

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT BESHALLACH

DVAR TORAH: BEAUTIFUL AND PRECISE

One expression in this week's parshah is the source for the concept of *הידור מצוה*, usually translated as the beautification of a mitzvah. In the Song of the Sea Moshe and the people of Israel said "זֶה קְלִי וְאֶנְוֶהוּ" – "This is my G-d and I will beautify Him" (Shemot 15:2). The word *וְאֶנְוֶהוּ*, according to this explanation, is related to the word *נוי*, beauty. Based on this expression, the Gemara (Shabbat 133b) says we should strive for beauty in the mitzvot we do. We pick out a beautiful lulav and etrog; write beautiful sifrei Torah, tefillin, and mezuzot; and make beautiful mitzvah objects, like kiddush cups, seder plates, and challah covers.

Another meaning of *הידור מצוה* is doing mitzvot in a precise and meticulous way. This involves keeping every detail of *מצוות בין אדם לחברו*, the interpersonal mitzvot, and *מצוות בין אדם למקום*, the mitzvot outlining the relationship between man and G-d. They have to be done on time and according to detailed specifications, paying attention to their fine details. Doing this properly involves learning and preparation.

One would have thought that it is our *ahavat Hashem*, our love of G-d, that inspires us to add aesthetic beauty to our mitzvot objects, whereas our *yirat Hashem*, our awe of G-d, motivates doing them meticulously and precisely.

However, Harav Shlomo Fisher, שליט"א, suggests that doing mitzvot with precision can also be an expression of our love of G-d. He illustrates this through a mother packing her child's duffel bag for summer camp. She wants to get everything just right – the right kind of canteen, the right kind of labels, and the right amount of each item of clothing. But she's not going from store to store looking for the right flashlight and insect repellent because she's afraid of her child. On the contrary, she's doing it because she loves her child and wants to make sure that things at camp are just right for her beloved child.

Similarly, *הידור מצוה*, even in the sense of doing mitzvot precisely and meticulously, might be based on our love of G-d. Because we love Hakadosh Baruch Hu we want to make sure that every mitzvah is not only beautiful but done perfectly, just right.

Hiddur mitzvah adds a new component to every mitzvah we do. Besides the particular command we are fulfilling, beautifying the mitzvah and doing it precisely adds both *yirat Hashem* and *ahavat Hashem*. When we do a mitzvah with hiddur, we not only do what Hashem commanded us, but that act becomes a reflection and expression of our relationship with Him, combining both love and awe.

SOURCE GUIDE: “HE WILL REIGN”: KRIAT YAM SUF AND KRIAT SHEMA

Every single day we mention קריעת ים סוף, the miracle of the splitting of the Reed Sea, at the tail end of the blessings of קריאת שמע. Why is mentioning this miracle a component of the Shema and what does it add?

A. Kriat Yam Suf in Kriat Shema

We mention the splitting of the Sea in the blessing after reading the Shema both at night and during the day:

<p>1. Blessings of the Shema – Evening Your sons saw Your Sovereignty, the sea split before Moshe, “This is my G-d,’ they declared, and said, “Hashem will rule for ever and ever.”</p> <p>Blessings of the Shema – Morning The redeemed ones sang a new song to Your great Name on the shore of the sea. Together they all gave thanks, proclaimed Him King, and said, “Hashem will rule for ever and ever.”</p>	<p>ברכות קריאת שמע למעריב מלכותך ראו בניך, בוקע ים לפני משה, זה אלי ענו ואמרו: ה' ימלך לעולם ועד ...</p> <p>ברכות קריאת שמע לשחרית שירה חדשה שבחו גאולים לשמך הגדול על שפתי־הים, יחד כלם הודו והמליכו ואמרו: ה' ימלך לעולם ועד ...</p>
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Mentioning the splitting of the sea has its roots in the Tosefta:

<p>2. Tosefta Berachot 2:1 One who reads the Shema must mention the Exodus from Egypt in the Emet Veyatziv prayer. Rabbi says: One needs to mention sovereignty in it. Others say (that it, Rabbi Meir says): One must mention within it the plague of the firstborn and the splitting of the Reed Sea.</p>	<p>תוספתא ברכות ב:א הקורא את שמע צריך להזכיר יציאת מצרים באמת ויציב. רבי אומר צריך להזכיר בה מלכות אחרים אומרים (זאת אומרת רבי מאיר אומר) צריך להזכיר בה מכת בכורות וקריעת ים סוף:</p>
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We include the last verse of the Song of the Sea:

<p>3. Shemot 15:18 Hashem will rule for ever and ever.</p>	<p>שמות טו:יח ה' ימלך לעולם ועד.</p>
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Apparently, that verse the Sages incorporated into the blessing following the three paragraphs of the Shema adds a dimension to Kriat Shema. The Mishnah (Berachot 2:1) teaches us that accepting Hashem as our King, קבלת עול מלכות שמים, is the theme of the first paragraph of the Shema, and the Gemara (Berachot 13b) teaches us that it is an essential element of the mitzvah. It follows that mentioning ה' ימלך לעולם ועד in Kriat Shema enhances our acceptance of Hashem as King. **What does that verse add to Kriat Shema?**

One way to appreciate how mentioning the Splitting of the Sea complements our Kriat Shema is by answering the (seemingly obvious) question, “What is the tense of the word “ימלך” in the sentence “ה' ימלך לעולם ועד”? Here are three approaches to that last verse of the Song:

B. Unkelos: The Eternal Present

The Targum seems to view the word ימלך as present tense (see also the Targum Yerushalmi):

<p>4. Targum Unkelos on Shemot 15:18 Hashem – His Royalty stands for ever and ever.</p>	<p>תרגום אונקלוס על שמות טו:יח ה' מלכותיה קאים לעלם ולעלמי עלמיה.</p>
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Rabbeinu Bechayei confirms this translation (see also Haktav Vehakabalah):

<p>5. Rabbeinu Bechayei on Shemot 15:18 And Unkelos rendered this present tense in his Targum, in line with the verse, “Hashem is King forever and ever, nations are destroyed from His land” (Tehillim 10:16) ...</p>	<p>רבינו בחיי על שמות טו:יח ואונקלוס עשאו בתרגומו הווה כלשון הכתוב, "ה' מלך עולם ועד אבדו גוים מארצו" (תהלים י:טז) ...</p>
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At the Sea, when they witnessed the fall of the powerful Egyptian army, Israel had a clear vision of G-d's total and eternal dominion. They declared "G-d is King. We now see that He always was and believe that He always will be." Our Siddur includes Chazal's combination of our verse with two others:

<p>6. Daily Siddur - Pesukei Dezimra Hashem is King (Tehillim 10:16), Hashem was King (Tehillim 93:1), Hashem will be King forever and ever (Shemot 15:18).</p>	<p>סידור תפילה – פסוקי דזמרא ה' מֶלֶךְ (תהילים י:טז), ה' מֶלֶךְ (תהילים צג:א) ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד (שמות טו:יח).</p>
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C. The Future

Unkelos apparently avoided translating ימלוך as "He will be King" because Hashem is already the King. But other commentators do translate the verse as "Hashem will be King," but explain the use of future tense:

<p>7. Rashbam on Shemot 15:18 After you will be settled in the Land of Israel the Sovereignty of the Holy One, blessed be He will be known in all of the kingdoms.</p> <p>Ibn Ezra on Shemot 15:18 When the Beit Hamikdash will be built for His Name His Sovereignty will be apparent in the world.</p> <p>Ramban on Shemot 15:18 For He now showed that He is King and Ruler over all, for He saved His servants and destroyed those who rebelled against Him. Thus, may it be His Will that he do this for all future generations.</p>	<p>רשב"ם על שמות פרק טו פסוק יח ה' ימלוך - לאחר שתתישבו בארץ ישראל תודע מלכותו של הקב"ה בכל המלכויות:</p> <p>אבן עזרא על שמות פרק טו פסוק יח ה' ימלוך - כאשר יבנה בית המקדש לשמו אז תראה מלכותו בארץ.</p> <p>רמב"ן על שמות פרק טו פסוק יח ה' ימלוך לעולם ועד יאמר, כי הראה עתה כי הוא מלך ושלטון על הכל, שהשיע את עבדיו ואבד את מורדיו, כן יהי הרצון מלפניו לעשות בכל הדורות לעולם</p>
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See also how the Netziv weaves into his comment on this verse an explanation of the Aleinu prayer. Kriat Shema includes not only an acknowledgement that G-d is King, but also that He will be King, that His Sovereignty will ultimately be known to all the world. In the morning Shema this verse is followed by speaking about the future and ultimate redemption, and the blessing closes גאל ישראל, Hashem is the Redeemer of Israel.

This is also how Rashi explains the first verse of the Shema:

<p>6. Rashi on Devarim 6:4 Hashem is G-d Hashem is one – Hashem, who is our G-d now, and not the G-d of the idolaters, will in the future be the One G-d. For it says, "Then I will transform the nations into a clear expression, to all call out in the Name of Hashem" (Tzefaniah 3:9). And it also says, "On that day Hashem will be One and His Name one" (Zechariah 14:9).</p>	<p>רש"י על דברים ו:ד ה' אלקינו ה' אחד - ה' שהוא אלקינו עתה ולא אלקי העובדי כוכבים הוא עתיד להיות ה' אחד. שנאמר, "כי אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה לקרוא כולם בשם ה'" (צפניה ג:ט). ונאמר, "ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד" (זכריה יד:ט).</p>
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D. Hashem Becoming Our King

There is perhaps another way to view this verse, and another way of understanding its place in Kriat Shema. The reason the Moshe and the People of Israel used the future tense when they said "Hashem will be King" was because their relationship with Hashem as King had just begun. They had gone through generations of Divine hiddenness and slavery. They were at the forty-ninth level of טומאה, impurity. But they had seen enough during the plagues and at the Sea, heard enough from Moshe and Aharon, and experienced enough of a connection to know that they wanted to make Hashem their King. But they were only at the beginning of the process. They had not yet heard Hashem's laws and only caught a glimpse of Divine revelation in Egypt and at the Sea – the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was yet to come. This is perhaps a third aspect of our daily שמים קבלת עול מלכות שמים, declaring that we want to make Hashem our King and keep on intensifying our relationship with Him both personally as a servant and communally as His nation.

HIGH POINTS, LOW POINTS BY RABBI ELIE SILVERBERG

In this week's portion, Beshalach, verses 22-25 in Chapter 15 talk of Bnei Yisrael going through the desert of Shur and not finding water. They come to Marah and find bitter waters that cannot be drunk. This reality is too much for the parched nation to accept quietly, and they cried to Moshe, who cries to Hashem. Hashem directs Moshe to throw a piece of wood into the waters to sweeten the waters. At this point, the verse tells us, "שם שם לו חק ומשפט ושם נסהו" – "There He gave him חק ומשפט and there He tested him" (Bereishit 15:25). What חק ומשפט – usually translated as two types of laws – are alluded to here?

Rashi, based on Sanhedrin 56b, connects this with the known idea that certain laws of Torah were taught to Bnei Yisrael even before they received the Torah on Mount Sinai. The Ramban gives an explanation that is tied to the event itself. He shows that חק ומשפט are sometimes used in Tanach to refer to providing sustenance (see Mishlei 30:8 and Bereishit 40:13), and here was Hashem showing Bnei Yisrael that he could provide for their physical needs in this harsh desert.

I heard from Harav Shalom Gold of Har Nof an explanation that connects this phrase not only to the event itself but also to the previous event, the splitting of the Yam Suf and the ensuing Shirah, the Song of the Sea. No doubt the Shirah signified a high point in the morale of the nation. Yet as little as three days later they reached a low point, thirsting for water in a hostile environment. It was the very juxtaposition of these two opposite situations that was the חק ומשפט, a rule for life being presented to Am Yisrael. This is a lesson for all times and all generations. When you're on a high, appreciate it and know it will not last forever. Conversely, when you're on a low point, do not despair, as help from Hashem can turn things around.

Harav Zelig Starr זצ"ל would say a similar idea about the juxtaposition of Chanukah, a high point of the Jewish history and our calendar year – to the fast of the tenth of Tevet, a bitter reminder of the destruction of the Temple. This is the חק ומשפט of life. As it says in the twentieth chapter of Seder Olam, כשאדם בטובה אל תתיאש, וכשהוא ברעה אל תתיאש מן הטובה – when things are going well don't get overconfident and think that it is rightfully coming to you. Realize that life has its ups and downs. The Seder Olam continues: וכשהוא ברעה אל תתיאש מן הטובה, וישועה of Hashem, the salvation of Hashem, is כהרף עין – can come as quickly as the blink of an eye.

We mourn the tragic death of Dafna Meir, הי"ד, killed in a terrorist attack this week. We continue to pray for a רפואה שלימה, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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