

פרשת בשלח-שבת שירה

In this week's Parasha we read about perhaps the greatest miracle of all time; the splitting of the sea. The Jewish people actually entered the sea, and emerged on the same side. Their route was like a semi circle. They initially thought that the Egyptians who were pursuing them would also emerge unharmed and continue to chase them. However the ocean began to "spit out" the dead bodies of the Egyptians, and it was only then that the Jews were convinced that they were indeed saved.

The Gemarah Pesahim 118 quotes Rav Huna who says that the Jews of that generation were "קטני אמונה" (men of "little faith") they thought that just as they walked on dry land, the Egyptians would do the same and they too would soon emerge from the ocean. Hashem commanded the minister of the sea (the angel in charge of the sea) to "spit them out onto the shore". The sea responded "does a master give a servant a present only to take it back?!" (This was considered a present to the sea because the bodies provided plenty of food for the fish to eat). Hashem answered "I will give you one and a half times as much in return". The sea responded "can there be a servant who demands payment from his master!" (The sea could not demand payment from Hashem so it requested a guarantor). Hashem said "the Kishon River will be your guarantor. Immediately the sea spit out the bodies, and the Jews rejoiced as the Pasuk says; "וירא ישראל את מצרים מת על שפת הים"- "the Jews saw the Egyptians dead on the *sea shore*".

The Egyptians chased the Jews with 600 chariots. In the times of Sisrah, they chased the Jewish people with 900 chariots. The ground under the feet of the horses became boiling hot, and started to burn the hooves of the horses. They ran into the nearby Kishon River to cool their feet, thereby drowning the riders of the 900 chariots. Hashem said to the river (the guarantor of the ocean), "go pay your guarantee". Immediately the river threw the bodies into the ocean (all rivers lead into the ocean). At that time the fish of the sea realized it was exactly 900 chariots of people, and they cried out "ואמת ה' לעולם הללויה"- "Hashem is true forever Hallelujah". They testified to the fact that Hashem was true to his word, and repaid exactly one and a half times the 600 chariots with the 900 chariots that had just drowned.

We see from this Gemarah that the fish were the ones who attested to the integrity of Hashem in fully keeping his promises to the last detail. It is for this reason that we eat fish on Shabbat. The Gemarah Shabbat 118b brings fish as the primary example of honoring the Shabbat. Why does this quality of fish (in that it reminds us of Hashem keeping his promises) cause us to partake of them every Shabbat??

The Gemarah in Beitzah Daf 16A says that the amount of money that a person will earn from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah (the entire year) is fixed, except for what he spends on Shabbat, Yom Tob, and Torah education for his children. The more he spends on those items - the more he is given. Hacham Baruch would teach a hint to this. He said: "from Tishrei until Tishrei is fixed except for Tishrei". Tishrei is the month of Rosh Hashanah. The Rabbi was saying that from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah the money you will make is fixed, except for what you spend on Tishrei. The word "תשרי" stands for יום טוב, ראש חודש, שבת, תלמוד תורה. The Rabbi included Rosh Hodesh, and said that whatever we spend on these four will be repaid in full by Hashem.

Hashem goes so far as to say "ליו עלי ואני פורע" - "borrow on my account and I will repay". Normally we are encouraged *not* to borrow, but in the case of a man who wants to borrow for his Shabbat needs Hashem says "don't worry", borrow and I will give it back to you.

This concept is hinted in a Pasuk in Perek 34 Pasuk 11 says: "כי פעל אדם" - "a man will get paid according to his work". The word "פעל" can also be spelled with a ו' (פועל). פועל stands for "ליו עלי ואני פורע" (borrow on my account and I will repay), and the Pasuk finishes "ישלם לו" - "*he will be repaid*". Hashem will repay him for what he borrowed to honor the holy Shabbat. How do we know the Pasuk refers to Shabbat? The holiness of Shabbat sets in at midday on Friday (six hours before the onset of Shabbat), and it remains until midnight after Shabbat (six hours after Shabbat has ended). This is why when reciting the קריאת שמע על המטה on Saturday night we omit וידוי if it is before midnight). Thus, the total amount of hours that we have the holiness of Shabbat is 36. 24 hours of Shabbat itself, plus the 6 hours before, and the 6 hours after, total 36. The Pasuk says "ישלם לו", the numerical value of the word לו is 36. Showing that it is regarding Shabbat that the Pasuk is hinting we will be repaid in full.

This is why we begin our Shabbat meal with fish. When a man sits down, and begins to contemplate how much the meal his wife prepared just cost him, we bring out the fish. They serve as a reminder to Hashem's being true to his word to repay a

person in full! The fish thus soothes the man, and reminds him that he will be fully repaid for all that he spent to honor the **שבת קודש**!

There is an additional connection to the fish's declaration of **"ואמת ה' לעולם הללויו-** and the eating of fish on Shabbat. It may be a bit lofty for our understanding, but in the Zechut of the Rashash (Rabbi Shalom Sharabi) Zechuto Yagen Aleinu, whose Yahrzeit is today the tenth of Shevat we should merit understanding it.

The Jewish people were faced with a terrifying dilemma. The Egyptians were behind them, and the sea was in front of them. They began to cry out to Hashem. Hashem responded to Moshe **"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה: מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי דְּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ"** - "Hashem said to Moshe why are you crying out to me - tell the Jews to travel!" We were always taught that we must pray to Hashem, especially in our most difficult moments. How we to understand what Hashem was asking Moshe "why are you crying out to me", what else are we supposed to be doing?!

In order to begin to gain an understanding in what Hashem's message was to Moshe, we must know the level the Jews were on at that moment, and on what tier they were connecting to Hashem.

Hashem is the energy source, and at the different times that we serve him, we attach ourselves to him at different levels of spiritual "voltage". For example, on Shabbat we are on a high level of spiritual voltage, and we thereby connect to Hashem in a more full extent than during the weekday. Even during the Shabbat itself, the level of spiritual energy increase until it peaks at a time called **"רעוה דרעוין"** which is attained at Minhah of Shabbat afternoon (this is why some Sadikim make sure to pray Minha Gedolah [early Minhah] on Shabbat afternoon, in order to prolong the experience at this maximum spiritual energy level).

At the time of the splitting of the sea, Hashem in his kindness revealed himself to the Jews on this super high level of "spiritual voltage". This highest level is what the Zohar refers to as **"עתיק יומין"** (or Keter). There are various filters or Midot that Hashem reveals his light through. The highest level is this level called "Keter". It is the level where Hashem himself is found, and this level is full of Hashem's unbridled kindness without any judgment at all mixed in (these are obviously very deep and esoteric concepts, and the terminology being used throughout is only so we can gain a small measure of understanding as to how this works). The Keter is compared to the crown

of Hashem. Just like the highest point on a mortal king is his crown, so to כביכול the highest point of spirituality and connection to Hashem is on this level of Keter. This level is normally “off limits” to us, and we almost never experience it (the only time we experience the holiness of Keter is on Shabbat afternoon after Mincha as mentioned).

The Jewish people at the moment of the splitting of the sea were attached to Hashem on the highest spiritual levels, and were connecting to Hashem through the level of Keter! This is why Hashem said to Moshe **”מה תצעק אלי”** - “why do they cry out to me! They are connecting to me through the level of Keter where it’s all kindness!

The Keter-crown of Hashem consists of 13 attributes. These are referred to as the “13 attributes of mercy”. We know them as the 13 attributes that we read in the morning Tefilah when we say; **”מי אל כמורך”** and proceed to list 13 attributes. We also read thirteen attributes in the ויעבר that we say in וידוי. The seventh attribute of the 13 is אמת-truth. We read: **א-ל-ל-2 (רחום-3 וחנון-4 ארך-5 אפים-6 רב חסד-7 ואמת**. There are 6 attributes before אמת, and 6 attributes after it. This is hinted in the letter ו of אמת. The ו is spelled ואו. ו is numerically 6. The א which stands for אמת has a ו before it and a ו after it symbolizing the attribute of אמת which has 6 attributes before it, and 6 after it.

On the human body the various body parts correspond to the various attributes of Hashem. The head corresponds to the level of Keter. The Zohar says that there are 13 points on the face that correspond to the 13 attributes of Hashem (the hair of the face stands for mercy as it corresponds to the Keter which is full of mercy. This is why at moments of judgment; we are required to let our beards grow in order to counteract the Dinim. For example; someone who is mourning לא עלינו is required to let their beard grow, since he has just experienced great judgment. During Sefirat Haomer, when the 24,000 students of R’ Akivah died is a time of judgment, and we let our beards grow. The hair of the head however, stands for Dinim- judgement and it is therefore recommended to keep it short). We mention these 13 attributes - and there corresponding points on the face – during the Tashlich prayer of Rosh Hashana. The seventh point on the face is the point just above the beard where the cheeks protrude. This is the point that corresponds to the seventh attribute- אמת. The Zohar calls this point on the face; תפוחין (literally apples)- the protrusion on the face by the cheeks actually somewhat resembles an apple.

The **בני יששכר** says that the seventh attribute of Hashem is **אמת**, and it corresponds to the seventh day of the week, the Shabbat. This is why some Sadikim recommend eating apples on Shabbat. The apple is the seventh point on the face, and corresponds to the seventh attribute of Hashem (**אמת**), which corresponds to the seventh day of the week (**שבת**). This is why we refer to the meal of Shabbat (as we read on Friday night) "**דא היא סעודתא דחקל תפוחין קדישין**" - "this is the meal of the "holy apples".

This connection between **אמת**, and **שבת** explains the Gemarah in Yerushalmi that says; that even though normally an **עם הארץ** may not be trusted when serving food that he claims he already tithed, on Shabbat we **do** believe the **עם הארץ** when he tells us he has properly tithed his produce, and the food he is serving may be eaten. This is because Shabbat is synonymous with **אמת**-truth, and on this day we believe that even the **עם הארץ** is not lying. Even common people today say "*I would never lie on Shabbat!*" Shabbat and **אמת** go hand in hand.

The word **אמת**, besides for meaning truth, also has another, deeper connection.

There are 3 Pesukim in this Parasha (chapter 14 Pesukim 19,20,21) that each contain 72 letters. In these three Pesukim there are 72 different combinations of three letter names of Hashem. These names are formed by taking the first letter of the first Pasuk, the last letter of the second Pasuk, and the first letter of the third Pasuk. The same goes with the second letter. We take the second letter of the first Pasuk, the second to last letter of the second Pasuk, and the second letter of the third Pasuk and so on for all 72 letters (for example; the first letter of the first Pasuk is the **ו'** of the word **ויטע**, the last letter of the second Pasuk is the **ה'** of **הלילה** and the first letter of the third Pasuk is the **ו'** of **ויט**. This spells **ו-ה-ו** and it is a holy name of Hashem). The fifth combination forms the name **ש-ה-מ** (the **מ** of **מלאך**, the **ה** of **הלילה** and the **ש** of **משה**), this holy name is the name that when contemplated, saves us from various plagues. We see this in Bamidbar Perek 17 Pasuk 11, during a plague that was ravaging the Jews, Moshe instructed Aharon to atone for the Jews with the Ketoret in order to stop the plague. The Pasuk says "**ויאמר משה אל אהרון**" (lit. and Moshe said to Aharon). We now understand the deeper meaning of the Pasuk, **משה** was telling Aharon the name of Hashem of **ש-ה-מ**, which when rearranged spells **משה**, in order to stop the plague. "**ויאמר משה אל אהרון**" - he was giving him the secret of the name **ש-ה-מ** in order to stop the plague.

How does the contemplation of ש-ה-מ work to stop a plague? It's not just the simple thinking of these letters; it is knowing *how* to think them. These letters have to be "opened up", we need to spell each letter. 'מ is מם 'ה is הא and 'ש is שין. The total numerical value of שין הא מם equals 446. This is the same Gematriyah as the word מות-death.

Why would we want to equal מות-isn't that exactly what we are trying to avoid?! The explanation is that we must insert a letter into this name. The letter that represents Hashem is the letter 'א (since Hashem is one). When we add a 'א to מות we show that we remember that the plague is from Hashem and this helps stop it. The letter א together with the word מות form the word **ואמת**. The word **ואמת** now represents the complete Kavanah (intent), that one must have of the name ש-ה-מ in order to be saved from impending danger. (It represents the "opening up" of the letters ש-ה-מ that equal מות, plus the 'א representing Hashem).

It was this that Hashem was teaching Moshe at the moment when he told him "מה תצעק אלי" ("why do you cry out to me"). The Pasuk begins "וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה" (lit. "Hashem said to Moshe") Hashem said to **משה**, משה stand for the letters ש-ה-מ. The Pasuk continues: "מֶה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי" The first letters of these words spell **אמת**. Hashem was teaching Moshe the Kavanah of ש-ה-מ and the way to activate it through **אמת**.

The Jewish people at that time were in great need of a salvation to be saved from there impending annihilation. The Zohar explains that the Jews at that time faced trouble from all sides, the waves of the ocean were raging in front of them, behind them was the Egyptian army approaching, even above in the heavens there were angels persecuting against them. There was no greater need for this holy name of ש-ה-מ (represented by **ואמת**) than now! Hashem gave the secret of this name to Moshe, the sea split, and the Jews were saved. The only problem was, they didn't know they were saved!! As mentioned above, the Jews thought that the Egyptians would emerge right behind them to attack! It was only until the sea spit out the bodies of the Egyptians onto the shore that the Jews realized they were saved. This is why the fish declared ה' לעולם הללויה-**ואמת**. The fish were the ones who notified the Jews that there Kavanah of **ואמת** was indeed successful! They were saved from the impending disaster, and were now finally free to serve Hashem.

When we put all this together, we understood another reason why we eat fish on Shabbat. The fish notified the Jews that there Kavanah of **ואמת** had succeeded. Therefore fish stand for **אמת**. The seventh attribute of Hashem is **ואמת** (notice how in the ויעבר it says "רַב חֶסֶד **ואמת**" with the ו'). The seventh day (which as mentioned above connects with the attribute of **אמת**) is Shabbat. Shabbat is associated with **אמת**, and the

fish too are associated with אמת. The numerical value of דג (fish) is 7. This stands for the Seventh attribute of Hashem – אמת , and also stands for the seventh day – Shabbat. It is therefore appropriate to enjoy fish that stand for אמת , on Shabbat which also stands for אמת. (It also says that the word דגים [fish] stands for יג-מכילין דרחמי-the 13 paths of mercy actually hinting to all 13 attributes of mercy of Hashem).

This is why many Pesukim that discuss Shabbat say זכר ליציאת מצרים (“a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt”). What does Shabbat have to do with the exodus?! We now understand that the Shabbat represents אמת, and the final stage of the exodus of Egypt was accomplished with ואמת. They are therefore linked in this regard.

From all this we are able to get a small glimpse into how deep and wondrous our Torah is! There are connections, and meanings to the most seemingly simple actions. Shabbat, Keter, the Face, Truth, Apples, Fish, Cheeks, the Exodus, 13 Attributes of Mercy, All Amazingly Linked!! How lucky are we to be given this treasure of the Torah! Let us appreciate it, and study it.

Let us honor the holy Shabbat to the best of our ability. We should buy the best food and drink, Hashem says it's on him!! By honoring the Shabbat all our needs become taken care of, as the Pasuk in Tehilim chapter 37 says: "והתענג על ה' ויתן לך" "enjoy "on Hashem" (on his account) and he will fulfill all the desires of your heart". May we merit properly honoring and appreciating the holy Torah and Shabbat Kodesh Amen!