

# A TIME TO SING

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Beshalach

### A Time to Sing

Our parashah relates (15:1), "Then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang this song to Hashem . . ." The midrash comments: "From the day the world was created until that day ('then'), no man sang a song to Hashem. He created Adam, but Adam did not sing. He rescued Avraham from the fiery furnace and from the Four Kings, but Avraham did not sing. He saved Yitzchak from the slaughtering knife, but Yitzchak did not sing. He saved Yaakov from the angel, from Esav and from the people of Shechem, but Yaakov did not sing. When Bnei Yisrael came to the sea and it split for them, immediately they sang."

R' Elimelech Bar-Shaul z"l (1913-1964; Chief Rabbi of Rechovot, Israel) explains: The word "Then" ("Then" Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang) teaches that this song was not sung in a vacuum. Rather, it was the culmination of all of human history until then. Adam's time was not yet ripe for song, for he had not yet withstood a test; indeed, he would soon fail his test. Avraham's time also wasn't ripe for song, for his path was a new one and its future uncertain. When Avraham was saved from the Four Kings, the time was not ripe for song because the king of S'dom had been saved as well and there can be no song when there is a S'dom in the world. Similarly, the times of Yitzchak and Yaakov were not yet ripe for song.

Nevertheless, R' Bar-Shaul writes, all of those moments of inspiration were not lost. Instead, they were buried in the hearts of the nation so that all the inspiration felt by Adam, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov was expressed then--in the Song at the Sea. This is alluded to by Midrash Rabbah which says, "Though you always existed, You were not known until Your sons sang shirah." (Min Ha'be'er)

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"Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him, for he had caused Bnei Yisrael to take an oath, saying, 'Elokim will surely remember you, and you shall bring up my bones mi'zeh / from here [literally, 'from this'] with you.'" (13:19)

What did Yosef meaning by the word "mi'zeh" / "from this"? R' Yosef Moshe z"l (1735-1815; maggid / preacher in Zborov and Zalozice, Ukraine) explains:

"Zeh" / "this" is a reference to Moshe Rabbeinu, as in the verse (Shmot 32:1), "Ki \*zeh\* Moshe ha'ish" / "For this man, Moshe . . ." Thus, "mi'zeh" / "from this" would mean "from Moshe." Yosef hinted: I know that Moshe will take my remains out of Egypt. However, Moshe will not enter Eretz Yisrael, so he won't finish the job of burying me. Therefore, "you shall bring up my bones mi'zeh," i.e., from Moshe. (Brit Avram)

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"Pharaoh approached; the Bnei Yisrael raised their eyes and behold! -- Egypt was journeying after them, and they were very frightened; the Bnei Yisrael cried out to Hashem." (14:10)

How did they forget so quickly the power that G-d demonstrated in Egypt? R' Avraham Yoffen z"l (1887-1970; rosh yeshiva of the Novardok Yeshiva in Bialystok, Poland; New York and Yerushalayim) explains that such is human nature. Any spiritual level that a person attains will be lost if it is not firmly fixed in his consciousness. The midrash alludes to this when it says that Bnei Yisrael at the Yam Suf "did not want to pray to Hashem as they had done in Egypt." They allowed themselves to forget what they had witnessed. This is why, say our Sages, the mahn fell every day rather than a whole year's supply falling once a year. Unless inspiration is renewed regularly, it will have no impact. (Ha'mussar V'ha'da'at)

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"Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt; and the people revered Hashem, \*and they believed in Hashem\* and in Moshe, His servant." (14:31)

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) asks: Didn't the Torah already say, when Moshe first spoke to Bnei Yisrael in Egypt (Shmot 4:31), "'The people believed\*, and they heard that Hashem had remembered Bnei Yisrael and that He saw their affliction, and they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves"?

He explains: In fact, although the Torah says that the people believed Moshe, the elders who agreed to go with Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh slipped away one-by-one until Moshe and Aharon were left alone. This teaches that although a person has emunah, i.e., he "believes" in G-d, there is complete belief and incomplete belief. This is why the Ani Ma'amin declarations that many people recite after Shacharit every morning state: "I believe with \*complete\* faith . . ." (Zechor L'Miriam ch.21)

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"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of

Yisrael; and in your hand take your staff with which you struck the River, and go. Behold! -- I shall stand before you near the rock in Chorev; you shall strike the rock and water will come forth from it . . ." (17:5)

Why was it relevant that the staff with which Moshe hit the rock was the same one with which he struck the Nile to bring about the plagues? R' Shmuel Rosenberg z"l (1842-1919; rabbi of Unsdorf, Hungary) explains:

The fact that the same staff could decrease the flow of water (by turning it to blood) and increase the flow of water (in our verses) demonstrates that it is not actually the staff that does either; rather, it is Hashem. Thus, by highlighting that this staff which will now bring water out of the rock is the same one with which the Nile was stricken, the verse increases Hashem's honor. This is what Hashem meant when He said, "Behold! -- I shall stand before you." (Be'er Shmuel)

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"Amalek came and battled Yisrael in Refidim." (17:8)

Rashi z"l (to Devarim 25:18) writes: "All the nations of the world were afraid to wage war against Bnei Yisrael until Amalek showed the way."

Why, in fact, wasn't Amalek intimidated by the Ten Plagues and the Splitting of the Sea as the other nations were? R' Azriel Tauber shlita explains:

The yetzer hara manifests itself in two different ways--the "yetzer hara of avodah zarah," which leads people to believe in false ideologies, and the "yetzer hara of adultery," which leads people to engage in selfish activities which they know are wrong. This latter manifestation of the yetzer hara also leads people to mock whatever is worthwhile or holy. It is the yetzer hara of those who know their Master and intend to rebel.

The Ten Plagues and the Splitting of the Sea demonstrated Hashem's power over the idols that the Egyptians worshipped. Thus, at the time of the Exodus, the yetzer hara of avodah zarah had been subdued. But, that was not the yetzer hara that motivated Amalek. Rather, Amalek knew G-d and intended to rebel.

R' Tauber continues: This explains how Bnei Yisrael could test Hashem repeatedly despite witnessing miracles such as the delivery of mahn and the presence of the Clouds of Glory on a daily basis. Although they had no doubt about Hashem's power, having witnessed His wonders in Egypt, their encounter with Amalek subjected them to the temptation to \*ignore\*, at times, what they knew to be true. (Pirkei Machshavah: Nisyonot Acharit Ha'yamim p.35-36)

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## Memories of Yerushalayim

R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; "Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim"), describes in his memoir, B'tuv Yerushalayim, his role in supervising the eruv in Yerushalayim. This proclamation was written after a period of Arab riots.

Thursday, Parashat Ki Tavo, 16 Elul 5699 [1939]

### IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE ERUV

As is known, the Eruv connecting the Old City with the neighborhoods has been broken for almost a year. It was already well publicized that the general Eruv extended only to the Nachalat Shiva neighborhood and that it was prohibited to carry from there to the Old City. Nevertheless, thousands of Jews have publicly transgressed Shabbat by carrying outside of the Eruv, reasoning that the sin will be on the heads of the leadership for not fixing the Eruv.

Therefore, G-d-fearing people were found who donated the expenses of repairing the Eruv that connects the Old City with the neighborhoods. Now, it is permitted to carry from the Nachalat Shiva neighborhood to the Old City, but only by way of Jaffa Street, and by no other route.

Regular inspections on Erev Shabbat will be crucial, especially for that area, which requires much supervision. Accordingly, it is a holy duty for every resident of our city to participate in the expenses of the Eruv, its inspection and its repair.

The western boundary of the Eruv remains as before, so that carrying is prohibited beyond the Sephardic old age home. All the neighborhoods beyond there are outside the Eruv. However, the three neighborhoods of Montefiore, the Diskin Orphan Home, and Givat Shaul are connected to each other by an Eruv, so that carrying is permitted from one to the other, but not outside of the three.

All the places that I specified as being outside the Eruv have not yet been repaired. In the merit of Shabbat observance, may we merit a ketivah, va'chatimah tovah and the complete redemption speedily in our days, amen!

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