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maskil Le'David

Am Yisrael at the Splitting of the Sea

"And you, lift up your staff and stretch out your arm over the sea and split it" (Shemot 14:16).

There is a well-known *Chazal* (*Shemot Rabba* 21:6) which states that when Moshe stretched out his arm over the sea to split it, the waters did not wish to comply. They continued flowing, even though Hashem had made a condition with them at the time of the Six Days of Creation that a day would come when they would have to split for Bnei Yisrael upon leaving Egypt.

The Holy Ohr HaChaim questions this *Chazal* (*Shemot* 14:27). How can one explain the idea that the waters did not want to fulfil Hashem's command and split for Moshe? This is especially puzzling, since it was a stipulation from the time of the creation of the world! And conversely, we find several incidents in the Gemara concerning *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* for whom the waters of a river or brook split, such as with Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair (*Chulin* 7a). What is the root of the difference between the generation of Moshe Rabbeinu where the sea did not wish to split, and the generation in which Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair and the rest of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* lived, when the waters split for them?

The Holy Ohr HaChaim explains that the foundation of the matter lies in the fact that in the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, Bnei Yisrael had not yet accepted the Torah, so the merit of Torah did not stand for them, that the world should change its nature and boundaries by splitting apart its waters. On the other hand, the river split for Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair since he possessed the power of Torah. (See the words of the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh where he writes about this at length).

Later on concerning the splitting of the sea, the Torah writes, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the water will go back upon Egypt, upon its chariots and upon its horsemen'" (*Shemot* 14:26). The Ohr HaChaim has a further difficulty with this. Why was it necessary to

command Moshe to stretch out his arm once again over the sea for it to return to its original nature and wash away the Egyptians? The entire goal of the splitting of the sea was for Bnei Yisrael to be able to cross over and escape from the Egyptians. If the sea would remain parted in two, the Egyptians would cross on the dry land and the miracle would be pointless. The sea returning to its original state after Bnei Yisrael's crossing would seem to be an integral part of the miracle, and not something that requires an additional command.

Chazal tell us that the sea heard the ministering angel of Egypt claiming, "These (the Jewish People) serve idolatry and these (the Egyptians) serve idolatry." Therefore it thought, "Why do the Jewish people have superiority over the Egyptians, causing the sea to change its nature for them, while the Egyptians did not merit this miracle?" This thought seems very strange. Am Yisrael were in the process of emerging from the forty-ninth level of impurity and had already left idol worship behind. So why did the sea think that the Jewish people and the Egyptians were on the same level and served idolatry to the same extent?

This question can be answered according to a description of King Chizkiyahu's generation: at that time, there was no young girl or boy who was not intricately familiar with all the details of the laws of impurity and purity. This was because Chizkiyahu placed a sword by the entrance to the *beit midrash* and threatened that anyone who did not engage in Torah would be stabbed with this sword. This act of Chizkiyahu cannot be understood literally, because we trust that we are supposed to study Torah since it is a mitzvah, it makes us wise, and it protects us against the *yetzer hara*. Additionally, there is no explicit command in the Torah that one who desists from Torah study will be punished with death. This shows us that Torah study is a merit for those who study it and affords reward to those who learn it, but one who evades Torah study but still observes all the mitzvot with meticulousness is not liable for the death penalty. If so, on what basis did Chizkiyahu make this proclamation?

The severity of spiritual death over physical death is contingent on the fact that while a person may die, his soul continues to live in the World to Come. But if a person reaches spiritual destruction, he loses his life both in This World and in The World to Come.

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13 Shevat 5786
31 January 2026

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Beshalach

Shabbat Shira



Hilula

13 Shevat
Rabbi Eliyahu
Meir Bloch

14 Shevat
Rabbi Yaakov
Yehoshua Falk,
author of *Pnei Yehoshua*

15 Shevat
Rabbi Yanon Churi

16 Shevat
Rabbi Shalom Mordechai
Hakohen Shwadron

17 Shevat
Rabbi Chaim Falaji

18 Shevat
Rabbi Binyomin Beinush
Finkel, the Mir
Rosh Yeshiva

19 Shevat
Rabbi Yitzchak
Baruch Sofer





WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

A Journey Back to His Roots

An irreligious Jew who lived in France was preparing for a trip to Pakistan with a number of friends. This is a country categorically unfriendly toward Jews, to say the least. When I was informed of his plans, and being aware of how such a trip would endanger his life, I asked him to come and see me.

"I heard you are planning a trip to Pakistan," I began. "Please cancel it. It is no place for a Jew."

The man was surprised at my words and asked, "How does the Rav know about my planned trip? And why does the Rav see fit to discourage me from going?"

"I somehow heard about your plans. I don't know why, but I felt it imperative to warn you not to go. *B'eizrat Hashem*, you will become enlightened and do complete *teshuvah*." The man decided to obey me and cancelled his trip to Pakistan.

A few days later, he received word that all of his friends who had gone were killed in a fatal car accident. He tangibly saw how obeying a Torah authority saved him from certain death.

Baruch Hashem, his miraculous salvation was the catalyst for him to recognize the Creator and do a complete *teshuvah*.

cont. from p. 1 >>>

Therefore, this kind of death is infinitely more severe. Chizkiyahu was implying that one who does not study Torah is sending an open invitation to all worldly temptations, and thereby killing his soul. It follows then that the street is his death ("רחוב" — street, has the same letters as "חרב" — sword).

According to this one can explain the sea's hesitation to return to its original state and drown the Egyptians: it thought that if Bnei Yisrael worship idols just as the Egyptians, and they have not yet received the Torah, there is nothing to protect them from the challenges of this world. Material temptations are compared to *avodah zarah* which brings great tragedy and destruction on Am Yisrael. This theory was strengthened after the sea saw the great wealth with which the Jewish people left Egypt, because it assumed that this wealth would be a temptation. Only after Hashem told the sea that this wealth was part of the promise given to the Avot, that Bnei Yisrael will leave Egypt with great wealth, was the sea appeased and agreed to return to its former state.



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

Follow the Torah Path — Salvation from the Yetzer Hara

"Pharaoh approached; The Children of Israel raised their eyes and behold! — Egypt was chasing them, and they were very frightened; the Children of Israel cried out to Hashem" (Shemot 14:10).

As the *sefarim* tell us, Pharaoh symbolizes the *yetzer hara*. "Pharaoh approached" is an instruction to us: when the *yetzer hara* approaches man, he must immediately cleave strongly to Torah and mitzvot, cry out to Hashem in prayer, and remain on the true path of Torah. It is in this merit that Hashem comes to our aid.

This idea also alludes to the incident of Yosef Hatzaddik with Potifar's wife, as it is written (*Bereishit* 39:11), "When he entered the house to do his work." Rashi quotes *Chazal* (*Sotah* 36b) who say "to do his work" can be interpreted in two different ways. One opinion is that Yosef entered the house to see to his physical needs. Another opinion is that the *yetzer hara* tempted and challenged him, until on his own initiative he entered the house to sin with the wife of Potifar. This is the concept of "Pharaoh approached": Pharaoh refers to the *yetzer hara* which approaches man with such power and strength, it causes him to stumble and sin.

The Gemara tells us that Yosef was saved from sinning because his father's image appeared before him. Also, Divine Inspiration warned him that if he sins, his name will not be included among the rest of the Tribes in the Ephod. The continuation of the verse hints to this, "The Children of Yisrael lifted their eyes." Yisrael refers to Yaakov the father of Yosef, and it was Yaakov's image that appeared to Yosef and saved him from sin. The word "Yisrael" also hints to his Divine Inspiration, that his name will not be mentioned among the Tribes.

What protected him was his attachment to Torah and mitzvot, as the verse concludes, "They cried out to Hashem." As mentioned earlier, one who cleaves to the truth of Torah merits Hashem's assistance — and Yosef Hatzaddik was attached to Torah! We are told that when the Tribes discovered Yosef's identity, he asked them to take wagons to Yaakov, and *Chazal* tell us that the wagons symbolized the section of *Eglah Arufah* which Yosef had studied with Yaakov just before he was sold. He wished to give over the message to Yaakov that although he was living in Egypt among gentile sorcerers, he remained attached to the Torah. This is why he merited being saved from the *yetzer hara*.

Another explanation is that these verses hint to Am Yisrael. When Bnei Yisrael saw that Pharaoh, meaning the *yetzer hara*, was approaching to frighten them and make them despair of serving Hashem, they immediately raised their eyes to their Father in Heaven, as it says, "The Children of Israel raised their eyes."

They then strengthened themselves and overcame their fear and began to pray to Hashem to save them from the hands of the wicked Pharaoh.

This is a lesson for all generations; it teaches us how to behave when confronted with the *yetzer hara*.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Sickness — A Warning to Correct One's Middot

The maggid HaGaon HaTzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Shechter *shlit"a* relates:

"When my wife was sick I received no less than sixty-four pieces of advice! Some five or six people offered me the same advice, but I counted the tips and not the number of people..."

"One piece of advice seemed to speak to me more than the others. A certain doctor called Dr. Barron opened a convalescent home near Miami, where patients are hospitalized for three weeks and fed a special vegetarian diet which he developed. With this he professed to save people from the terrible illness. Relative to other pieces of advice, this solution seemed the most credible.

"Two hours before our flight was supposed to leave, I called my Rav and said to him, 'HaRav, I feel that I am flying for nothing. I am wasting \$15,000 on this treatment, not including the airfare! I feel that I am investing so much money on some insecure assurance, and really all this money is going down the drain. I want to stay here!'

"The Rav replied: 'Go. Exile atones; you should go!'

"And what an exile it was... Just the actual flight to Miami was so terribly difficult. Thirty hours we suffered in the plane, may Hashem have mercy on us.

"In this doctor's convalescent home there are no bread or milk products, no eggs, and certainly no meat. There is an abundance of nuts, and juice is squeezed from watermelon and melon. In addition, they grow a certain kind of wheat and wait for it to sprout. The sick person himself must roll the wheat to produce 'wheat milk,' and then drink it, as if this is what will heal him..."

"The doctor explained his treatment method: 'Look, the illness is just a light that switches on to signal a person's negative traits. An angry person becomes ill. A proud person becomes ill. These are only warning lights that signal to the person that something is not okay with his behavior.

"How do we try heal him? We completely remove him from whatever he is used to. He used to eat everything, and suddenly he has to consume strange food. And then he begins to think, to contemplate. He starts building himself anew, working on his anger and pride. Through our treatment he can "hop aboard" and make changes in his life and divest himself of his negative ways and any bad traits!"

"I left and burst out crying, thinking to myself, 'I had to travel thousands of kilometers away from Eretz Yisrael so that Doctor Barron, a gentile, should tell me why Hashem sends sickness, and how to get rid of it!'"

Illnesses come so that we should change and improve our middot! This is the goal of sickness!

Hashem promised Bnei Yisrael that if they observe the mitzvot and do what is just in the eyes of Hashem, "Then all of the diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer" (*Shemot* 15:26).



PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

The Manna was Sixty Times as Sweet!

"The House of Israel called it manna. It was like coriander seed, it was white and it tasted like a cake fried in honey" (*Shemot* 16:31).

The question is asked: *Chazal* explain that the sweetness of honey is one sixtieth of the sweetness of the Manna. Meaning, the Manna was sixty times sweeter than honey. But the wording of the verse seems to imply that it was comparable to a cake fried in honey, meaning like honey itself.

Rabbi Reuven Karelstein *zt"l* quotes in the name of the Vilna Gaon *zt"l* that on the contrary, this is what the verse is saying: "It tasted like" means that it lends taste. How much taste does it lend? One sixtieth. Just one sixtieth of the Manna tasted like a cake fried in honey, because the Manna itself was sixty times sweeter. One part of the Manna can be mixed with up to sixty amounts of a different food and it will still taste like honey!

Yosef Also Participated in Raising His Bones

"Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him" (*Shemot* 13:19).

To be precise, the words "with him" seem superfluous.

The Gemara (*Sotah* 13a) explains that while Am Yisrael were occupied with gathering spoil from the Egyptians before they left Egypt, Moshe went and stood by the bank of the Nile and said, "Yosef, Yosef, the time of the promised redemption has arrived, and it is time to fulfil the oath you made Yisrael swear. If you show yourself, good, if not, we are free from your oath." Immediately Yosef's coffin arose.

Rabbi Yitzchak Badarshi *zt"l*, a French Sage, asks in the *sefer Harei Bashamayim*, if Yosef made Bnei Yisrael swear to bring his bones up to Eretz Yisrael, why did Moshe think he would be exempt from this oath if Yosef's coffin did not rise?

This can be clarified by the words of the Mishna (*Bava Metzia*) which talks about the Torah command of unloading an animal. "If you see the donkey of someone you hate crouching under its burden, would you refrain from helping him? You shall help repeatedly **with him**" (*Shemot* 23:5). *Chazal* explain that if the donkey's owner sits at a distance and tells someone else, "If you wish to unload it, unload," that person is exempt, because it says, "**with him**."

The words "**with him**" imply that the owner himself must assist together with the one offering his help.

This is what this verse implies: "Moshe took the bones of Yosef **with him**." Yosef needed to help Moshe by making his coffin rise from the Nile, similar to the law of "you shall help repeatedly **with him**." Moshe was obligated to fulfill the oath and take Yosef's coffin to Eretz Yisrael, only with Yosef's help! Therefore, Moshe warned Yosef that if he does not cause his bones to rise, they would be exempt from the oath.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Remember to Pray When Times are Good!



If someone were to ask us, “Who deserves the title of a ‘*ben Olam Haba?*’” presumably we would find several precise requirements for those worthy of this title. Indeed, this is a question that *Chazal* have asked, and answered: “Who is a *ben Olam Haba?* One who blesses about the redemption just prior to the Shemoneh Esrei prayer.”

What about this form of prayer makes one deserving of *Olam Haba*?

There is a verse in *Tehillim* (111:4), “He made a memorial for His wonders, gracious and compassionate is Hashem.” What is the connection between the beginning and the end of the verse? The beginning is talking about Hashem making a memorial for the wonders of the Exodus twice a day, and the end of the verse talks about Hashem’s attributes.

There was once a wealthy Jew who lived in Brisk, called R’ Yisrael. But the wheel of fortune turned, his source of livelihood ceased to be reliable and his financial situation deteriorated. Just before reaching complete bankruptcy, he decided that he was obligated to make some effort to save the situation. He decided to travel to Baron Rothschild in England, a journey which would take him three months, and ask him for a loan of three thousand rubles. This was the only solution he could think of that could save his dire plight.

He sold his furniture, gave half the money to his wife for housekeeping expenses and took the other half with him for travel expenses. Three months later he arrived in England where he was told that the Baron received the public in a certain hall Tuesday afternoons.

He went to the hall and saw hundreds of people standing in line. Two clerks were sitting at a desk, distributing one lira to some of the poor and half a lira to others. He was hit by a feeling of tremendous devastation. He had travelled for three months, left his wife and children,

all for the sake of receiving at most one lira?! He stood to the side and cried bitterly. He did not even feel how the tears were pouring down his face, but the clerks noticed. They saw his pitiful crying and understood that his was not a simple situation. They asked him to explain his plight and he told them that he had come from afar to ask for a loan of three thousand rubles, but he sees that they are only dispensing single rubles.

The clerks said to him, “We are only the messengers, not the owners. But on Friday afternoon, the Baron comes here to organize his charity affairs. He looks over all the records and takes note of what needs to be done. If you come back on Friday, we can try to arrange a meeting for you and maybe you will merit deliverance.”

At the end of the week R’ Yisrael arrived at the Baron’s office. As soon as they met, before R’ Yisrael managed to open his mouth, the Baron asked him, “Do you have somewhere to spend Shabbat?” R’ Yisrael indeed had no idea where he would stay over Shabbat so the Baron graciously offered, “Please be my guest.”

R’ Yisrael rejoiced! The beginning of his relief was in sight! R’ Yisrael, being a *talmid chacham*, spoke words of Torah at the Friday night meal, sang *zemirot* in his pleasant voice until late at night, and brought much pleasure to Baron Rothschild during the rest of the Shabbat meals as well.

After Havdalah the Baron turned to him and asked, “R’ Yisrael, what brought you here?”

“I will tell you the truth,” he replied, “I was also once a very wealthy man, but things went from bad to worse until I now have to struggle to put bread on the table... I am in need of an urgent loan of three thousand rubles to put me back on my feet.”

The Baron asked him, “When things were

at their best, how much were your assets worth?” R’ Yisrael answered, “10,000 rubles.” The Baron went over to his safe, took out 10,000 rubles that had just been released from the printing press, and handed them to him. He then took a piece of paper, wrote his name and address on it and placed it on top of the rubles.

The Baron then said, “I know you. If it ever happens again that you lose your assets, don’t bother coming all the way here. Just send me a letter and help will be on its way.”

The lesson of this story is comparable to what Hashem said to Am Yisrael, “You were in bondage and I punished the Egyptians with Ten Plagues. I delivered you from Egypt and split the sea for you. Write down My address! If you come across further troubles, just remember the Exodus! Remember that I am merciful and compassionate, and then you will not forget to turn to Me!”

Most people remember to pray from the depths of their heart only when they are lacking something, when suddenly things are not working out, when test results do not look so good... And when things are not in order, our prayer looks different. Suddenly we remember that there is Someone Who can help. But when everything is fine, unfortunately our prayers are not quite the same...

A wise person asks **before** the trouble arrives, **before** feeling a lack. This is the meaning of what *Chazal* say — a person should always precede trouble with prayer, for during a time of trouble, G-d forbid, he is told to bring a merit to be saved, prayer may not suffice. We must strengthen ourselves in this matter, and train ourselves to turn to Hashem throughout our day, davening for help in all we do. In this way, we will indeed merit a special closeness to Hashem and bountiful blessing.



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

Exciting update: With *siyata diShmaya*, the *shiurim* of Moreinu v’Rabbeinu, the Admor Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlit”a, are now available in Hebrew, English, French and Spanish

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