

LIKE A BRICK WALL

Ari Capland '27

In the fourth aliyah of this week's parsha, Az Yashir is recited by Moshe and all of B'nai Yisrael. One particularly interesting aspect of this song is its formatting. Typically, a Torah is written line by line in conventional rows; however, in this portion of the parsha, the text is staggered like a brick wall.

Gemara Megillah mentions this unique formatting when discussing the hanging of Haman's sons, which is presented in two separate columns. The Gemara explains that the spacing between the columns symbolizes a weak structure, implying that they should not be able to recover from their downfall. This is in direct contrast to the formatting of Az Yashir. The song is arranged as though bricks were laid—with a whole brick positioned over a half brick and vice versa—symbolizing that B'nai Yisrael can rise from any of their downfalls, just as a strong brick wall endures. Moreover, B'nai Yisrael sings this song immediately following the downfall of the Egyptians and 210 years of slavery.

The water through which B'nai Yisrael passed is described as being like a wall for them, resembling a brick wall. The formatting of Az Yashir further demonstrates B'nai Yisrael's strength throughout their struggles in Egypt and serves as a blessing for them to continue doing so in the face of future challenges.

Additionally, the formatting of Az Yashir teaches us an important lesson about resilience. Just as each brick is carefully placed to support the others, so too must we rely on one another in times of struggle. In moments of difficulty, the strength of our community can help us rebuild and rise stronger—just as B'nai Yisrael did after their miraculous redemption.

The symbolism of the brick wall reminds us that any obstacle can be overcome when we stand together.

Finally, Az Yashir is a song of praise to Hashem, thanking Him for redeeming B'nai Yisrael from Egypt and serving as a protective wall on our journey into Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalaim—a walled city that represents resilience and strength.

TRUSTING HASHEM TO BREAK THE BONDS OF SLAVERY

Alexia Abitbol '28

Parshat Beshalach marks the beginning of freedom. The Jewish people had been enslaved for 210 years leading up to Beshalach. When Hashem sent Moshe to free them, many had grown so accustomed to their life in slavery that they didn't want to leave. This slave mentality was forged through years of physical and spiritual pain. After the ten plagues, Pharaoh let them go, but he soon realized his mistake and sent his army to pursue the Jews.

When they saw the Egyptians chasing them, their initial reaction was terror and fear, followed by blame. They blamed Moshe for taking them out of Egypt and for angering Pharaoh. This response underscored the slave mentality and the internal struggles the Jews had faced for the past 210 years. After so many years of pain, their Emunah in Hashem had dwindled to the point that they didn't even think to call out to Him.

Moshe then reminded them, saying,
אַל־תִּירָאוּ֙ הִתְיַצְּב֔וּ וּרְא֕וּ אֶת־יְשׁוּעַ֥ת
ה' אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂ֥ה לָכֶ֖ם הַיּ֑וֹם

"Do not fear; Hashem will work for you today, and you will never see this nation again"

Not only did Hashem destroy Egypt, but He also cared for the Jewish nation for 40 years in the desert.

Hashem's love for us is everlasting, no matter how far we stray from His ways. To truly connect with and feel Hashem's presence, we must let go of our internal struggles and trust that He is with us every step of the way. He wouldn't give us a challenge we can't overcome. We see from this parsha that when we face terrible pain and misfortune, Hashem is always watching and waiting to rescue us.

MANNA OF EMUNAH

David Ellis '27

In this week's parsha (16:4), the pasuk states:

"וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם וְיָצָא הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנַסֶּנּוּ הֲיֵלֵךְ בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם־לֹא"

"I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day's portion —that I may thus test them, to see whether they will follow My instructions or not."

This verse reveals that the manna was not just sustenance but also a test for B'nei Yisrael. The question then arises: what exactly was Hashem testing them for?

Ramban cites an explanation from Rashi, which holds that the test involved two specific commandments concerning the manna: the people were not to let it remain overnight, and they were forbidden from going out on Shabbat to collect it. However, Ramban disagrees with this limited interpretation. He contends that the true test was not merely about following particular instructions related to the manna. Rather, it was about whether the Jewish people, having no prior experience or nowledge of what manna truly was or whether it could sustain them, would still follow Hashem into the desert. Their willingness to embrace the unknown demonstrated their deep emunah and trust in Him.

This idea is further emphasized by the very name they gave the food —"manna," meaning "What is it?" The name reflects the mystery surrounding this divine provision. Even though they did not fully understand what they were receiving, the people's readiness to accept Hashem's gift underscores that true faith is not contingent on complete understanding. Instead, it is found in the courage to trust and follow Hashem, even when the outcome is uncertain.

This powerful lesson in emunah speaks to us today. In moments when the path ahead is unclear or unfamiliar, we are reminded to trust in Hashem's guidance. Just as B'nei Yisrael demonstrated unwavering faith in the desert, we too can strive to let go of our internal struggles and embrace the unknown, confident that Hashem is with us every step of the way.

HABITS FROM HASHEM

Daniellah Mizrahi '26

In this week's parsha, the pasuk states:

"וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרן אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי ה' הוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם"

The Seforno explains that this pasuk teaches: “Hashem will give you your evening needs specifically in the evening so that you will know that He took you out of Mitzrayim completely —even transforming the way you behaved there.”

Chazal compare B’nei Yisrael to chickens that wander around searching for scraps, eating at random times. This was how they were acting until Moshe instituted set times for them to eat. R’ Henoch Lebowitz zt"l explains, based on the Seforno, that Moshe Rabeinu davened for Hashem to provide food at specific times so that the people would become accustomed to eating on a schedule.

He poses two questions:

1. How is it that B’nei Yisrael, who had reached a level where they experienced Hashem’s presence, could behave like chickens?
2. If Moshe Rabeinu desired that they eat at set times, why didn’t he simply teach them proper behavior? Why was it necessary to daven for this change?

R’ Henoch Lebowitz zt"l teaches that this episode highlights the power of habit. After so many years in Mitzrayim, the people had grown accustomed to their erratic behavior and were unable to break that habit on their own. Even with Moshe’s wisdom and influence, he could not convince them to change by mere instruction; the only option was to pray for divine intervention.

This lesson reminds us how powerful our surroundings and ingrained habits can be—and how difficult it is to change once we become accustomed to them. We should remain vigilant in working on our middot, ensuring that we continuously refine our character, no matter where we are.

THE GIFT OF A TEST

Rabbi Akiva Wolk

In this week’s parsha, we are told about the miraculous gift of manna. The pasuk states:

“וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם וְיָצָא הָעָם וְלָקְטוּ דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ”

"And Hashem said to Moshe, 'I will rain down bread for you from the sky, and the people shall go out and gather each day that day’s portion.’”

What an incredible gift—to never have to worry about food! Yet, the pasuk doesn’t stop there. It continues by revealing Hashem’s deeper purpose:

"לְמַעַן אֲנַסֶּנּוּ הֲיֵלֵךְ בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם־לֹא"

"That I may thus test them, to see whether they will follow My instructions or not."

But what exactly is the test?

Rav Shimon Isaacson, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Sha'arei Mevaseret Zion, explains that the challenge lies in how the Jews perceive this ongoing miracle. Imagine witnessing manna fall from the sky every day—Sunday through Thursday, a double portion on Friday, and none at all on Shabbat. This cycle repeated itself consistently, week after week, year after year, for forty years. At some point, it would feel routine. It would seem like a natural phenomenon rather than a miraculous gift from Hashem.

And *that* is the test! Would the Jewish people still recognize it as a miracle, or would they take it for granted?

How true this is for us as well! So much of our daily lives is miraculous—the ability to see, to move, to think; the birth of a child; the way trees produce delicious fruit. Yet, because these wonders happen with such regularity, we often fail to see them for what they truly are—Hashem's ongoing miracles.

Just as the manna was a test for Bnei Yisrael, challenging them to recognize Hashem's hand in their daily sustenance, so too, we are tested to see the miracles in our own lives. May we all strive to open our eyes and appreciate Hashem's constant presence and kindness.

שבת שלום!

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