

## פרשת בשלח

### שמות יד: טו-יח

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִהִתְצַעֵּק אֶלָּי דָּבָר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה וְיֹשְׁעָה וְאַתָּה הַכֹּם אֶת-מִטְרָה וְגַטָּה אֶת-יִצְחָק עַל-הָיָם וּבְקָעָהוּ וַיַּבְאֵן בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הָיָם בַּיּוֹבָשָׁה: וְאַנְּיִ הַגָּנִי מַחְזִיק אֶת-לֵב מִצְרָיִם וַיַּבְאֵן אַחֲרֵיכֶם וְאַכְבְּדָה בְּפַרְעָה וּבְכָל-חַיְלָיו בְּרַכְבָּעָוָן וּבְפַרְשָׁיו: וַיַּדְעָו מִצְרָיִם כִּי-אַנְּיִ הַיְהוָה בְּהַכְבָּעָן בְּפַרְעָה וּבְרַכְבָּעָוָן וּבְפַרְשָׁיו:

The Lord said to Moses, Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel. And you raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and split it, and the children of Israel shall come in the midst of the sea on dry land. And I, behold! I shall harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they will come after you, and I will be glorified through Pharaoh, and through all his force, through his chariots, and through his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I will be glorified through Pharaoh, through his chariots, and through his horsemen

### Molly Goldstein- Class of 2021 : Chizkuni

(Chizkuni: Hezekiah ben Manoah, was a French rabbi and Bible commentator of the 13th century.)

In this set of pesukim, Moshe and Bnei Yisrael have arrived at the sea and appear stuck. Bnei Yisrael panic and scream at Moshe, complaining that they would rather be in Egypt then out in the wilderness. Moshe tells them to calm down, and prays to Hashem. Hashem tells him not to worry and to lift his rod to split the sea.

The Chizkuni explains why Moshe would be crying out to HaShem as they get to the sea. One might think that Moshe was unfaithful to Hashem in this situation, however Chizkuni explains that Moshe actually knew what he was doing. He knew Hashem's plan to harden Pharaoh's heart and eventually save them from peril. So, Moshe was praying on behalf of Bnei Yisrael because they were the ones worried and losing faith. If they didn't see Moshe praying, they would have lost faith in him too. In response, Hashem says to Moshe, "why are you screaming at me?" In reality he was expressing this to Bnei Yisrael, asking them why they are losing faith in Him.

This commentary puts Moshe in a good light because it shows how he knows his people and what they need, making him a strong leader of Bnei Yisrael.

## Daniel Gross- Class of 2020-

### On Teshuva and being independent; some original thoughts

As the Jews approach the red sea, panic starts to set in. After escaping Egypt in a hurry, the culmination of the ten plagues and hundreds of years of suffering, the freed slaves find themselves in a predicament. An uncrossable sea looms as the bloodthirsty Egyptian army breathes down their necks. Naturally, the Jews did the one thing they are best at: complain. They cried out to Moshe, “why did you bring us here to die?”, whereupon Moshe responds: “not to fear, Hashem will save you!”. As the leader of the nation just saved by Hashem’s outstretched arm, it would make sense to defer to God in such matters. And yet, Hashem immediately responds “ Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel”. He tells Moshe that he will “harden the hearts” of the Egyptians and gain glory through the downfall of the army. And, as he is God, he turns out to be right.

This passage poses a very clear issue for me. Hashem seems to imply that the Egyptian army and Pharaoh will bring glory to him. But, the very next thing that happens to Pharaoh and his army is that their hearts are hardened and Hashem kills them in the sea. So what Hashem seems to be implying is that his name becomes sanctified by killing an entire group of people against their free will? The Torah goes so far as to mention specifically that the Egyptians attempted to flee the closing sea, but Hashem tossed them in anyway. This brings an obvious massive moral dilemma: how could Hashem force people to their death and then brag about it?

For me, the answer comes in two separate parts. The first finds its basis in Halakha. Why does a merciful God give to his people the death penalty, as the Jews have? The oversimplified answer is that death is an essential part of the Tshuva process for that specific sin. To merit one’s place in Olam Habah, one must cleanse themselves of sin. For those that commit the most egregious transgression, part of that cleansing process is the death penalty. And I know, this is an uncomfortable concept, but the Rabbis thought so too; courts would barely have a death every 70 years. And so, for the Egyptian people, this is their death penalty. The culmination of the ten plagues, the outstretched arm to the finger of God. This brings me to my second reason: this process of Tshuva for the Egyptians was essential for the Jews to fully sever their ties with their masters. Had Pharaoh given his permission, his heart not been hardened, the Jewish nation might still have deference to Egypt. To become independent they had to cleanse themselves of their former lives. This is why the passage starts with Hashem telling Moshe “Why do you cry out to me”? Why do you always need guidance from a higher power? You are the leader of an independent nation, act like it!

And for our daily lives, this shows us the power of boundaries. If we don’t want to be slaves to our work, our phones, our hobbies, we must know where they end and where we begin, the severance with which we reach independence.

## Noah Meimoun: RMBA Alumni: Class of 2019- currently studying at Yeshivat Orayta

The commencement of the third of aliyah in this week's Parsha- Parshat *Beshalach*- segues from Moshe consoling and ensuring protection to the recently freed (and apprehensive) Jewish people, now being chased by Pharaoh and the Egyptian forces, to Moshe taking action into his own hands. Pasuk 15 tells us in Hebrew: *וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מֹשֶׁה מִה-תְּצַעַק אֱלֹהִים דָּבַר אֶל-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל*

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to Me? Tell the Israelites to go forward." Rashi expounds two possible interpretations of what the line means. The first possibility, Moshe was standing and praying and הַקְרְבָה tells him that now is not the time for prayer, but that Am Yisrael is in distress and immediate action must be taken (by Moshe). Alternatively, he proposes that הַקְרְבָה is remonstrating Moshe for crying out to him at all, implying that these matters are in the hands of G-d and that Moshe should not instruct G-d regarding His chosen people and his divine power. Aside from Rashi *darshining* two mutually exclusive approaches how to interpret this verse- both of which suffice and offer tremendous insight on their own- looking beyond the *pshat* of Rashi's *drash*, I think the alternative approaches present a fascinating representation of the dichotomy of divine intervention, or *hashgacha pratis*, qua *machshava* in Judaism.

A question discussed frequently in my Yeshiva experience thus far is "to what extent or frequency does G-d intervene or take action in our world and daily lives?". The sides of the debate can be represented by two of our greatest Rishonim- Rambam (Maimonides) and Ramban (Nachmanides). The Rambam is classically summarized as the more rational and natural approach, believing in very minimal amounts of divine intervention, and us not knowing when they happen. The Ramban, holds a nearly antithetical approach to that of the Rambam, asserting that Ribono Shel Olam intervenes frequently and many occurrences in this world are the active workings of G-d. The truth is that this conversation, though incredibly captivating, has no normative answer we can or will ever know. Nonetheless, I firmly believe that each of us can and should identify where on this spectrum we feel most connected to and discover how we choose to perceive G-d's active role in our lives. This is what I believe Rashi, though perhaps not explicitly, is suggesting. Through the lens we choose to view divine intervention, we can extrapolate meaning and interpretation that speaks to us as we dissect the verses of Tanach, and that is exactly what Rashi does here. Whether הַקְרְבָה was charging Moshe not to rely on him solely but to take matters into his own hands, or He was asserting his unbounded providence as the creator of worlds, he (Rashi) is encouraging us to apply our philosophies, namely our stance on divine intervention, into our analyses within Talmud Torah and throughout our everyday lives. May we succeed at discovering what speaks to us most.

Shabbat Shalom!



: Yoram and Meira Ranaan

In the painting, we see and feel this tumultuous drama unfolding. The waters swirl and rise high, as a gentle light seeps in to illuminate the pathway of the people who are about to walk through the sea.

This painting came into being through a process that mirrors its subject. First, a visit to an underground sea aquarium inspired a misty, colorful abstract painting with hints of clouds. Through Raanan's desire to reach deeper and break through the barrier of mere beauty, a deeper image arose. As he threw water and swashed the canvas with paint, he saw a depth of blue emerging that looked like a huge wave, like a massive wall of water. "It had tremendous presence. I had not intended to paint it – it just appeared there. I was thrilled with this image, but I did not know what to do with it immediately. When I began to think of it as the biblical crossing of the sea, it came together. Only then could I allow it to be what it was. In the final stage, I added dashes of color, suggesting people. I could accept this figuration because the painting now had much more integrity and power and depth, perhaps even awe."

Even though the Israelites crossed the sea thousands of years ago, the parting of the sea remains a timeless metaphor for taking a leap of faith and forging forward to discover hidden treasures. The crossing of the sea represents trusting the process of breaking through to find and reveal what is concealed within.