israel prevailed..." (17:11)

Amalek represents those who believe in the forces of nature and thus deny G-d. Moshe raised his hands to invoke the power of G-d.

In order to defeat Amalek and his kind, we must raise our hands in prayer to G-d. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 19a)

THE THREE PILLARS

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

"Moshe's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it underneath him and he sat on it, and Aharon and Chur supported his hands, one on this side and one on that side, and he was with his hands in faith until the setting of the sun." (17:12)

Parshas Beshalach ends with the story of *Bnei Yisrael's* war against Amalek, who attacked them, unprovoked, in Rephidim.

The Torah tells that Moshe stood on a hilltop overlooking the battlefield, and when he raised his arms, drawing the people's thoughts to Hashem, they were victorious, but when he lowered his arms, Amalek was victorious. Moshe's brother, Aharon, and his nephew, Chur, thus stood beside him, each holding up one of his arms (17:12).

Rav Yisroel Meir Druck explained that this scene represents the three "pillars" upon which the Torah stands, as the Mishna in the beginning of Pirkei Avos (1:2) famously teaches - תורה, עבודה, גמילות חסדים.

Moshe, who brought us the Torah from the heavens, represents Torah; Aharon, the *kohen gadol* who served in the Mishkan, embodies עבודה, the devoted service of Hashem; and Chur was the son of Miriam, a paragon of *chesed*, who - as Chazal teach - was one of the two midwives who risked their lives to defy Pharaoh's edict that newborn boys should be killed.

Rav Druck explains on this basis why Rashi, commenting on this *pasuk*, found it necessary to inform us that Chur was Miriam's son.

This information is necessary for us to understand the meaning of Aharon and Chur standing alongside Moshe as *Bnei Yisrael* fought against Amalek, that they symbolized the three "pillars" of Jewish life, one of which is represented by Miriam's extraordinary self-sacrifice on behalf of others.

In order to defeat "Amalek," to overcome our foes, and to triumph over the spiritually hostile forces represented by Amalek, we must reaffirm our commitment to all three "pillars."

We combat our adversaries through our complete, unbridled devotion to all areas of Torah life, without any compromises.

HEALTHY BALANCE

Rabbi Moshe Schochet

"Moshe's hands grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it underneath him and he sat on it, and Aharon and Chur supported his hands, one on this side and one on that side..." (17:12)

The Torah relates how Moshe conducted himself when *Bnei Yisrael* went to war with Amalek. Moshe would hold his hands up with Aharon standing on one side and Chur (his brother-in-law) standing on the other side to support Moshe's hands when they would get tired.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab (Maayan Beis Hashoeivah) explains that the usage of the word "*echad*" twice is to highlight two individual *middos*: one possessed by Aharon and one by Chur.

Aharon was known to all as a peace maker. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos famously states that Aharon was *ohev shalom v'rodef shalom*; *ohev es habrios umekarvan l'Torah* - "he loved peace and chased after peace; he loved all people and brought them closer to Torah."

Chur was a passionate person who fought for Hashem's honor at all costs. As we know, Chur was killed trying to deter the people from building the Golden Calf.

Moshe, who stood between these two people, was a combination of both of these *middos*. He understood when to chase after peace, like his brother Aharon. At the same time, he understood when to go to battle in defense of Hashem and the Torah, like his brother-in-law Chur.

In fact, as Rabbi Schwab explains, it is when Moshe went up to *shamayim* to learn with Hashem that the sin of the Golden Calf occurred. As mentioned above, Chur attempts to stop the rebellion and ultimately loses his life as a result. Aharon attempted to proceed peacefully, which served to facilitate the building of the idol. In order to be a successful leader and servant of Hashem, one must synthesize and merge these two *middos*, not separate them.

We must strive to create a healthy balance in which we integrate both of these character traits into our lives with appropriate measure. We need to be like Aharon and focus on creating peace while also being passionate and fervent like Chur. If we incorporate each personality trait into our lives in the right way, we will be sure to become successful leaders like Moshe in our homes, families and communities.

BATTLE AGAINST AMALEK

Reb Noson of Breslov

"He said, 'For the hand is on G-d's throne. G-d will wage war against Amalek in every generation.'" (17:16)

The verse says *Keis* (כס) and not *Kisei* (כסא, throne), and G-d's Holy Name *YHVH* is cut in half (יה-), since G-d swore that His Name and His throne would not be complete until the name of Amalek is erased completely. (Rashi)

Amalek's battle against the Jews represents the battle of heresy against faith, against the *tzaddikim*, and against all those who sincerely wish to serve G-d.

Indeed, Amalek is ready to fight anyone who believes in the One G-d. Therefore, G-d said, "My Name and My throne will not be complete until Amalek is defeated."

Ultimately, Amalek will be defeated, heresy will be removed from the world, and everyone will come to recognize the One G-d. (Likutey Halakhot VIII, p. 70b)

G-d wages this battle against Amalek through the *tzaddikim* who are found in every generation. And in every generation, there is a *tzaddik* whom Amalek battles.

However, this war is not fought by the *tzaddik* himself, but by his disciples, who recognize their need for the *tzaddik*.

In the desert, Amalek battled against Moshe - the *tzaddik* - and the war was fought by the Jewish people - Moshe's disciples. Though the *tzaddik* himself does not fight, his strength empowers his disciples to do battle. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 18)

HAFTORAH

EMULATING THE SUN

HaDerash VeHalyun

"...but let those who love Him be like the powerfully rising sun..." (Shoftim 5:31)

Of those who are insulted but do not return the insult, who hear their shame and do not retaliate, the Torah says: "Those who love Him are like the sun when it powerfully rises." (Gittin 36)

According to the Sages, those who do not retaliate when they are insulted and pay no attention when they are humiliated resemble the sun.

Actually, keeping silent in the face of insult and not reacting to humiliation is a virtue only when one's own honor is involved. This is what the Sages mean by the expression "they hear *their* shame," meaning their own, personal shame.

However, if one hears insults hurled at, for instance, an honest scholar, keeping silent is a sin. In this respect, the sun demonstrated conduct worthy of emulation.

We are told that when the world was first created, the moon, in an attempt to humiliate the sun, declared: "Two kings cannot have the same crown." The sun remained silent in the face of this insult to its dignity. But the Sages (Nedarim 39) say that when Korach and his company revolted against Moshe, the sun took up the light for Moshe's honor, refusing to spread its light over the world unless the person who had insulted Moshe was punished.

Hence, those who "hear their own shame and don't reply" but are quick to defend the honor of other innocent persons are truly "like the sun when it powerfully rises," for they show the same strength and steadfastness as the sun in the heavens.

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