

## פרשת בשלה

This week's Parasha coincides with the holiday of Tu Beshvat. Tu Beshvat is a very significant day, as it marks an end to the difficult period of דינים that span the month of Tevet and the first half of the month of Shevat. From Tu Beshvat onwards we end the period of Din and enter the period of kindness-Hesed. This is hinted in the formation of Hashem's name of the month of Shevat. (The 4 letters of Hashem's name of הויה can be reconfigured 12 different ways. These 12 configurations represent the 12 months of the year; each month has its own configuration.) The configuration for the month of Shevat is ה-י-וה. The first two letters of this name- the ה-י- are "backwards" (since Hashem's name really begins with י-ה), but the second half- the letters ו-ה- are "straight" and in order (since Hashem's name does indeed end in ו'ה). This shows us that in the first half of the month we are not under Hashem's "straight" kindness, as signified by the first half of the letters of this month's configuration - the ה'י- - being "backwards", but in the second half of the month we are under Hashem's direct kindness as signified by the second half of the configuration- ו'ה - being in the proper formation.

Tu Beshvat is like the "magnet" that connects us to the holiday of Purim, which in turn connects us to the holiday of Pesah. Since 30 days before a holiday we have a "magnetic" pull towards the holiday and a connection to it. From Tu Beshvat on, we are already being drawn to the happy and holy times of Purim and Pesah.

### אז ישיר

The portion of אז ישיר is one of the only portions of the Torah that we recite in our daily Tefilot. This shows us the importance of אז ישיר. It is written, that if one recites the אז ישיר with the proper כונה- concentration he will merit to be spared of any difficulty that he is experiencing. Since אז ישיר is the song about being saved from the גלות מצרים, and everyone's personal "גלות" – exile- is called מצרים. מצרים is from the word מצר, which means constriction or difficulty. The Jews rejoiced and sang about being saved from the turbulent waters of the ocean, and when a Jew recites אז ישיר with the proper concentration, he too is saved from his personal "turbulent waters" of life.

"אז ישיר משה" Rashi explains "אז כשראה הנם עלה בלבו שישיר שירה"- "then, when he saw the miracle, it came upon his heart to sing a song". There are several interpretations to the depth behind Rashi's comments. Firstly, the eyes represent the

physical and the heart represents the spiritual. Since the eyes can only see something that is before them. However the heart can sense things that are “above” the physical, that are not visible to the eyes. The qualities of the eyes and heart- the physical and spiritual-are both inherent in the Torah. The Torah was given on Mount Sinai and at that time the world was in danger of being destroyed, since if the Jews had refused to accept the Torah Hashem would not have let the world continue to exist. Once the Jews accepted the Torah, they saved the world from destruction and therefore technically the world now “belongs” to them. The physical world is only in existence because of the Torah, therefore the Torah possess physical benefits- benefits represented by the eyes. Even so, we study the Torah for its **spiritual** benefits, to become closer to Hashem, which corresponds to the “heart” element of the Torah. These 2 qualities of the Torah- eyes and heart- are hinted to in the last words of the Torah. The Torah ends with the words; לעיני כל ישראל-“in front of the **eyes** of the Jews”. The last letter of the Torah is a ל , and the first letter in the Torah is the ב of בראשית. The ב and ל spell לב – heart. Thus, we see the mention of both eyes and heart in the final words (and opening word) of the Torah.

The Jewish people actually had two redemptions, the first redemption was six months before the splitting of the sea, and that was when the labor ceased. The difficult backbreaking torture that the Egyptians inflicted on the Jews stopped six months earlier with the onset of the first plague. The second redemption was when the Jews actually crossed the sea and were finally free from the Egyptians, to enter the desert and accept the Torah. This second redemption was the **main** redemption. Since, what good is freedom if we have nothing to do with our lives?! The second redemption is the one that represents our freedom to accept the Torah and is the reason for our existence in this world! This is alluded to in the Haggadah where we celebrate and read about מצרים מצרים -the **leaving** of Egypt, we read וכל המרבה לספר וכל המרבה לספר “whoever expounds on the **leaving** of Egypt is praiseworthy” The Haggadah praises one who speaks of the Jews leaving Egypt, not just the stoppage of work! He is praised since he focuses on the spiritual - which is represented by the leaving of Egypt - rather than the physical – which is represented by the stoppage of work. We are supposed to speak about this and praise Hashem the night of Passover until sleep overtakes us (interestingly, on Shavuot many of us stay up all night even though this is a Minhag, but on Pesah we go to sleep immediately after the Seder when we have a Misvah from the Torah to stay up and speak about the exodus!). Moshe Rabeinu was praising Hashem for this freedom to accept and live by the Torah - which as mentioned represent the eyes and heart. This is what Rashi was hinting to us, כשראה - when he **saw** the miracle, עלה בלבו שישיר - it came on his **heart** to sing, Rashi mentions the eyes and the heart. Even so, we see

that Moshe actually sang from his **heart**- **בלבו** שיסיר, since that is the most important quality of the Torah, - its ability to bring us close to our G-d.

It is written that Moshe was “created” from the heart of Abraham Avinu. (not that he was physically created from Abraham’s heart, this is to be taken in a spiritual sense). This is hinted to in our daily prayers in **ודוד** ויברך we say the words **ושמת שמו אברהם** "ושמת שמו אברהם" -ומצאת אל לבבו **נאמן** לפניך". It is written about Moshe; **בכל ביתי נאמן הוא**; this shows us the connection between the heart of Abraham (לבבו), and Moshe (נאמן). Moshe shared the same quality as Abraham, namely, **מסירות נפש** - to sacrifice for Hashem, as seen by Abraham’s sacrificing his beloved son (whom he waited all his life for), on the alter without questioning G-d at all. And Moshe, when he was told by Hashem that he would be the start of a new nation and that everyone would be destroyed, he responded “destroy me with them”! Like a true leader, Moshe was willing to sacrifice everything - even having his name mentioned in the Torah- as it says: **מחני נא מספרך**”- all for the sake of the Jewish people. Where did Moshe get this strength from? From Abraham, and this is what is meant when it says that Moshe was from the heart of Abraham.

When it speaks about Abraham’s preparing for the sacrifice of Yishak, the Torah says; **ויבקע עצי עולה** -“he split the logs of wood” (for the alter). They needed to be split in order that Abraham could inspect them to insure that they did not contain any worms. In the merit of the splitting of the wood by Abraham, the sea split for his children to cross. This is what Rashi is hinting to when he says; **עלה בלבו** - it came to his **heart** to sing, the heart represents Moshe’s connection to Abraham and to Abraham’s act of slicing the wood, in which merit the sea had split.

We say in the Shaharit of Shabbat; **לגזר ים סוף לגזרים**, which literally means; Hashem split the sea into sections. Twelve sections for the twelve tribes.

Another explanation of these words are: **לגזר ים סוף** - Hashem split the sea- **לגזרים** - for those who performed the Brit Milah (the word **גזר** means; to cut, referring to the cutting of the Brit Milah). In the merit of the Brit Milah the sea split (even though in the previous answer we said that it was in the merit of Abraham splitting the wood- the Torah has many facets and all the explanations are true).

What is the special significance of the Misvah of Brit Milah that the sea split because of it?

When Moshe approached the sea and commanded it to split, the sea refused. The “argument” of the sea was that the sea was created by Hashem on the third day and

man was created on the sixth day. So the sea was “telling” Moshe I am older than you! Therefore I do not have to listen to you. This argument is rebuffed by the Brit Milah, since the Brit Milah signifies the fact that when we were born we were not “complete”, and we still needed something to be done to our bodies in order to make us holy. We are actually on a higher level a few days **after** we are born- after the Brit Milah. This shows us the concept that sometimes **later** is better than earlier (since the Brit Milah is performed a few days **after** birth). This showed the sea that just because you came into existence before us, does **not** mean that we have to listen to you!

This idea is also illustrated in a story in the Gemarah about Rabbi Akivah. Rabbi Akivah was asked by Turnus Rufus which is better, what Hashem does or what we do? Rabbi Akivah responded; what we do. Since for example, when Hashem makes the wheat grow it indeed is a miracle. However what are we supposed to do with stalks of wheat?! However after man processes the wheat he ends up with a delicious jelly doughnut! Rabbi Akivah was explaining that actions which happen **later** are more valuable.

This is what it means when Moshe was asking Hashem to choose someone else to lead the Jews out of Egypt: שלח נא ביד תשלח - “send them with whom you will send them”. He was really referring to Rabbi Akivah, since Rabbi Akivah represented this concept that “later is better” and he would be able to answer the sea’s claim, however Moshe was born מהול (he was born with his Brit Milah already done). In his case there was no situation of a Milah showing later is better, since Moshe did not need a Brit Milah on the eighth day- since he was born with it already done. In the end, the sea saw the Brit Milah of **all** the people - לגזר ים סוף לגזרים and in that זכות it split.

The word in the Torah that describes the Misvah of Brit Milah in וימל and the אונקלוס (Aramaic translation) for וימל is וגזר (and he cut). The word וגזר hints to the fact that the sea split in the merit of Milah. The first two letters are ו' and ג'. ו' is 6 and ג' is 3, this hints to the confrontation between what was created on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day- the sea- and what was created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day- man. When the sea saw the Brit Milah, it split and we sang אז ישיר. The last letters of אז ישיר are ז' and ר'. These are the last two letters of וגזר. The אונקלוס is hinting to fact that the sea split in the merit of the Mitzvah of Brit Milah.

“את השירה הזאת”

The word זאת alludes to a deep message. It says in Tehilim איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא - “the foolish one doesn’t understand this”. What is meant by the word זאת- this? The ז' of זאת is 7, the number seven represents טבע- nature, the 7 days of the week etc... The letters א-ת of זאת represent the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet א thru ת. Hashem created the world with these letters, for example, to create the sun, Hashem “took” a ש' then a מ' than another ש',- that spell שמש -put them together and created a sun. The same way with all of creation. The את of the word זאת represents

Hashem creating and controlling everything in the world. That is why David Hamelech wrote וְכִסִּיל לֹא יבִין אֵת זֹאת - the fool doesn't understand the **את** from the word **זאת**, he thinks that everything is nature and not being controlled by Hashem ח"ו. He only knows of the **ז'**- nature, not the **את**. By the splitting of the sea, Hashem's glory and control of every element in the world was so clear that the Pasuk says **את השירה הזאת**; the **את** was clearly part of the **זאת**. The fact that Hashem runs the world and that he is controlling nature was crystal clear when the sea split.

את השירה הזאת the word שירה is feminine לשון , why did the Torah use a feminine term rather than the word שיר which is the masculine term that is normally used ? One answer is that feminine terminology is like a female which reproduces so it's a recurring term, since אז ישיר is recurring in that we say it every day; the Torah chooses a נקבה of לשון.

On a deeper level the Torah specifically chose the word שירה instead of שיר since it wanted to teach us the **reason** why we left Egypt. It says in the Pasuk "להנחיל אהבי יש" "Hashem has in store for his beloved one's" the Rabbis explain from this Pasuk that in the future every Sadik will receive 310 "worlds"- שי עולמות - as a reward for serving Hashem. Since שי ( which equals 310) is the same letters as יש. Why do the Rabbis refer to the amount of worlds as שי עולמות? Why not use the same terminology as the Pasuk and call them יש עולמות?

The Rabbis are hinting to the method that the 310 worlds are acquired.

The Pasuk says "כי נר מצוה ותורה אור" this Pasuk speaks about the value of תורה and מצוה. The last 2 letters of נר מצוה are רה. The last two letters of תורה אור are הר (the same letters as רה just reversed). The ר is spelled ריש and the ה is spelled הי. The last letters of ריש and הי are י-ש'. We now notice a certain "interchangeability" between the letters רה and יש, in the same respect we also find the letters הר (last letters of תורה אור) interchangeable with יש (since the last letter of הי is י' and the last letter of ריש is ש'). The last letters of נר מצוה ותורה אור is now like שי-הר. The Rabbis specifically said שי עולמות instead of יש because they wanted to hint to the Pasuk of נר מצוה ותורה אור since נר מצוה is like the letters שי. Only through תורה ומצוה can a Jew reach the level to receive 310 worlds.

The word שירה contains these four letters שי-רה which as spelled, allude to the first two words of the Pasuk נר מצוה ותורה אור, (since there last letters- רה- are synonymous with שי; spelling שירה). The word שירה backwards is הריש, which alludes to the last 2 words of the Pasuk; תורה אור, (since הר is synonymous with יש).

The Torah specifically uses the word שירה to give us the secret of how to obtain these special 310 worlds and to show us the reason why were freed from Egypt; to serve Hashem through Torah and Misvot.