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Beshalach

A PARASHA THOUGHT



Covenant of Chessed

A song about a national or personal event usually is not easily adaptable to other situations. For example, a Chanukah song would not be fitting to sing on Pesach. Similarly, a wedding song would be out of place at a Bar Mitzvah. It would be expected, then, that *Az Yashir* would be limited to times celebrating our redemption from Egypt. However, the opening phrase is put in future tense, *Az Yashir* (lit. then we will sing), which indicates a future time that we will sing this song yet again. Seemingly, the notes of *Shiras Hayam* (The Song of the Sea) have relevance to future times and resonate even today.

But what are the beautiful chords of this song? What is the source of such apparent and clear revelation of Hashem's mighty Hand that we couldn't help but burst out in *shira*?

The Tanna D'bei Eliyahu points to a unique covenant that was taken in Egypt between the Jewish people, the Covenant of *Chessed*. The Jewish nation committed to perform acts of *chessed*, lovingkindness, with one another. The ethic of taking care of each other has been and is a defining feature of a Jew. Therefore, it is unsurprising and almost expected that, in Egypt, *chessed* was ubiquitous. This, however, leads to a difficulty. There must have been a community of *chessed* even prior to this Covenant of *Chessed*. Why was it necessary to make a covenant about something so basic to every Jew?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that when we act with *chessed* and actively engage in helping each other, in due measure (*middah knegged middah*) Hashem acts with *chessed* to us. We acted as a family in slavery and Hashem in turn was "*nachisa bechasdecha*," guided and redeemed us with chessed.

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED *ON THE PARASHA*

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHOK PREIS

Q. During the plague of darkness, the Egyptians could neither see nor move, but we could. So why didn't we skedaddle?

A. The Chassam Sofer directs us to the *Targum Yonasan* in *Vayechi* on the words "*Vayashba Yosef*" (and Joseph made his brothers swear…). Aside from the oath that they would eventually bring his body back to *Eretz Yisroel*, Yosef was also imploring them not to leave *Mitzrayim* until they were given the signal to leave. This says, the Chassam Sofer is the meaning of the verse in *Tehillim* 105: "He sent [the plague of] darkness… and they did not rebel against His word."

Q. Our *parasha* references the oath that Yosef demanded of his children regarding his eventual burial in Eretz Yisroel (as mentioned in the previous answer). But what was the point of the oath? Upon whom would it be binding if that entire generation (and the subsequent generation) were to die well in advance of the Exodus?

A. Rashi addresses this and explains

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED
ON THE PARASHA

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that the double term "*hashbei'ah hishbi'ah*" means that Yosef had told his children to have each subsequent generation make a similar oath. Thus, the most "updated" oath would be binding on the generation of the Exodus.

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincykollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.



The Kollel will be on winter recess from this Monday afternoon, January 29th until Monday morning February 5th

FOCUS ON TARYAG
RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUCK

The Midrash (*Devarim* 3:5) tells a story about Rav Shimon ben Shetach who bought a donkey from an Arab. To the great surprise of Rav Shimon's students, they found a gem on the neck of the donkey. They were elated about the newfound gift. However, their Rebbe disagreed. I bought a donkey, not a gem, said Rav Shimon, and he went to return it to the seller. The seller was blown away by the act and exclaimed, "Blessed is the G-d of Shimon ben Shetach." In the *Sifsei Chaim*, Rav Chaim Freidlander is bothered. Why did the Arab praise G-d and not Rav Shimon himself? Rav Chaim explains that the Arab understood that such an act was beyond that of a regular human being; rather it was an outcome of Rav Shimon's walking in the way of Hashem, through which he revealed a new level of G-dliness in this world. This is actually a positive commandment – "After Hashem your G-d you should walk" (*Devarim* 28:9). The Gemara explains that this means we should follow in the *middos* (character traits) of Hashem by doing acts of kindness, visiting the sick, helping the poor, and comforting mourners.

A PARASHA THOUGHT

CONTINUED

Our *chessed* with each other became the vehicle that aroused Hashem's attribute of *chessed* towards us.

This, explains the Chefetz Chaim, was what the Covenant of *Chessed* set out to accomplish. It was a demonstration of our love and care for each and every one of our brothers and sisters. It was a plea for Hashem to be the Father of our family of *chessed*. The day will come when we, the *Am shel Chessed*, will yet again burst out in song to our Father, our Father of *chessed*.

Yes, we know the chords of this song.

TRACING OUR MINHAGIM
RABBI YAAKOV SAKLAD

The *minhag* of eating fruit on Tu B'shvat has fairly early sources. The Magen Avraham (*OC* 131:6) brings this *minhag* from the *Tikkun Yissachar*. The *Minhag Yisroel Torah* also brings the Shevet Mussar, who says to be scrupulous in this *minhag* because it has been the practice of those who are meticulous. Additionally, the Shevet Mussar brings a practice to fry ones esrog after Succos and to eat it on Tu B'shvat. He brings the Tzemach Tzaddik, who says in the name of the Rizhiner Rebbe that many righteous people have worn Yom Tov clothing on this special day, as it is the beginning of the new year for trees and, as the *possuk* says (*Devarim* 20:19), "man is a tree of the field." The Bnei Yisoschor says that on Tu B'shvat one should daven for a beautiful esrog with which one can fulfill the *mitzvah* of taking the *daled minim* (the four species).

How many types of fruit should one consume on Tu B'shvat? One opinion is 12, corresponding to all the different combinations of Hashem's name; the Kerem Shlomo maintains that one should have 13, while the Maharam Chagiz says in the name of his Rebbeim that one should have 15.

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