



## Parshat Beshalach: Decisive Dance

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Why did Bnei Yisroel and then the women burst forth in song at the splitting of the Reed Sea? Weren't they awed enough to sing by all the preceding miracles? What was it about this experience that prompted them to sing?

The Sam Derech explains that just as a song is not one note but a collection of notes that come together in harmony to form a whole, so must the "lyrics" also be a collection of experiences that come together to form the whole song. Similarly, *Bnei Yisroel* could not sing the song after the first miracles, for those were only part of the redemption experience. However, when our ancestors saw their oppressors drowning, the entire redemption experience was complete. Each note was now in place to compose this glorious hymn of gratitude to Hashem.

Some of the Egyptians sank to the bottom of the sea immediately while others experienced a slower death. When *Bnei Yisroel* saw this, they realized that Hashem had been with them throughout their ordeal, watching them and loving them, and now He was meting out justice measure for measure. This new element, explains the *Lev Tahor*, enabled *Bnei Yisroel* to sing a song of praise for His goodness. For the men, whose faith was not as strong as the women's, could not sing until their salvation was manifest. They had to review the entire redemption process, but the women were convinced of the future salvation throughout the enslavement. To them, Hashem's providence was always palpable. For them, the only new experience was the

miracle at the Sea, the drowning of the Egyptians as a measure for measure punishment. That was all they needed to sing about.

This idea forms the basis of the *Chatam Sofer's* explanation of Miriam's answering them (in the masculine). Miriam was not speaking to the women and urging them to sing; she was responding to the angels who felt it was their turn to sing God's praises. The angels argued that because the women were redeemed through their own merit, they were not entitled to sing. However, allowing the women to witness the downfall of the Egyptians and their measure for measure punishment was not a result of the women's merit, but an additional kindness from Hashem, and for this, argued Miriam, the women were entitled to sing. Therefore, their entire song was only about what they witnessed on the shores of the Reed Sea.

Rabbi C. Vann notes that while the men's song included God's salvation in so many ways, the women's song was focused only on the Egyptians and their chariots drowning. The result of the Egyptians drowning was that all their gold and silver washed up on shore for the Israelites to collect. Unfortunately, the men used it to form the golden calf. Therefore, they were not entitled to sing only of this great miracle. On the other hand, the women were steadfast in their *Emunah* and did not sin. Therefore, they were entitled to sing exclusively of this event. When Miriam was about to begin her song, she answered them (in the masculine), warning the men to use this

new found wealth appropriately.

Ish, Man, has the letter "yud" in its center while Isha, Woman, has the letter "heh" at the outside. This placement, says the Ner Uziel, signifies that the spirituality of Man is within while the spirituality of woman is external. Our patriarchs contemplated God and His wonders while our matriarchs translated these thoughts to practicality in our physical world. The serpent targeted Chava, since she was more attuned to the external world. She corrupted her strength and would now be subjugated to Adam. At the Sea, women regained their status as ruling over the external world. To symbolize this dominion, they used the drums and tambourines to accompany their singing and dancing. The men continued with internal meditation that found voice in song alone, without external accompaniment.

The Minchat Michael suggests the reasoning behind the one-line song of the women. First, he reminds us that the entire purpose of the redemption was so to receive the *Torah*. Perhaps the women felt they were being made second class citizens, for the obligation of learning *Torah* rested primarily on the men. But here at the Reed Sea they saw not only the evil Egyptians drowning, but their horses as well. The horses enabled the Egyptians to pursue the Israelites, and for that they were punished. Similarly, the women will be rewarded for enabling the men to keep their *Torah* study obligations. Therefore they "will sing to God Who is exalted, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea."

## The Sanctity of Prayer

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tzipora Heller

The third blessing in *Shemone Esrei* is called *Kedushat Hashem*- the holiness of Hashem. It is very difficult to translate the word holy. One definition might be separated from anything that's limiting, and focused on all that's eternal and real. On a human level, a holy person is someone who isn't constrained by such petty matters as time, space, and subjectivity. It's someone who is transcendental and doesn't see this world as being bigger than it really is. Someone who recognizes that spiritual and

moral choices is where it's at.

Of all the three *avot*, Yaakov was the one who epitomized living a holy life. Avraham was *chesed*. Yitzchak personified judgment. Yaakov could transcend the physical and find Hashem.

The stronger you are, the further you can reach. To be holy and transcendental, while standing at the Kotel on *Tisha B'Av* night

doesn't require much. To be holy while riding the train surrounded by immorality demands a lot more. The more holy you are, the more you can stretch yourself when circumstances demand it.

Ultimate holiness is Hashem who is not limited by anything. A person can be relatively holy, but only Hashem can be absolutely holy. There's a *mitzva* in the *Torah* to be holy. Rashi says this means separating oneself from

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actual physical temptations. Wherever there's a fence separating us from promiscuous acts, that is where one can find transcendence. Ramban takes it further. He defines holiness as separating oneself from doing even permitted acts in a way that's vulgar. Don't be a glutton even when you're eating kosher food. Don't drown in materialism even when its permitted.

The blessing continues, "You *Hashem* are holy and your name is holy." What does this mean? When you call somebody by name it means you have some level of understanding of who the person is and some level of relationship. *Hashem's* names are the key to a relationship with Him. It reveals His attributes. There are seven divine names and each one opens up a door to another dimension. *Adnut* connotes mastery over all

forces. The world is made up of multiple forces that in fact are part of one great ecology ruled by *Hashem*. *Hashem* is the master of external and spiritual reality. Each one of His names takes us closer to knowing how transcendental He really is.

"*U'kedoshim*- and your holy ones." Who are Hashem's holy ones? The first view is that it refers to the angels. Angels are a spiritual force created to do Hashem's will. They are holy and are not held down by desire or subjectivity. They do Hashem's will with great happiness because the joy of connection is their reality. They praise Hashem all the time. Angels experience no conflict and have no separate reality other than their mission.

The second view is that Hashem's holy ones

are the Jewish people. All of Yaakov's twelve sons were holy. Yaakov achieved this because he saw the potential in each one of them. He recognized their uniqueness. The name of *Hashem* is made up of four letters- *yud, keh, vav, keh*. There are twelve different ways of arranging the letters signifying that each one of the tribes could see *Hashem* from his own angle. That is holiness. When we say *Hashem* is holy and above everything we mean that He hid some of His sanctity within us. Each of us was given enough holiness in our own unique way to find Him.

When we can say no to what grounds us in the illusions of this world and yes to what gives voice to our spiritual selves, we become holy. Each Jew on his own level has the potential to reach a place of sanctity, divinity, and eternity.

## Shir Shel Yom Shlishi Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In the famous Beilis trial, Mendel Beilus, a Russian Jew, was accused of ritual murder. The Russians turned his court case into an accusation against Judaism and Rabbi Mazeh, the Rabbi of Moscow was called up for questioning. Chazal say, "*Atem keruim adam v'ain umot ha'olom keruim adam*- You are called man, but the gentile nations are not called man." This was considered evidence that the Jews could slaughter a gentile for his blood because he was not considered human. Rabbi Mazeh countered, "Twenty years ago, if you would have asked someone who is Mendel Beilis, nobody would have known. Today, ask any Jew and he will tell you, 'Beilus doesn't let me sleep at night. We pray for him, give charity for his merit...'" That is the meaning of *adam*, we are all like one person. If a man hurts his finger, his whole body hurts. If one Jew is hurting, the whole nation suffers with him.

If our focus is solely on physicality anything another person has that we don't have, makes us feel deprived. But if our mindset is- we are one team, all here to serve Hashem, then we are happy for others. Whatever they have serves the same purpose. It's a partnership between all of us. The more we are connected to Hashem, the root of it all, the more united we become. The better the relationship between parents and children, the better the relationship between siblings as they see themselves as part of one unit. The power of the third day is unity, tapping into our inherent spirituality to become one.

Man is a study in contrasts. He can be generous and selfish, merciful and cruel, physical and spiritual. It wasn't always like this. When Hashem created Adam there was total harmony within him. His understanding and closeness to Hashem was such that it united his disparate parts. All that he possessed

served the same purpose, to do the will of Hashem. When a person is very close to Hashem there are no incongruities because closeness means divinity, and there are no contradictions by Hashem. "*B'rogez rachamim tizkor*." Hashem can be angry and merciful at the same time as it all serves one purpose. When Adam sinned, he created a division between his body and soul. This engendered contradictions inside him. Our purpose is to recreate that original harmony by bringing Hashem back into our world. That is what the third day teaches us.

"*Ani amarti Elokim atem*- You have the potential to be divine like." And when we are divine like there are no contradictions. When everything is directed to serve Hashem, unity reigns. Yaakov's attribute was *emet*, truth. Combining *chesed* and *gevura* in the right measure, which can only be achieved through *Torah*.