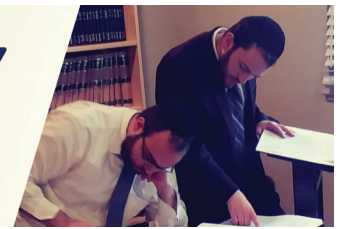




TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Parshas Beshalach

January 14, 2022

A Taste of Torah

The Purest Song

by Rabbi Chaim Gross

Every day, as part of *shacharis* (the morning prayers), we recite *Shiras Hayam*, the song that was uttered at the Splitting of the Red Sea, one of the loftiest moments in our nation's history. The Mishnah Berura, quoting the Zohar, writes that whoever recites this *shira* (song) with joy will be forgiven for all his transgressions!

But what does it really mean to sing *shira* to Hashem, and how does it connect to our ordinary, miracle-free daily lives? Let us take a closer look at what occurred at the Red Sea, and hopefully come out with a new understanding of what *shira* is all about in a most practical way.

A basic reading of the Torah indicates that Bnai Yisrael sang *shira* after experiencing the miraculous Splitting of the Sea. However, the Medrash tells a different tale – that the *Shiras Hayam* was actually sung before the splitting of the sea! How can this be? Rabbi Yerucham Olshin answered with something startling. In reality, he said, there were two groups in Bnai Yisrael at this time. There were those who, understandably, sang *shira* only after witnessing Hashem's salvation, joyously thanking Him for saving them from death. However, there was another group, a more exalted one, which sang *shira* at a different time, at a moment when their lives hung in the balance and the future seemed so uncertain... they, too, sang *shira*, not one of a salvation which had already occurred, but one born out of their pure belief that Hashem would bring them the deliverance they so desperately needed.

These are two levels of *shira* – one, the most basic, to praise Hashem when He has already granted the salvation, and a higher level, to utter *shira* based on the faith that He will send the necessary help. These are most valuable lessons for our everyday lives. As we go through each day and week, we invariably encounter

challenging situations – not necessarily as scary as that of the Jewish Nation before the sea's splitting, but difficult nonetheless. The choice is ours: Will we join the group of those who sing *shira* only after Hashem rescues us, or will we be from those privileged ones to sing with faith in Hashem that He will come through for us?

However, there is yet a third level of *shira*, even higher than those we have spoken of until now.

The Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto; 1707-1746) in his classic *mussar* (ethical) work *Mesilas Yesharim* (Chapter 19) discusses the fact that, unfortunately, difficult situations come up in every person's life. He goes on to discuss something people often struggle with – how does one retain his love for Hashem despite the painful circumstance sent by none other than Him? The *Mesilas Yesharim* guides us in navigating this challenge by providing the following tool: one must know and realize that everything Hashem does is truly for our good. Even though we cannot always understand why it is good, just knowing that it is good comforts us and prevents feelings of resentment from creeping in.

While easier said than done, if we learn to live with this realization, we can come to praise Hashem on a level higher even than the second group discussed above. For that group sings *shira* in faith that Hashem will bring them out of their situation and grant them deliverance, but they fail to realize that, in reality, the salvation has already come, for this difficulty in and of itself is a blessing. However, one who approaches hardships with the understanding that Hashem knows this to be the absolute best thing for him can sing *shira* for the difficulty itself, realizing that this, too, is a precious gift from our caring Father.

continued on back

Stories for the Soul

Underperforming

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter (1810-1883) once stayed at an inn. While there, he noticed that the innkeeper's religious observance left much to be desired. Rabbi Salanter broached the subject with the fellow, wondering why his devotion had declined.

"Well," explained the innkeeper, "there was a heretic staying at my inn not so long ago, and he sat down to eat. He took a piece of non-kosher meat, and announced, 'If there truly is G-d, I should choke on this meat!' Nothing happened to him, and his actions caused my faith in G-d to weaken. After all, if there is a G-d, why was this person left unscathed?"

Rabbi Salanter noticed a diploma hanging on the wall of the inn. Upon inquiry, he was told that the innkeeper's daughter was an accomplished musician, and the diploma attested to her degree in music.

Rabbi Salanter asked the young woman if she would play the piano for him in order to prove her prowess.

"Why should I perform?" she responded. "I have a diploma that shows that I am a master musician!"

"I don't want to rely on your diploma," responded Rabbi Salanter. "I need to hear it for myself!"

"What do you mean you don't believe it?!" the daughter snapped back. "My diploma proves it! I don't have to perform for every skeptic!"

Rabbi Salanter turned to the innkeeper and said, "The Torah testifies to the fact that Hashem performed miracles. That is His proof. He doesn't have to perform for every skeptic!"

The miracles of the Exodus established Hashem's dominion over every aspect of Creation. Those lessons have been passed down, generation to generation, and we continue to live with that knowledge.

Kollel Happenings

RABBI YOSSI EPHRATHI NOW TEACHING LEARN 2 LEARN GESHMAK

You may have limited experience learning Talmud. You may think that you don't enjoy serious Talmud study, that it's just not for you. But you haven't tried Learn 2 Learn Geshmak. A gemara program crafted to give you the satisfaction and joy of learning, Learn 2 Learn Geshmak is now being taught by Kollel Scholar Rabbi Yossi Ephrathi, and is beginning a new topic. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at rnk@denverkollel.org for further details.

M.B. GLASSMAN DIVISION GOLD SENIOR LUNCH & LEARN MONDAYS AT EDOS

The GOLD Lunch & Learn for seniors is back at EDOS, 198 S. Holly St., on most Mondays at 12 noon. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Class is available on Zoom, as well. For info, to confirm there is a class or for Zoom link info, email rmf@denverkollel.org.

TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at rnk@denverkollel.org for further details.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: A group of three men ate together. None of them has recited *Birkas Hamazon*, yet one of the three did something that takes away their ability to have a *mezuman*. What did he do?

Answer: He joined another group for their *mezuman*. Once he has done so, he has fulfilled his personal *mezuman*

obligation, and can no longer be part of the other group's *mezuman* (Rema Orach Chaim 194:1). (Of course, if there are three people remaining in the old group, they may still recite *mezuman*.)

This week's question: How does the number of people in the *zimmun* affect the need to sit instead of being able to stand?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XXXIV

Of course, creating this yeshiva would require massive amounts of funding. The very first thing Rabbi Shapiro required, however, was a plot of land upon which to erect his building. On a visit to Lublin, he met with a friend of his, a wealthy Jew by the name of Shmuel Eichenbaum.

Mr. Eichenbaum owned an empty lot in Lublin, located at Lubitrovska 57; it is said this was a valuable piece of real estate. Rabbi Shapiro shared his vision for a great yeshiva with his friend, and asked him if he'd be willing to give him a small piece of the lot for the yeshiva.

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

There is still one more rung to climb in the ladder of *shira*, one that far supersedes the first three. The Chovos Halevavos (authored by Rabbi Bachya ibn Pikuda of 11th century Spain) in Sha'ar Habitachon teaches that although we can deal with suffering by saying that it is truly good for us and it is in our best interest to undergo these challenges, there is a much greater approach, exclusive to those who live on an entirely different spiritual plane. These unique individuals realize that life is simply not about us and what is good for us altogether; rather, the purpose of our existence is for one thing and one thing only, to perform the will of G-d. And a challenging situation, difficult as it may be, is also His will.

I heard many times from my grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, of the last words she heard from her father before she fled her hometown, Pressov, shortly before it was overtaken by the Nazis. Her father was elderly and physically unable to go into hiding, although he was well aware of what was to come. He placed his hands on her head and emotionally gave her the priestly blessing, as he was a *kohen*. When he finished, my grandmother turned to

him and tearfully asked, "But what will be with you? What will be when they come for you?" Her father looked her and replied, "I will go with my *tallis* and *tefillin* - and accept the decree with love..." Those were the final words she heard from him.

The one who is lucky enough to attain such a spiritual, selfless level also sings *shira*, but not one born of witnessing the salvation of Hashem like the first level, not out of hope and faith of a future deliverance like those in the second group, and not even from the realization that the difficulty itself is actually good for him. Rather, he sings *shira* because all that simply does not matter - all that matters is to fulfill the will of Hashem. The verse in Tehillim (Psalms 104:33) says, "I will sing *shira* to Hashem with my life." On a deeper level, this verse can be interpreted as saying, "I will sing *shira* to Hashem by living the life that He has chosen to give me." Praiseworthy is the one who accomplishes this in his lifetime.

May we all merit to internalize the lessons of *shira* and implement them into our own lives, so that when the Final Song is recited with the coming of Mashiach, we will be able to join in at that joyous moment, may it come speedily in our days.

To sponsor Torah Weekly, delivered weekly in print and via email to thousands of Jews worldwide, email info@denverkollel.org
Denver Community Kollel | 5080 W. 14th Ave., Denver, CO 80204 | 303-820-2855
info@denverkollel.org | www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, email to info@denverkollel.org