

Fountain Farewell Parshat Chukat

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

In Parshat Chukat we have the third, and perhaps least known, of the ten songs of our holy Tradition. This is the Song of the Well that *Bnei Yisroel* sang at the end of their forty year journey to *Eretz Yisroel*.

Why did *Bnei Yisroel* sing this song now and why is there no mention of Moshe singing the song.

Rabbi Frand citing the Vilna Gaon explains that the *Torah* is often compared to a well from which anyone can draw. Some will drink its waters directly while others will be involved in maintaining the well's infrastructure, by supporting *Torah* study and *Torah* institutions. The *Torah* was a gift from the wilderness. The Tiv Hatorah teaches that *Torah* has the ability to lead you to great spiritual heights, but if it leads to arrogance, Hashem will put you in your place and send you down to the low places. To be successful in *Torah* one must be humble as a wilderness which is open to all and ownerless.

Rabbi Shmuel ben Betzalel remarks that Moshe does not sing here because he was the personification of *Torah*. Therefore, he was not moved to sing as was the rest of the nation who only now after forty years of *Torah* study were beginning to appreciate the beauty and depth of *Torah*.

The Sefer Shemen Hatov notes that the Song of the Sea and the Song of the Well, represent transitional phases in our national history. Song of the Sea was the coda between our slavery in Egypt and our following Hashem into the wilderness totally dependent on Him. Song of the Well marked the transition from life in the desert to a new

generation entering the Promised Land.

Moshe and Aharon dug the original well, and taught the original song, but now the notes were passed to Yehoshua and the people, who needed to interpret the music on their own.

Song is a spontaneous expression for something above and beyond the natural, for extraordinary and unexpected gifts proffers the Shem Mishmuel. As *Bnei Yisroel* were about to enter the Land, the Amorites waited in ambush in caves between the mountain ranges. Hashem caused the two mountains to come together, crushing the Amorite soldiers. The water from the well then picked up the bones and blood from the caves and the mountains and brought them to where *Bnei Yisroel* would see them. In response to this miraculous salvation, *Bnei Yisroel* burst forth in song.

Rav Eliyahu Schlesinger points out that at the end of our sojourn in the desert, Hashem revealed to us the miracle of our salvation. He saves us from our enemies constantly, creating circumstances that force them to change their plans or make it impossible for them to carry out their plans to annihilate us. Therefore, although the full extent of Hashem's *chesed* toward us may only be known to the other nations, we must recognize Hashem's constant benevolence toward us and praise Him. How much more so must we thank Hashem when we are aware of the miracles He performs for us.

During our national infancy at the Reed Sea, Moshe led *Bnei Yisroel* in song. He taught them the proper reaction to miracles. Now, after forty years under Moshe's tutelage, *Bnei Yisroel* learned the lesson, says, Rabbi Frand,

and could sing independently and Moshe could "shep naches," (derive pleasure) for Moshe, who was barred from entering the land because of his sin at this very well, could not personally sing on this occasion.

This song was not only in appreciation of the well, but also in praise of Miriam in whose merit it gave water to *Bnei Yisroel*. Now, when they no longer had either, continues Rabbi Frand, *Bnei Yisroel* recognized their worth and sang their praises. How true this is of human nature, that we do not appreciate the value of something until we no longer have it. But Moshe appreciated Miriam's greatness and capacity for *chesed* all his life. He always sang her praises, albeit privately.

The word *shir* has a root whose derivation means circle. The Sefer Mimaamakim notes that certainly *Bnei Yisroel* were now completing their circle of travels in the wilderness as they were about to enter *Eretz Canaan* and as the Oznam LaTorah, points out, the well itself had now completed its assigned mission. Therefore, it was now appropriate to sing its praises whereas praising the well earlier would have been premature.

The Bartenura, citing Pirkei Avot that the mouth of the well was one of the ten things created at the twilight of creation, posits that the well itself now opened its mouth in song and *Bnei Yisroel* responded. Just as the angel who fought with Yaakov needed to complete his mission before he could sing in the heavenly choir, so too did the well now complete its mission.

The Mitzvah of Rebuke

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The three weeks is an auspicious time to reflect on the destruction of the *beit hamikdash* and what we can do to bring it back. Chazal tell us the second *beit hamikdash* was destroyed due to baseless hatred. It follows that it is especially appropriate to focus on improving our *mitzvot ben adam l'chaveiro* (commandments between man and man) during this time.

We will study the *mitzvah* of giving rebuke. In *Vayikra* it says, “*Lo tisna et achicha belvovecha hocheach tocheach et amisacha v'lo sisa alav cheit*.” Don't hate your brother in your heart give him rebuke and you shall not bear sin.” The commentators ask, what is the relationship between these three distinct clauses? Targum Yehonason says, if you have reason to hate someone in your heart because he is acting in an improper way, give him rebuke. Even if he will be embarrassed you will not bear iniquity as you are fulfilling the *mitzvah* of rebuke. Rashi disagrees and says you may give *tochacha* up to the point of *lo tisa alav cheit*. If he will be embarrassed, you must refrain. The Rashbam says the first and second clauses are related. If someone did something wrong to you, don't act friendly to him on the outside while bottling up your

negative feelings on the inside. *Hocheach tocheach*, talk it through so as to save yourself from the sin of *Lo tisna et achicha*. The Ibn Ezra offers a different take. If you feel like someone did something wrong to you, give him *tochacha*, don't keep it inside. By talking it out you might discover that you misunderstood the whole situation. The person in question could explain himself and it will clear the air. The Ramban writes that people who hate each other usually keep their hatred inside. Therefore the Torah tells us *hocheach tocheach*, if you can prevent someone from sinning, you'd better do so. If you don't rebuke him you become an accomplice to the sin and you will bear iniquity. This is part of the general halacha of “*Kol yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*,” every Jew is responsible for another. Usually this is applied to positive commandments but the Ramban says it equally applies to negative commandments. The Ritva explains that all of *Klal Yisrael* are different appendages of one metaphysical entity. We're all in it together.

There are conflicting opinions in Shas whether the *mitzvah* of *tochacha* applies to someone that will not listen. The Gemara in *Erchin* says, the Torah uses a double expression *hocheach tocheach* to teach us that even if the person won't listen, keep at it. The Gemara then

quotes Rabbi Tarfon who questions if there's anyone in this generation who knows how to receive *tochacha*. We see that people already in the time of the Mishnayot didn't know how to receive *tochacha*. If someone gave a critique, there was always a comeback. If this flaw existed back then it certainly exists today. People don't know how to receive criticism whether from colleagues or even one's spouse. We're always defensive and that's a sad reality. Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya said, I wonder if anyone in our generation knows how to give rebuke. Knowing how to give rebuke in the right ways also seems to have been lost.

The Gemara concludes-if a person won't listen to your constant rebuke, how far do you need to take it? Rava says until you're about to be cursed or beaten up. Rav Yochanan says until the person begins to show scorn. In *Masechet Bava Metzia* the Gemara says, *hocheach* teaches us that one should even rebuke a hundred times and *tocheach* teaches us that even a student must rebuke his Rebbe.

Another Gemara in *Shabbat* seems to indicate that in fact even if the person won't listen one should still give *tochacha*.

Netivot Olam-Two Forms of the Yetzer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Maharal quotes a Gemara in *Masechet Niddah*, a person who purposefully brings himself to thoughts of desire cannot dwell within the same encampment of Hashem as it says, “It is evil in the eyes of Hashem.” In another context it says, “Hashem isn't someone who desires wickedness and he doesn't dwell with evil.” In a certain sense a person who has desirous thoughts is worse than a person who actually sins. If a person did something evil it doesn't mean his essence is evil. He may have just been trapped momentarily by his passions. But a person who purposely brings himself to thoughts of desire affects his essential self.

The soul has three garments –thought, speech, and action. None of these are the soul in essence. Each garment however, moving from the outside in, gets closer to the essential soul. Deed is the most external and the key factor because we were put into the

world of action to do *tikun olam* (rectification). However you cannot recognize through the deed who the doer is. In essence if you were to see three people commit a murder and you were a Martian, each of the acts could all look the same. Yet in reality one could be a hero, one could be involved in an accident, and the third could be an actual murderer because his intent was to murder. So the essential person is described more through intent than through the action itself.

Fantasies or desires come from an empty space within a person that should be full of goodness and light with the goal to accomplish *tikun atzmi* and *tikun olam*. When goodness is absent then darkness surfaces and people tend to fill that with fantasy. For men the deepest *yetzer hara* has to do with the *brit basar* -the physical covenant with Hashem. For women it's *brit sefatayim*, the covenant of speech. When a person's speech or inner

descriptive power (*hirhur*) is misdirected and he thinks and speaks badly of others he is filling his empty space with evil.

The Gemara tells us, Rav Shmuel bar Nachmani says in the name of Rav Yonoton - the *yetzer hara* seduces a person in this world and testifies against him in the next world. We sometimes end up in these inner debates with ourselves. We treat the *yetzer hara* as though it is an equal contender to the *yetzer tov* when in fact we must not allow this sort of equality to take place.

In this world the *yetzer hara* resonates within us. Attempting to repress it is like shutting up oneself and the truth is that in this world it is a part of us. Only in the future world will the soul experience a rude awakening when it will see that what seemed to us to be honest and authentic was really superficial and false.