

Derech Ha-Rif

Excerpts from the Torah discourse delivered by The great Rabbi Yoshiyahu Yosef Pinto Shlita

For the Torah portion of Beshalach | Volume 60 | 17 Shevat



First Shabbat Meal

"Thus, Moshe and the Jewish people will sing this song (Shemot 15:1)."

Reciting the Song of The Sea (Az Yashir) diminishes globally the draw to corporeal pleasures.

The Chida zt"l conveys an intense message of how one should recite the portion of Az Yashir every day. One should envisage the same scenario and conditions that the Jewish Nation was in just prior to jumping into the sea. The nation was surrounded on all sides: Bloodthirsty Egyptians behind them, blazing and perilous deserts to the sides and the infinite expanse of the sea in their direct path. Then, all of a sudden, with trepidation and absolute faith in Hashem aroused in everyone's heart, the tumultuous sea separated itself into two, revealing a dry and flat surface, beckoning the nation forward.

In short, while reciting Az Yashir, one must reenact the crossing of the Red Sea in one's imagination. The Chida zt"l goes so far as to say that if one does so, Hashem will without a doubt bestow Salvation on the person and also forgive all their sins. One has the opportunity every single day to be granted salvation in whatever they need, to have their sins forgiven, to succeed in all their undertakings by only reciting the Az Yashir with joy and genuine sincerity and emotion.

Why is this so? What is the power of Az Yashir such that it bestows so much blessing? Furthermore, the Zohar (Beshalach 52b) teaches that Mashiach will repeat Az Yashir when he comes. What is so special about this song that Mashiach will recite it once again in the very near future?

An indication to the source of power of Az Yashir can be found in the Arizal (Shaarei Kedusha 8:2). The Arizal explains that there are four primary elements which make up our world and these are represented by physical elements and are associated with intellectual elements as well. The elements are fire, water, air and earth. Fire represents arrogance, water represents sensual pleasures, air represents Lashon Hara (slander) and earth represents depression.

At the splitting of the sea, all the waters of the world were split into two separate entities. Not only was the physical world affected, but the spiritual/intellectual world was as well. Meaning, that alongside this incredible miracle, there was also a splitting of the intellectual component of the sea, i.e. the draw to desires and pleasures; along with this miracle, there was a diminishing of attraction to earthly pleasures.

This is the basis of the power of reciting Az Yashir; it reduces the Evil Inclination for earthly desires. Reciting Az Yashir banishes the Yetzer Hara and elevates us spiritually. This also explains why we will read it in the time of the Mashiach.

The recital of Az Yashir is immense and there have been many Tzadikim who would dance from joy at imagining the Crossing of the Red Sea as if they were actually present.



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Soul Of the Rif

There is something basic to be aware of. If a person wishes to become angry, they should stop for a few seconds and count slowly, "One, two, three, four, five..." A person should count a little, stop and think about something positive, such as how much you have helped someone in such and such way, and then stop.

If you want to be angry, stop for a moment. If you wish to drink alcohol, stop, and drink a little later but not right away. If you wish to argue with someone, stop, and then answer them in a little bit. It is imperative not to do things automatically, the moment a person does things automatically, they ruin their life.

Feelings should not lead to outcomes in the mind and thought, instead, one's thoughts should lead to results in terms of one's feelings. If a person's thoughts are mere results of how they feel, then they are living a life of destruction.



2nd Shabbat Meal

**"And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him (Shemot 13:19)."
When someone withholds himself from that which he deserves, he will receive incredible things beyond description.**

This week's portion teaches that "Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him." The Talmud (Sotah 13a) comments on this: Come and see how dear Mitzvot were to Moshe, for all of Yisrael were busying themselves with wealth, and he busied himself with Mitzvot, as it says, "A wise-hearted person will take Mitzvot (Mishlei 10:8)." There is an enormous difficulty which needs to be asked, Moshe Rabbeinu had no right to take from the wealth of Egypt. As our Rabbis teach, since the tribe of Levi were not enslaved and they did not serve in Egypt, they had no right to take of the wealth; only those who were enslaved were able to take off the plunder.

Our Rabbis teach further that all the evil that befell Korach was a result of him being the only person from the tribe of Levi who took of the wealth. In light of this, the Torah's choice to praise Moshe our teacher, saying that a wise-hearted person will take Mitzvos in reference to his lack of taking of the plunder requires explanation, as it emerges that it was forbidden for him to take of the spoils of Egypt, as he was from the tribe of Levi and did not work as a slave in Egypt.

The following answer can be given: Moshe would come and go before Pharaoh, in this regard, he too was enslaved, as he had to flee from Pharaoh, he had to leave Egypt and he too underwent suffering on account of the redemption of the Jewish people. Since he underwent difficulty in order to attain the redemption, he too is defined as having been enslaved. Our holy Rabbis teach that Kayin was a Gilgul (transmigration) of Kayin and Moshe was a Gilgul of Hevel. It was therefore permitted for him to take all that Kayin took from Hevel during the previous lifetimes. In any case, even though it was permitted for Moshe to take from the wealth, he withheld himself and did not even touch it. Through this, Moshe achieved tremendous elevation for his soul.

A person needs to know a key concept. There are many things in life which a person can do, and the Halacha even permits them. However, the moment a person holds themselves back and does not do

them, they attain tremendous achievements which are unparalleled. Many people attained entire worlds because they deserved something and because they worked on their Middot (character traits), they did not act or take based on what they deserved. When a person overcomes their tendencies and relinquishes things that they deserve, they merit and receive things which cannot be evaluated nor described. This is what happened to Moshe, he overcame himself and did not take anything from the wealth of Egypt; as a result of this, he merited great things.

**"And it was when Pharaoh sent the people... (Shemot 13:17)."
A person's mission being performed with joy brings great success to the mission.**

The Noam Elimelech asks why Bnei Yisrael underwent forty difficult years in the desert? the Talmud (Megilla 10b) teaches that the word 'vayehi' is always an expression of pain and therefore Bnei Yisrael underwent forty years of suffering in the desert.

There is a key concept which one needs to be aware of: When a person sends his friend, his son or his wife, and so too, when a woman sends her husband or her child somewhere, it is necessary to separate from one another with joy and positivity. If people depart from each other with sadness, the path which a person goes on will be a cause of sadness and stumbling.

Pharaoh sent Bnei Yisrael with sadness, as indicated by the word 'vayehi' which connotes pain. Throughout the time that Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they endured sadness and difficult events. Therefore, a person should be careful about the following. When a person sends a friend on a journey, or a parent sends off a child, they should go on their way in joy. If they go in joy, the path will also be one of joy; if a person goes off in sadness, the journey will be with sadness.

Q & A with the Rif



Question:

Dear Rabbi, our Ketuba (Halachic marriage document) was with our parents, who are no longer alive. All of the contents of the house were thrown away, including the Ketuba. What should we do?

Answer:

Go to the rabbinat. A person must have a Ketuba in their house, if one does not have a Ketuba, this is an extremely severe matter. The Rabbi will make a new Ketuba in place of the one which was lost. There are many matters behind having a Ketuba, but the bottom line is that it is imperative that a couple has one.





3rd Shabbat meal

Third Shabbat Meal

"And Hashem said to Moshe: 'Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and let them journey forward' (Shemot 14:15)."

During the splitting of the sea, like on the holy Shabbat, great light and blessing came down from Hashem without any requirement for preparation and awakening from Bnei Yisrael.

In this week's portion, we see Bnei Yisrael come out of Egypt and stand by the Red Sea. The Egyptians were behind them and the sea was in front; they had wild animals and the desert on either side. Bnei Yisrael were in an extremely difficult predicament and did not know what to do. Moshe stood and prayed to Hashem, but Hashem answered him, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they should travel." There is a basic and strong question to be asked, what is the meaning of this line, "Why do you cry out to Me?" The Jewish people were in trouble, facing an unparalleled problem, what was it that they were supposed to do? Were they meant to remain silent?

When a person is in a difficult predicament and they pray to Hashem, this is a fulfilment of what the Torah says "when there is trouble for you ... return to Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice (Devarim 30:4)." When a person faces oppression and difficult things, he prays to Hashem, this is what everyone has done throughout the generations, and this is what we do in every troublesome situation. Short of praying, what is there that we can do? Therefore, what is the meaning of "Why do you cry out to Me?"

Perhaps, this issue can be explained along the lines of the Zohar. The Zohar (47a) in this week's portion states that Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai would connect the splitting of the sea to the holy Shabbat, for the two concepts have equal weight. One of the key cornerstones of Judaism is the observance of Shabbat. Indeed, Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that whoever observes the Shabbat according to the Halacha, even if he worships idols like the generation of Enosh, will be forgiven (Shabbat 118b). The Shabbat carries exceptional power to elevate a person.

The Talmud (Shabbat 10b) brings as follows: Hashem said to Moshe, "I have a good present in My storehouse and Shabbat is its name." However, this gives rise to a question. If a person gives an item to his friend, he is giving him a present, in that the recipient has now gained a present. However, if one already owned something, in that it belonged to him prior to the current point in time, then this is not a present. Something is only defined as a present if it is given to another person. Therefore, what is the meaning of the idea that Hashem has a present and its name is Shabbat, from whom did He receive this present?

A tremendous concept can be suggested in answer to this question. The essence and depth of the holy Shabbat is special and incredibly deep. As we say in our prayers, "And two tablets of stone he [Moshe] brought down in his hands, and the observance of Shabbat was written on them, and so is written in Your Torah." When Moshe broke the Luchot (tablets) after the sin of the golden calf, all of the commandments within them flew out, other than the command to observe Shabbat, which remained in the Luchot and did not move. This is the source of the immense power of keeping Shabbat, a level of strength which cannot be evaluated or described.

Therefore, it can be explained that the Jewish people began to keep Shabbat already when they were in Egypt before the giving of the Torah and the Mitzvot which they were instructed about in Mara. The Midrash (Shemot Rabba 1:28) says that when Pharaoh decreed harsh decrees against the

Jewish people, they were working seven days a week, for twenty-four hours a day. Moshe went to Pharaoh and asked, "If a person has a slave, does he want the slave to die or does he want him to be healthy?" Pharaoh responded, "Of course, he will want him to be healthy, in order that he works well and provides a good level of output." Moshe said to Pharaoh that if he were to continue working the Jews seven days a week, they would die and he therefore advised giving them a day off. Pharaoh asked which day he should give them, Moshe asked that Shabbat be the day that they were allowed to rest. The Jews would rest every Shabbat, and they ensured to refrain from speaking Lashon Hara (gossip) or Rechilus (rumours) for the entirety of the day.

There are people who look for things to speak about throughout the entire day. They discuss what other people have said, how they have spoken and what they have and have not done. These people come from a root of Kayin; all connection with them is bad for the entire world. During Shabbat, Bnei Yisrael would have been able to sit and spread rumours about each other in regard to what the other had said or done. However, the Midrash (ibid. 5:22) states that they would not gossip, but rather sat and learnt Aggadot (Midrashic stories) which were written for them on skins. They had records of all forms of learning from the time of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. They would sit and learn these every Shabbat, becoming stronger and holier through them.

Bnei Yisrael began to observe the Shabbat before it was given in Mara. When they were given a free day in Egypt, instead of sitting, strolling and enjoying themselves through whatever means, they sat and learnt from the old Aggadot and kept the Shabbat.

Hashem said that He had a good present in His storehouse named Shabbat. The Jewish people began to observe Shabbat even before Hashem gave it to them. Therefore, relative to Hashem, the Shabbat was a present because the Jewish people had set its borders and strengthened the concept of observance of Shabbat. Therefore, Hashem said "I have a good present in My storehouse," for relative to Him, it was defined as a present. The other question must therefore be asked, why did Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai connect the power of Shabbat to the splitting of the Red Sea?

Perhaps, a tremendous concept can be suggested in answer to this question. The difference between Shabbat and the Chagim (festivals) is that the Chagim require preparation, the awakening of below (i.e., this world) must first take place. As a result of the awakening below, awakening and elevation comes from above. However, in the setting of Shabbat, this is not so; immediately, upon Shabbat entering, there is an upper awakening and Hashem pours out great light and bounty from all of the worlds, without any need for awakening and exertion on the part of man below.

Based on this, it is possible to explain that Bnei Yisrael stood at Kriyat Yam Suf and were uncertain if a lower world awakening was needed in order to ascend and become stronger. It was then that a great gift of divine impact came from on High. Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry out to Me?" He meant to say, this is like Shabbat, there is an upper awakening, there is light above with no need for a lower world awakening. For this reason, Hashem informed Moshe that there was no need to wait, and rather he should, "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and they should travel." This was because He, Hashem, would offer Divine assistance and support. Therefore, even though the splitting of the sea took place on a Wednesday, it nevertheless carried the essence of the holy Shabbat.

Therefore, on Shabbat, in our prayers, we say: "It is Shabbat from crying out, and recuperation is close to coming," (Shabbat 12a). On Shabbat, there is power which does not require us to cry out in order to benefit from, just as was the case at the splitting of the sea. The power of Shabbat is entirely sourced in the awakening of the upper world without any need for the awakening of the lower world.

Treasure charms from the Rif



It is known that Parashat Beshalach contains all the foundation principles relating to Parnasah (sustenance). In this light, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov would relate that anyone who reads 'Parashat HaMan' on the Tuesday preceding Parashat Beshalav, can be assured of a comfortable Parnasah, mirroring the Divine sustenance related in this week's Parashah.



The fourth Post Shabbat meal

Stories from the Rif

Rabbi Moshe ben Yonatan Galante was a tremendous Tzaddik who lived in the city of Tzfat during the days of the Ari KaKadosh. Below is a story about him.

One day, Rav Galante went to visit the Ari HaKadosh. The Ari warmly welcomed his guest and began to sing his praises. He told him that he was a Tzaddik, a Chassid and a true Ba'al Yirat Shamayim (one who fears Heaven); however, he added that there was a certain positive attribute which he lacked.

Rav Galante, although touched by the Ari's praises, was deeply concerned about the trait he lacked. He therefore asked the Ari to elaborate upon the trait which he was missing. The Ari responded that he had been able to discern from his face that he, Rav Galante, was in fact a thief and was in possession of a stolen item. Rav Galante was horrified by the accusation, and immediately began to introspect. He knew that he was a trustworthy person who gave generously to Tzedakah, and he couldn't think of what it could be that he had stolen! He asked the Ari which item he had stolen and where it could be found, but the Ari responded that it was incumbent upon him to search for the item himself.

Rav Galante immediately went to his office and searched through all his bills and documents, however, he could not find any sign of theft. With the Ari's words burning in his mind, Rav Galante retrieved a hefty bounty of treasures from his safe and spread them out over the table in his office. He then summoned all his employees to the room. Once they had all arrived, he declared that if any of them felt that he had stolen anything from them, they should take that which they felt they were owed from amongst the treasures. The employees were bowled over by his statement and immediately informed him that he was a noble employer and had never stolen from any of them. However, after a couple of minutes, an old lady approached the table. The lady examined the wares, and upon identifying two valuable coins, she gracefully declared that they rightfully belonged to her. Rav Galante did not understand why, but having Emunah in the words of the Ari, he nodded his head and the old lady and other employees left and went on their way.

Once he had cleared up the wares, Rav Galante returned to the Ari HaKadosh. The Ari examined Rav Galante's face and joyously informed him that he was no longer a thief; he had returned that which he owed. Rav Galante was overjoyed by the Ari's assurance, but he was still perplexed by the incident with the old lady; he therefore related it to the Ari and sought an explanation. The Ari explained that although Rav Galante's employees were all hard-working, the old lady worked the hardest of all. Moreover, her age lent her a unique level of experience which meant she was exceptionally talented at her job. The lady was paid the same as the other employees, however in truth she deserved to be paid an additional amount, equivalent to those two coins. The Ari concluded that upon Rav Galante paying her those two coins, he had settled his debt and was no longer considered a thief.

This story teaches us a valuable lesson. It teaches that even if one draws up an agreement with someone for that person to perform a job and be paid a certain amount, if at the time of the job's completion, it becomes clear that the person ought to be paid more than that agreed, it is virtuous to consider paying them the amount they are truly owed.

More broadly, we can understand that one must be exceptionally careful regarding his monetary dealings. He ought to ensure that he returns exactly that which he took from his friend; and in so doing he will ensure that all his interactions will be pure and holy. If one can accustom oneself to be

in the mindset of serving Hashem in every facet of life, then it will become easier to act with unyielding integrity in all monetary matters. If one exerts oneself in this area of serving Hashem, then Hashem will surely give them Divine assistance in all their endeavours.

It is recorded that one year, Yerushalayim was hit by a terrible famine. No rain fell and the Jews of Yerushalayim found themselves in dire straits. The ruler of Yerushalayim was a rabid antisemite and in his fury over the situation, he informed the Jews that he would banish them from the city if it didn't rain. Rav Galante was deeply troubled by the situation and therefore designated a day to be a day of communal fasting and prayer for rain. Rav Galante instructed all the Jews to accompany him to travel early in the morning to pray at the Kever (grave) of Shimon HaTzaddik. In fact, his Emunah (faith) that Hashem would answer their prayers was so great, that he instructed the Jews to come with their coats and umbrellas, so as not to be soaked by the rain on the way back.

The designated day came, and it was scorching hot; yet despite this, the Jews rose and adorned themselves in their rain clothes. The Jews set off in the direction of the Kever, full of conviction that Hashem would answer their prayers. During their walk, a policeman stopped them and asked where they were going dressed in such a ridiculous manner. Rav Galante answered that they were going to pray to beseech Hashem to bring down rain, and hence they were dressed in their rain clothes. The policeman scorned the Rav, mocking him for his obscene Emunah, and even hit him on his face. Undeterred by the policeman's behaviour, Rav Galante and the Jews continued to the Kever. They had absolute Emunah and surmised that they would refuse to leave the Kever until Hashem opened the windows of Heaven and brought down rain.

This story exhibits what true Emunah is. Rav Galante genuinely believed that his prayers would be answered, to the extent that he couldn't comprehend a reality in which they would not be answered. It is imperative for us to draw on this to inform our own prayers. Rather than simply praying and hoping that something will transpire, we must learn from Rav Galante, that it is virtuous to envisage that the subject of our prayers will happen with absolute certainty. This level of Emunah in Hashem, will, G-d willing, bring our redemption speedily in our days.

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