

# **SALVATION IS HASHEM**

*by Shlomo Katz*

## **Parshas Shlach**

### **Salvation is Hashem's**

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Today's Learning:  
Keilim 29:4-5  
O.C. 314:11-315:1  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Metzia 56  
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Batra 9

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (21:31), "The horse is readied for the day of battle, but salvation is Hashem's." Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (14th century; Spain) explains: King Shlomo is warning in this verse that a person should do everything in his power to improve his own lot according to the laws of nature, and then he should leave matters in Hashem's hand. The reason for this is that man was created to live within nature, and miracles begin only where nature ends.

For example, R' Bachya writes, one who wishes to go to war must prepare weapons, horses and chariots to the best of his ability. If he fails to prepare at all, he will certainly fall into the hands of his

enemy. Likewise, if one has an ill person in his home, he should prepare medicines and healthy foods for the patient. Similarly, Hashem commanded Noach to build the tevah / ark. Hashem could have given Noach and his family the ability to live through the flood without a boat, but that is not how He runs the world.

Even so, R' Bachya continues, after a person has made appropriate preparations, he must recognize that it is not the preparations that bring success, but only the will of the Most High. A person can be defeated in battle notwithstanding his preparations or he can be saved from defeat without extensive weaponry. Likewise, an ill person can be cured without medicine, while some who take medicine are not cured.

R' Bachya continues: The success or failure of the Jewish People in battle depends on our merit or sinfulness. A small merit can be enough to defeat many enemies, while a small sin can be sufficient to cause a tragic defeat. Even so, we are commanded to act in accordance with nature, and this is why Hashem told Moshe to send spies to Eretz Yisrael, as related in our parashah. (Beur Al Ha'Torah)

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"Moshe sent them forth from the Wilderness of Paran at Hashem's command; they were all distinguished men . . ." (13:3)

Rashi z"l comments: At that moment, they were still righteous.

Even so, asks R' Yehuda Assad z"l (1796-1866; a leading Hungarian rabbi), how can Hashem associate His name in the verse with people who were essentially wicked? He explains:

We read about Yishmael, the son of Avraham (Bereishit 21:17), that "G-d has heeded the cry of the youth in his present state." Rashi explains that the angels argued that Hashem should not save Yishmael, who was dying of thirst, because his descendants were destined to kill Jews. Hashem said, "But in his present state, he is righteous."

Where did Yishmael settle after that incident? We read four verses later, "He settled in the Wilderness of Paran," the same place from which Moshe dispatched the spies hundreds of years later. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Hashem judged the spies in their present state as well and associated His name with them when they had not yet sinned. (Divrei MaHaRIA)

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"The Land through which we passed to reconnoiter it -- the Land is very, very good." (14:7)

R' Chaim Palagi z"l (1788-1868; rabbi of Izmir, Turkey) writes: The punishment of those who spoke ill of Eretz Yisrael is well known, as described in our parashah. One is forbidden to speak ill of Eretz Yisrael - not only of its inhabitants, but even of the Land itself. For example, one should praise the beauty of the mountains and should not mention that they are rocky and hard. One who mentions the faults of Eretz Yisrael speaks lashon hara and can cause others to despise the Land. The Gemara

(Ketubot 114a) mentions that the sage Rabbi Abba used to kiss the stones near Akko (the northern border of the Land at that time), while the sage Rabbi Chiya would smooth out the roads so that nobody would trip and thereby have cause to criticize the Land. If Rabbi Chiya went to that extent to protect the good name of the Land itself, certainly one should never speak ill of the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Prinei Rav Chaim Palagi p.381)

A related thought:

R' Moshe Zvi Neriyah z"l writes: Many years ago, I accompanied R' Aryeh Levin z"l to a shivah house--of a family, incidentally, that R' Levin did not know--and I asked him, "We read in Tehilim (95:10), 'For forty years I was angry with a generation; then I [G-d] said, "An errant- hearted people are they--they do not know My ways".' Were the Jews in the desert considered willful sinners or unintentional sinners?" I [R' Neriyah] asked.

R' Levin replied, "Definitely unintentional sinners! True, forty years is a long time to continue in this way, and the Jews did see wonders in Egypt which no one else has ever seen. However, the education of an entire nation is not easy, and it continues to this day. Even today, most Jews 'do not (yet) know My ways'." (B'sdeh Hare'iyah p.411)

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"It shall constitute tzitzit for you, that you may see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem and perform them." (15:39)

Why does this not work? Why do we usually not remember all of the mitzvot when we look at our tzitzit?

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) explains that one can only be reminded of what he already knows. Thus, if a person has studied the halachot / laws of all the mitzvot, then the tzitzit will remind him of those laws. However, if he is not familiar with the laws, what good can a glance at the tzitzit do?

The Chafetz Chaim explains this further with a parable: When a merchant travels to the annual fair, he makes a shopping list which consists of notations and abbreviations that will remind him of what he needs to buy for his business. All along the way, he reviews his list, scratching out some items and adding others.

Were this merchant's list to fall into the hands of someone who had never been to the fair, that person would not be able to understand the list. He does not know what wares are sold there or who the different wholesalers are. The list could not remind him of something he never knew. So it is with the tzitzit, says the Chafetz Chaim. If a person never knew the mitzvot, the tzitzit cannot remind him of them. (Quoted in V'karata La'Shabbat Oneg)

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"I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out from the land of Egypt to be a G-d to you; I am Hashem your G-d." (15:41)

Our Sages instructed us to recite the last five verses of our parashah twice daily (as the third paragraph of Kriat Shema) in order to recall the Exodus every day.

What is the difference between the mitzvah of zechirah / recalling the Exodus twice daily and the mitzvah of sippur / relating the story of the Exodus on the first night of Pesach? R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993) enumerates three differences in the name of his grandfather, R' Chaim Brisker z"l, and two more differences in his own name:

- (1) One fulfills the mitzvah of zechirah / recalling with a brief mention, as in our verse. Sippur requires telling the entire story of the enslavement and the Exodus.
- (2) Zechirah is performed privately, whereas sippur means telling someone else.
- (3) Zechirah is not an independent mitzvah, but is rather part of the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven that we undertake through our recitation of Kriat Shema. Sippur is a separate mitzvah.
- (4) Sippur entails offering praise and thanksgiving, while zechirah does not.
- (5) As noted above, sippur requires telling a story. More than that, however, sippur requires studying and expounding the Torah portions relating to the Exodus, as we in fact do at the Seder. Zechirah does not include such a requirement. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach: An Exalted Evening p.60)

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This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

27 Sivan: Some people fast today to commemorate the burning by the Romans of the Tanna / sage of the Mishnah, Rabbi Chananyah ben Teradyon z"l Hy"d, together with a sefer Torah (Shulchan Aruch, O.C. 580:2). This event is recorded in the kinot of Tishah B'Av as well as in the Mussaf of Yom Kippur.

R' Yehuda He'chassid z"l (died 1217) writes that one should limit pleasure trips on the day on which a tzaddik died. (Sefer Chassidim \* 715)

On this date in 5701 (June 22, 1941), Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

Friday night, Parashat Shelach: Some have the custom that, on this Shabbat and in other weeks when we the parashah speaks of Bnei Yisrael's rebelliousness in the desert, the chazzan for Kabbalat Shabbat does not recite aloud the verse, "For forty years I was angry with the generation . . ." (Luach Davar B'ito p.1092)

29 Sivan: On this date, the Spies were sent to Eretz Yisrael.

R' Chaim Vital z"l writes that the months of Adar through Sivan are a time when prayers are readily

accepted (Note to Zohar, Acharei p. 58a). Accordingly, one should use the waning hours of this month to beseech Hashem for his needs. (Luach Davar B'ito p.1109)

Rosh Chodesh Tamuz: The name of this month (Tamuz) is an acronym for the Hebrew phrase, "Zemanei Teshuvah Me'mashmishim U'va'im" / "The times of repentance are drawing closer." Therefore, "Zerizim Makdimim V'osim Teshuvah" / "The alacritous do not wait to repent." (Luach Davar B'ito p.1115)

In Izmir (Smyrna), Turkey, it was customary to close the talmud Torah ("cheder") on this day and to take the children on a nature hike. Some have speculated that, because the children need a day off in the hot summer, a day was chosen which often (though not this year) falls in the week when we read the verse (Bemidbar 24:6), "Like gardens by a river, like aloes planted by Hashem, like cedars by water." Others say that it is because the gematria of "Tamuz" (453) equals the gematria of "ginat" / "garden of." (Luach Davar B'ito p.1115)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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