

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### Sing Your Song!

This Shabbos is referred to as *Shabbos Shira* (Shabbos of the song of praise).

The reason for this is because we read in this week's *parasha* about the *shira* that *Klal Yisrael* sang to Hashem after *kriyas Yam Suf* (the splitting of the sea).

This needs an explanation. In next week's *parasha* we read about receiving the *aseres hadibros* (the ten commandments), which is fundamental to *Klal Yisrael*. If it is common to name a Shabbos after significant events in the *parasha*, why don't we call next Shabbos *Shabbos Aseres Hadibros!*?

One time a *chassid* approached the great *rebbe* of Gur, the *Beis Yisroel*, with a request for a *bracha* for a great need. The *rebbe* responded, "Did you thank Hashem for your house?" The *chassid* tried again. "Rebbe please give me a *bracha*." The *rebbe* responded, "Did you thank Hashem for your car?" The *chassid* tried again. "Rebbe please give me a *bracha*." The *rebbe* responded, "Did you thank Hashem for your job?" Finally, the *rebbe* explained that in *Hallel* we say *hodu la-hashem* (thank you Hashem) six times, but when it comes to asking Hashem for

help, we ask only four times (*ana Hashem* etc.).

We see from here, said the *Beis Yisroel*, that first and foremost we must constantly praise and thank Hashem. Only after we have built the relationship through praising and thanking Him should we ask Him!

Dovid *hamelech* said, "*Ashirah lhashem bechayay*" (I will sing to Hashem my entire life). Furthermore, the *Targum* translates the word *yehude*, often translated as "a Jew," to mean "a person who thanks and asks." We learn from both of these ideas that the mission of every *yid* is to first sing *shira* and thank Hashem, and only then to ask. Therefore *Chazal* (the Sages) felt the need to give this Shabbos the name *Shira* to show us how crucial thanking and praising Hashem really is. **SHABBOS SHIRA IS OUR ESSENCE!**

Gut Shabbos! 🕍



RABBI  
TZVI  
FISHMAN

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

An elderly man once got angry at his son for not helping him or caring for his needs. Thankfully, Hashem arranged that Reuven, a compassionate fellow, found the old man and took care of him with ultimate devotion over the course of three years.

After the elderly man passed away, his will was opened, and in it was written that, with much gratitude to Reuven for helping me, I would like to bequeath all my possessions (amounting to one million dollars) to him.

The man's son came to *Beis Din* and claimed that although Reuven did indeed serve my father with tremendous devotion, I secretly gave Reuven \$1000 every month for his living expenses, and I requested of him not to let my father know about it. Therefore, the inheritance that he got was a "*mekach taus*," a mistaken and invalid transaction.

**Q** Is the will void or not?

**A** We must determine who arranged for Reuven to serve the father. If the son made the arrangement and promised the monthly pay, we can say the son should get the inheritance.

We can bring proof from the *Shulchan Aruch* (C.M. 246:1), who rules that when one who gives a present to another, we always must assess the giver's intention. If the circumstances express his true intent, we will rule based on that, even though the giver did not clarify. For example, consider a person whose son traveled to a distant land and who then heard that his son died. Therefore, he gave all his possessions in his will to someone else as a present with no proviso. Then his son came back. This present is null because, had he known his son was alive, he would never have given all his possessions to someone else.

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## A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

What item in this week's *parasha* lasted for hundreds of years?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 🕍



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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

CONTINUED

Here too, the old man gave his possessions to Reuven under the assumption that his son had neglected him. Ultimately, however, it became clear that his son was indeed helping to take care of him in his old age. (See also *Mahara"m Lublin*, 108, quoted in *Shach ibid*, s.v. I.)

If Reuven began helping the old man on his own volition, and the son sent him a monthly stipend on his own accord, *Beis Din* should evaluate Reuven's financial position to determine if he would have continued helping the old man even without the son's money. If so, the money should go to Reuven. But if the assessment shows that Reuven could not have continued assisting the old man without the son's money, then the inheritance all goes to the son.

In summation, if Reuven served the father due to the money given to him by the son, the inheritance goes to the son. 🕊️

## IT HAD TO BE HASHEM

*Upon learning of the Jewish refugees that escaped to their military ally, the Nazis dispatched senior officials to persuade the Japanese to return the refugees to Europe or at least create their own concentration camps...*

Since the creation of the Axis powers, the Nazis had been attempting to "educate" the Japanese on the matter of Jews and their "danger" to the world. There were top officials in the Japanese government who were convinced. But as a whole, and partially thanks to Dr. Setsuzo Kotsuji, who upon learning of the Nazi propaganda went on a lecture tour of Japan to disseminate the truth and contain the damage caused by the propaganda, the imperial Japanese government was not swayed. At a top level meeting in 1938, it decided

## GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL



to allow Jews entry into Japan. Incidentally, this is the same time in history that the United States was denying entry to Jewish refugees. Now that a large number of Jews had found haven in Japan, the Nazis increased their pressure on the Japanese to do away with their Jews. Japanese leaders met again to discuss their Jewish policy. There was a decision made to interview Jewish leaders in their quest to understand why the Nazis wanted to eliminate them. A message was sent to the leaders of the Kobe Jewish community that they wanted to interview the Jewish leaders Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes, known as the Lomzer Rav, and the Amshenover Rebbe, Rav Shimon Shalom Kalish. Mr. Leo Hanin, who was one of the leaders of the Kobe community, escorted them to the offices where the Japanese officials were waiting. He was barred from staying in the room. Hanin waited outside with his stomach tied in knots. Neither of these men understood

Japanese nor the Japanese mind. A simple misunderstanding could jeopardize thousands of refugees. Eventually, the door opened. All those who had been in the room seemed to be cordial. As soon as he could, Hanin asked the Amshenover Rebbe what had transpired. "Everything is alright." "What do you mean 'everything is all right'? What happened?" The Rebbe looked at him and said, "They asked me why the Germans hate us." "And, what did you say?" Hanin asked. "I told them the Germans hate us because they consider us Orientals too." Hanin marveled at the Rebbe's wisdom in picking the exact thing to say that would encourage the Japanese to continue withstanding the pressure from their Nazi counterparts. It was decided, though, in August of 1941, that the bulk of the Jewish refugees in Kobe would have to be relocated. The location chosen was the international city of Shanghai. *To be continued...* 🕊️

## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Although the first ordained rabbi did not arrive in America until Rabbi Avraham Rice immigrated in 1840, the first known Torah scholar found his way to America before the turn of the 19th century. Israel Ber Kursheedt was born in Germany in 1766. As a young man, he was sent to Frankfurt to learn under Rav Nossan Adler, well known as the *rebbe* of the *Chasam Sofer*, Rabbi Moshe Sofer. Rav Adler is quoted as giving high praise to Israel Ber. His studies under Rav Adler came to an end with the French invasion of Frankfurt in 1792. After weathering the storm of war, Israel Ber decided to immigrate to America in 1796. Eventually arriving in New York, he befriended and married the daughter of the *chazzan* of Congregation Shearith Israel, Rev. Gershom Mendes Seixas. Seixas began to rely heavily on Israel Ber for answering *halachic* questions. Israel Ber also helped revamp the curriculum of Shearith Israel's *cheder*. In 1812 Israel Ber relocated to Richmond, Virginia, for business purposes. He traveled overland with his family and shipped his collection of Jewish books by sea. The ship they were placed on was the first ship seized by the British in the War of 1812 and was sold off in Bermuda. Several years later his books were returned to him, although he never knew who was responsible for organizing their return. It is said that while in Virginia he made the acquaintance of Thomas Jefferson and visited Monticello. Israel Ber would return to New York in 1824 and took part in establishing Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York's first Ashkenazic congregation. 🕊️

SOURCE: Levine, Dr. Yitzchak. "America's First Torah Scholar: Israel Baer Kursheedt." 2007.

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