



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Beshalach 5774

### Kriat Yam Suf

Rabbi Shlomo Drillman zt"l

*Editor's Note: The following is based upon HaRav Drillman's weekly parsha shiur given in Shevat of 5745.*

**S**hemos 14:15 - Hashem said to Moshe, "Why do you cry to Me? Speak to the B'nei Yisrael and let them move on. The Torah tells us that when Klal Yisroel found themselves trapped between Paro's army and the Yam Suf they prayed to the Ribbono Shel Olam for salvation. HKB"H told Moshe that it was improper to pray at this time. Instead, Moshe Rabbeinu should direct Klal Yisroel to go forward into Sea and at then HKB"H would save them. HaRav Drillman asked why tefillah was an inappropriate course of action at this time? After all, do we not always look to the Ribbono Shel Olam in times of crisis? It would appear that this would have been a much better course of action then traveling into the Sea.

HaRav Drillman cited an answer to this question that he heard from Rav Elchonon Wasserman, zt"l hy"d. Reb Elchonon cited his rebbe, Reb Chaim Brisker as quoting the following in the name of Reb Chaim Volozhiner, In essence, HKB"H was telling Moshe that the salvation of Klal Yisroel was dependent upon this test of Emunah and Bitachon. The Ribbono Shel Olam wanted to present Klal Yisroel with the challenge of following his instructions without discussion. He had already decided that B'nei Yisroel would be saved as soon as they demonstrated their faith in Hashem. Until this Klal Yisroel had not actually had their commitment to HKB"H tested. They had never had to actually commit to anything until they stood at the banks of the Yam Suf. Their act of commitment was to be putting their faith in HKB"H into practice by entering Yam Suf before the waters actually split. It was for this reason that HKB"H told Klal Yisroel to stop their tefillos as there was no point in further prayer, only in acting on their Emunah and Bitachon in the Ribbono Shel Olam's promise to them.

*Shemos 14:22 - "And the Children of Israel came through the sea on dry land." Shemos 14:29 - "And the Children of Israel went on dry land through the sea"*

HaRav Drillman was bothered as to why the Torah switched the words "dry land" and "sea" in these two passukim. Citing his ancestor and namesake, the holy Noam Elimelech, he answered as follows: When Klal Yisroel were traversing the Yam Suf they witnessed the awesome miracles done by HKB"H on their behalf. The people found that they were able to walk through the Yam Suf as if they were walking on the dry ground. It was the contemplation of these marvels that brought them to an even higher spiritual madraigah, level, then they had been on previously. It was at this point that the people were able to appreciate that all of nature is as much of a miracle as the splitting of the Yam Suf.

We mean to say that such a madraigah is referred to as walking on "dry land through the sea" because when one is on dry land, in other words carrying on their ordinary, daily, life, only then can one see themselves as if they were crossing through the Yam Suf. Only then does the miraculousness of Nature become as evident as the splitting of the sea.

Chazal tell us that there are three things that are as difficult for the Ribbono Shel Olam, k'vayachol, as the performance of Kriyas Yam Suf: providing a person with food, finding a person's zivug, marital partner, and the keeping the functioning of a person's body in a proper manner. What does this mean? HaRav Drillman explained that if we work a little harder to see the miracles in these "everyday" occurrences then we will be better able to rise to the Madraigah of seeing HKB"H in every aspect of our lives and being able to come closer to Him.

# The Trial of Affliction, The Trial of Affluence

Rabbi Zevulun Charlop

Several years ago, a grandson of mine spent the last days of Pesach with us. It being the first time his family had not attended our Seder, my grandson wanted me to give him another chance to find the Afikomen on “Shvi’i shel Pesach,” the last day of the Pesach holiday, to make up for the regular Afikomen he had missed during the Seder nights. I explained to him that the Afikomen is a Mitzvah prescribed exclusively for the Seder night, and we would be guilty of the prohibitive commandment of Bal Tosif – adding to the Mitzvah – if we instituted an Afikomen during the last days of Pesach as well... he was not mollified.

My grandson nagging me for an Afikomen opportunity, I had to devise another game plan: “The hunt for the Rechush Gadol.” Whereas on the first days of Passover we recall through the Matza the Oni, the affliction of our ancestors, on the second days of Passover we focus on the Rechush Gadol—the great bounty. This is what Hashem promised Avraham when He told him that his descendants would leave with Rechush Gadol after serving the Egyptians for four hundred years (Bereishis 15:14). The idea conveyed by the Rechush Gadol fits more appropriately with the notion of prizes and expensive gifts, and I felt that the Rechush Gadol hunt was the perfect game for my grandchildren to play on the second days of Pesach. The game itself is “played” with the same rules as the Afikomen search; the grandchild (I suppose all children can play this game as well) must look for the Rechush Gadol Matza that has been hidden in a clever place by the father or grandfather. When the young man or girl finds the Rechush Gadol, he or she receives a reward which ought to be even more valuable than the Afikomen!

The Bnei Yisroel’s collection of this “great bounty” came in two stages. The first stage occurred when the Egyptians, in a miraculous turnabout, sent the Bnei Yisroel away with expensive farewell mementos that they had ostensibly borrowed. The second stage, when the Bnei Yisroel picked

up from the Red Sea shores on Shvi’i shel Pesach, a week after the initial Exodus, the gorgeous armor of their drowned, Egyptian pursuers. This armor surpassed by far the wealth they had collected in Egypt, and in fact, Moshe had to coerce Bnei Yisroel to depart from their Red Sea riches (Shimos 15:22).

There are two explanations for the need for coercion here, which, superficially, seem altogether contradictory. Rashi says that Moshe literally had to tear them away from the Red Sea because they were so engrossed in accumulating the expensive remnants of the Egyptian cavalry. The Zohar, however, understands the need for force here in an entirely new perspective. The Jews did not want to depart from the Red Sea because never before had they sensed so vividly and unmistakably – the presence of the Shechinah.

My grandfather z”l, saw no contradiction between Rashi’s understanding and the Zohar’s. There are two tests of faith – nisayon ha’oni, the test of affliction, and nisayon ha’osher, the test of affluence. When dark times hit, it is often difficult to recognize Hashem’s Presence and believe fully in His ultimate guiding hand. However, even a more difficult test is the test of affluence: to believe in Hashem and heed His Word in times of well being and ease. A person’s recognition of Hashem even in affluent times can be an even more sublime vision than in a time of adversity. There is no contradiction here between Rashi and the Zohar. Bnei Yisroel’s powerful awareness of Hashem came precisely because of their preoccupation with the riches at the sea. And this is what Chazal mean when they say: “What the plainest maidservant saw at the Red Sea was not seen even by Ezekiel in his marvelous conjuring of the chariot.”

“We are expected,” I told my grandson, “To feel the Shechinah when we are flushed with Rechush Gadol, and indeed, it is possible for us to reach higher peaks of Yedias Hashem in wealth than in poorness.

# The Long Way Around

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

No sooner do the Israelites depart Egypt than they are confronted by a divinely ordained detour. *“And it was when Pharaoh sent out the people, and God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, ki karov hu (as it was near), for God said: ‘Lest the people reconsider upon seeing war, and return to Egypt.’”*

## Questions

Two sets of questions emerge as we consider this strange passage.

Textually, the sentence does not seem to flow. What does the phrase “ki karov hu (as it was near)” mean? Proximity would seem to recommend rather than discourage the choice of a path. Should the text not have said that God bypassed the way of the Philistines although it was near?

Conceptually, why is this detour necessary? God, after all, has just decimated the Egyptian empire on behalf of the Israelites. Can He not do the same to the Philistines or, at the very least, protect the Israelites from the effects of an outbreak of hostilities?

## Approaches

**A:** The textual difficulty presented by this passage centers around the Hebrew word *ki* in the phrase “ki karov hu (as it was near).” The word *ki*, according to the Talmud, translates variably in the Torah, dependent upon the context: “Reish Lakish said: ‘Ki serves four possible meanings – if, perhaps, however, because.’”

Of these four translations, only “because” fits our passage. That interpretation, however, leaves us with the basic question, why would God avoid a specific path “because it was near”?

**B:** Numerous commentaries, including Rashi and the Ibn Ezra, offer a straightforward pshat approach to this sentence which preserves the translation of *ki* as “because.” God avoids taking the Israelites through Philistine territory because the proximity of this path to Egypt would have encouraged and facilitated the Israelites’ retreat from battle. At the first hint of hostilities, the nation would have returned to Egypt. The “nearness” of this path was thus not a potential benefit, as we might have assumed, but a drawback.

Raising issues of syntax, both the Ramban and Rabbi Moshe Hakohen (quoted by the Ibn Ezra) refuse to accept the straightforward solution proffered by Rashi and the Ibn Ezra. The Ramban maintains that the phrase *ki karov hu* is to be translated as “which was near,”<sup>4</sup> while Rabbi Moshe understands it to mean “although it was near.” The objection can be raised, however, that neither of these approaches translates the word *ki* in a fashion consistent with the list suggested by Reish Lakish. The Rashbam, for his part, explains that God’s concern for the Israelites transcended the possibility of war with the Philistines alone. The path through Philistine territory was “near” – the most direct route to the land of Canaan. The Israelites, however, were not prepared for all the battles that would face them in the conquest of the land. God, therefore, diverts them from the shortest route to Canaan and leads them on a circuitous path in order to prevent a disheartened retreat to Egypt.

**C:** In stark contrast to the above suggestions, which reflect struggle with the pshat of the text, are a series of creative Midrashic alternatives. Two such explanations are quoted by the Da’at Zekeinim Miba’alei Hatsofot :

1. The phrase *ki karov hu* is not to be translated “because it was near” but, rather, “because He was near.” The Torah refers to the fact that God was “near” to the Israelites. Because of their preciousness to Him, God refuses to endanger the departing slaves by taking them along a path that could lead to war.

2. The phrase refers to the Philistines themselves, not to their territory. The Philistines were “near” to the Egyptians in that they shared common ancestry. God does not want the Israelites, upon their departure from Egypt, to encounter the Philistines because he knows that the Philistines will attack in order to uphold the honor of their relatives, the Egyptians. Numerous other approaches, including a tradition chronicling an earlier failed attempt by the tribe of Ephraim to escape Egypt through Philistine territory, can be found in Midrashic literature.

**D:** While the textual problems surrounding this passage are certainly intriguing, of greater concern are the conceptual issues. Why does God feel compelled to lead the Israelites on a circuitous route upon their departure

from Egypt? Could He not have fought the battle for them or, at least, miraculously protected them from the ravages of warfare? Two possible approaches can be suggested; each carrying overarching eternal lessons:

### **1. God does not punish nations undeservedly.**

As noted previously (see Bereishit: Noach 4, Approaches A), God includes a striking message to the patriarch Avraham in the Covenant between the Pieces. After predicting that Avraham's descendents will be strangers in a land not their own, where they will be made to work and suffer for four hundred years, God states: "And the fourth generation will return here [to the land of Canaan] for the iniquity of the Emorites will not be complete until then."

Do not assume, Avraham, because you and your descendents are chosen, that I relate to you alone. The legitimate rights of all nations continue to be My concern. Your fate will, therefore, be determined not only by your own merit but by the rights of others. You will not return to this land until its inhabitants have become so corrupt that they deserve to be expelled.

The very same principle may well be driving God's decisions during the days immediately following the Exodus. God punished the Egyptians because their acts warranted such penalty. The Philistines, however, have done nothing to this point to earn divine retribution. God, therefore, will not act against them even to protect His "chosen people." He instead leads the Israelites on a circuitous route in order to avoid the confrontation.

## **A Song for the Ages**

*Rabbi Shmuel Silber*

**S**HIRA is not simply a song. SHIRA is perhaps one of the most pure and beautiful expressions of love, devotion, commitment and accomplishment. Henry Giles, an English preacher in the mid-1800's, wrote: "A song will outlive all sermons in the memory." When there is a need to express something more profound than the simple meaning of spoken words, SHIRA begins where words end.

In this week's Parsha we read of a SHIRA, a song of songs sung by the fledgling Jewish people as they saw the mighty Red Sea come crashing down on their Egyptian

### **2. The Israelites have to learn to fight their own battles.**

With the Exodus, the rules begin to change. Until now, before His people set out upon their journey towards freedom, God fought on their behalf. Now, the transition to independence requires that the Israelites must learn to fend for themselves. Even later, when the last act of the Exodus unfolds and God does intervene to complete the destruction of Egyptian might in the waters of the Reed Sea, God does not act until the Israelites take their destiny into their own hands and begin to move into the sea.

Had God waged a divine battle against the Philistines, had He even miraculously protected the Israelites from attack, the wrong message would have been transmitted. The time has come for the Israelites to begin fighting their own battles. They are ill prepared for such challenge, however, at this moment. God, therefore, moves to avoid the confrontation.

**E:** A final lesson can be gleaned if we view this episode in a larger context. The endpoints of Parshat Beshalach chronicle a striking transformation. While the parsha opens with God shielding the Israelites from the mere possibility of conflict, it closes, ironically, with the Israelites victorious in battle. The final scene of Beshalach describes the unprovoked attack upon the Israelites by the nation of Amalek and the ensuing battle from which the erstwhile slaves emerge triumphant.

The band of Israelite slaves, ready to retreat at the first hint of hostilities, has evolved, by the end of Beshalach, into a successful fighting force.

The march towards nationhood has begun in earnest.

oppressors. AZ YASHIR MOSHE U'VNAI YISROEL (It was then that Moshe and the children of Israel sang), they were so overcome with joy and elation that there were no words - only SHIRA.

Why did the Jewish people wait until crossing the Red Sea to sing SHIRA? Why didn't the people burst forth with spontaneous song upon their departure from Egypt, upon tasting freedom for the first time?

Perhaps, the answer can be found in a very strange exchange between Moshe and God. As the Jewish people stand by the banks of the Red Sea, roaring waves in front

of them, hostile and vengeful Egyptian army behind them - Moshe lifts his eyes heavenward and begins to supplicate for Divine assistance. God responds in a most unusual fashion; “The Lord said to Moshe, Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel (Exodus 14:15).” What does this mean? Who else should Moshe be calling out to? Isn’t prayer the most instinctive spiritual response to difficulty and challenge?

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen of Dvinsk (1843-1926) in his work titled *Meshech Chochma* explains that until now the Jewish people had followed Moshe like sheep following a shepherd. Despite the fact that they so often seemed to doubt Moshe’s ability and leadership - at the end of the day, he was their shepherd, they believed in him and were prepared to follow him into the sea. It is here that God turns to Moshe and says, “The people have clearly demonstrated their willingness to follow (they followed you out of Egypt), they must now demonstrate their ability and willingness to take the lead.”

MAH TITZAK ELAI – “Why are you praying Moshe? It is not a lack of prayer or supplication that is holding up this process.”

DABER EL B’NAI YISROEL V’YISAU – “Tell the people they must go in first and you will follow them.”

God explains to Moshe, “I need the nation of Israel to exhibit initiative; I need them to demonstrate that they have the inner strength to do what is right and take the reins of life even if their leader is not leading the charge.” Only 7 days out of Egypt the children of Israel are being asked to exhibit initiative and walk in to the raging sea before Moshe Rabbeinu!

Perhaps, now we can understand why the SHIRA could only have occurred after crossing the sea. Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik zt”l explains: “SHIRA is appropriate only when one attains a victory—and to be a victor one must actively participate in the struggle” (*The Warmth and the Light*, Feldheim, p. 129). There was no SHIRA upon leaving Egypt because the children of Israel were simply “following.” SHIRA can only be sung when one has accomplished something of epic proportions. SHIRA is the melodic culmination of man’s work, toil and struggle. After the Jewish people crossed the Sea of Reeds, they sang SHIRA, elated that they had been able to summon and harness the inner strength to walk into the roaring waves, imbued as they were with the hope and belief that God would save them. It was at the sea that they were forced to exhibit initiative, they had to actively participate in the struggle, they had to overcome the natural impulse to run back to the “safety” of Egypt. They had to literally jump into the unknown. This is an accomplishment and life victory of epic proportions. The crossing was an event of such great magnitude that the feelings of the people could not be captured in mere words – they needed the extra emotion and power that only SHIRA could provide.

Throughout the journey of life we each encounter our own issues, challenges and problems. Too often we wait for someone to lead us across the turbulent sea of our troubles into our personal Promised Land. We must learn from our ancestors. If we desire a life of SHIRA - a life of accomplishment and fulfillment - we must be willing to take the initiative, actively participate in the struggle and initiate our personal redemption.

## The Connection Between Yam Suf and Marah

*Rabbi Meir Goldwicht*

In many communities, the custom when there is a simcha is to add several aliyot to the seven standard aliyot by breaking them into smaller sections. However, there are several aliyot that may not be broken. For example, we do not interrupt the tochachah to divide it into two aliyot so as not to begin or end with a curse. Another example is in our parasha, Parashat Beshalach. After shirat hayam, which concludes with the song of Miriam, the Torah discusses the episode of the bitter

waters at Marah, which the nation was unable to drink until Moshe carried out Hashem’s instructions to throw an eitz into the waters to sweeten them. Only after this episode does the fourth aliyah of Parashat Beshalach conclude. The fact that we may not interrupt between shirat hayam and the waters of Marah implies a connection between these two episodes. What is that connection?

When Moshe Rabbeinu spoke with Pharaoh, demanding that he release Am Yisrael, the result was

that Pharaoh increased their workload severely. Moshe complains to Hashem, saying, “From the moment (az) I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he has done evil to this nation, and You have not saved Your nation” (Shemot 5:23). Hashem responded that Moshe would see that Pharaoh would not only release the nation, but chase them away, leading Moshe to realize the error he had made by displaying this lack of emunah in Hashem. And here Moshe’s greatness is revealed. For once he realized his error, he wished to publicly apologize for it before HaKadosh Baruch Hu and before Am Yisrael. The most appropriate time to do this was at keriat Yam Suf, when they would be most receptive to his words. And so he began the shirah with the same word he had used in complaining, “az,” as if to say, as the midrash puts it, “With ‘az’ I did damage, and with ‘az’ I will repair.” In other words, Moshe wished, in the moment of geulah after years of slavery in Mitzrayim, to teach that even when life is difficult, when it seems as though things are only becoming more difficult (the first “az”), we should not be scared but continue on, until we can see the picture in its entirety (the second “az”). The greater the darkness, the greater the ultimate clarity and redemption.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu wanted this lesson, not to throw our hands up in defeat in times of adversity, to stick with Am Yisrael, and so he led them to the bitter waters at Marah. Moshe thought that perhaps the way Hashem would tell him to palliate the bitterness of the water would be by adding honey or sugar to it. But He told him instead to throw in a piece of wood, saying, The way of Man is to sweeten something bitter by adding something sweet; the way of G-d is to sweeten something bitter by adding something bitter. In other words, Man takes something bitter, like tea, and adds sugar, but the tea itself does not become sweet. We could theoretically remove the sugar in a laboratory, and the tea would remain as bitter as it ever was. The sweet ingredient simply masks the bitterness. HaKadosh Baruch Hu, on the other hand, changes the actual nature of the bitter ingredient into sweetness. The analogy is clear: a week ago, you were still in Mitzrayim, in the bitter state of slavery. When I redeemed you, I did not simply mask the bitterness with sweetness; rather, the original bitterness became sweet. Its nature changed completely. The waters at Marah cemented the feelings Am Yisrael experienced at Yam Suf, of bitterness being transformed into sweetness.

This notion became even clearer to Am Yisrael once, leaving Marah, they arrived at their next destination, Eilim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees. Why palm trees? Unlike all other trees, which are called by their fruit (e.g., apple tree), the palm tree is not called a date tree. This is because the palm tree itself is very bitter, but its fruit is very sweet. Calling it a palm tree reminds us that something so sweet came from something so bitter.

It is for this reason as well that the passuk says, “A righteous man shall blossom like a date tree” (Tehillim 92:13) – even though sometimes a tzaddik may wind up in a bitter, trying situation, the Torah transforms it into sweetness. “[The words of Torah] are sweet like honey and the drippings of the honeycomb” (Tehillim 19:11).

This also explains how Am Yisrael, having left Mitzrayim with donkeys laden with treasure and having despoiled the Egyptians after keriat Yam Suf, taking double what they took out of Mitzrayim, could complain so vociferously only three days later about not having water to drink. Couldn’t they have voiced their concerns politely and calmly to Moshe? The midrash explains that when the Torah says the reason why Am Yisrael could not drink the waters of Marah because “they were bitter,” it refers not to the waters but to the people. Am Yisrael, with all their riches, felt a certain emptiness, a vacuum of spirituality. For this reason, the gemara in Bava Kama says, Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam instituted the Torah reading on Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat, so that Am Yisrael would never go three days without Torah lest they reexperience that emptiness. This emptiness is also the reason why Am Yisrael was given several mitzvot in Marah.

This being the case, the waters of Marah and of Yam Suf teach us that bitterness is only part of the picture and will ultimately turn into sweetness. This is exemplified by the fact that we make a bracha, saying “Baruch atah Hashem,” over marror. At no time of the year do we make a bracha like this. Only on the night of Pesach do we truly understand the fact that every instance of bitterness turns into sweetness. For this reason as well we do not make a separate bracha on the sweet charoset, as it is covered by the bracha over the bitter marror which precedes it.

May Hashem grant, and speedily, the transformation of all of the bitterness Am Yisrael has experienced and continues to experience, in our Land and abroad, into sweetness and the fulfillment of “I shall surely redeem you in the end as in the beginning.”

# The Incomparability of God

Rabbi David Horwitz

In the midst of Az Yashir (Exodus 15), we find a difficult verse: *Who Is like You O L-RD, among the celestials; Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in splendor, working wonders? (Exodus 15:11).*

The phrase among the celestials is the JPS translation of the Hebrew ba-elim. (Another English translation is “among the powerful.”) That phrase can be literally translated as “among the gods.” But there is a problem in translating in such a literal fashion, because of the following problem:

Philosophers of religion distinguish between monolatry, the service of only god, and monotheism, the belief that only One God exists. Logically, one could adopt the former without believing in the latter. That is, one could say, “There are numerous gods, but my god, the god that protects me, the god that I pray to and worship, is one particular deity out of a group of many.” Judaism, of course, rejects this. We proclaim ein od mi-levado- there is only one God. When we say the Shema, we are not only claiming that we worship only one God (monolatry) but are asserting monotheism. We are proclaiming the philosophical/theological doctrine of absolute monotheism as a fact about the universe. Ontologically, there is no other Divine Being but the One God. The L-RD alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other (Deuteronomy 4:39).

In the Mekhilta to the parashah of Az Yashir, and in other sources, Hazal present numerous derashot concerning the meaning of elim. For example, one famous derashah states: mi kamokha ba-ilmim (those who are mute).

Who is like unto Thee in silence, O L-RD, who is like Thee among the silent ones, O L-RD, who is like Thee, who, though seeing the insult heaped upon thy children, yet keepest silence, as it is said: “I have long time held My peace, I have been still, and refrained Myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman, gasping and panting at once.” (The verse alluded to is Isaiah 42:14-15; See Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, ed. Lauterbach {Philadelphia, 1949}, pp. 60-61.) We praise God Who is silent in spite of the words and actions of those who blaspheme His nation, the children of Israel. Ramban (in his commentary, ad loc.) understands elim as the celestial beings, and this underlies the JPS translation quoted above. According to Ramban, these beings exist on a higher plane than human beings do, but they are definitely not gods.

I think that part of what impelled the numerous interpretations is the difficulty in accepting the peshat of elim as gods and that is precisely because a literal interpretation would indicate only an affirmation of monolatry, but not of monotheism. Just perhaps, the view quoted in the Mekhilta that the children of Israel and the nations of the world uttered the Mi Kamokha verse (but, by implication, not Moshe Rabbenu; see Mekhilta, ed. Lauterbach, p. 59) might be hinting at that. Benei Yisrael, having just left Egypt, and not yet possessing a refined religious consciousness, had reached the stage of monolatry after having seen the miracles, but they still had not yet reached the level of affirming absolute monotheism. The nations of the world as well, were (albeit, momentarily) also kofer ba‘Aboda Zara. They renounced polytheism, and accepted monolatry. (Alternatively, Mi kamokha ba-elim could be an expression of absolute rejection of the reality of other gods by those who had previously believed in the reality of these other gods. If one goes in that direction, one might consequently understand that temporarily, at least, this opinion in the Mekhilta understood that the entire universe became [temporarily] monotheistic!) Moshe, however, of course did understand the truth of onto-theological monotheism. He was beyond making comparison that implied the lower level of monolatry. Hence, he did not utter that verse.

One could add to this last point by employing a notion utilized by Rambam, and expanded by the 14th century Provençal Maimonidean Joseph ibn Kaspi. That is, the employment of the notion of “the Torah speaks in the language of man,” not only as an explanation of grammatical formulations, but as an expression of theological beliefs. It has been pointed out (see the JPS Torah Commentary) that several biblical texts in close proximity to each other utter statements such as “O L-RD G-D, You who let your servant see the first works of Your greatness and Your mighty hand, You whose powerful deeds no god in heaven or earth can equal” (Deuteronomy 3:24), a verse that seems only to indicate monolatry, and the subsequent declaration, cited above, that The L-RD alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other (Deuteronomy 4:39), an absolute and unambiguous declaration of monotheism. The way to solve the discrepancy is to realize that the verse at

3:24, which seems to only indicate monolatry, is a rhetorical flourish. There certainly is no reality to the other gods, but the language was couched in the rhetoric of comparison. The “language of man,” in sum, was that of monolatry. The belief, however, was that of absolute monotheism.

According to this last explanation, one might even suggest that even the untutored benei-yisrael, having seen the miracles at the sea, had indeed actually reached the level

of monotheism. “And when Israel saw the wondrous power which the L-RD had wielded against the Egyptians, the people feared the L-RD; they had faith in the L-RD, and in His servant Moses.” (Exodus 14:31). They understood that ein ‘od mi-levado.

## Beshalach’s Relationship with Story of Devorah

*Rabbi Avraham Gordimer*

The haftarah for the seventh day of Pesach consists of Dovid’s song of thanksgiving to Hashem for salvation from Dovid’s enemies. This haftarah parallels the day’s Torah reading, which is taken from Parshas Beshalach and details K’rias Yam Suf and features Shiras Ha-Yam - Klal Yisroel’s expression of gratitude for God’s miracles at that site. Why, then, do we read a different haftarah on Parshas Beshalach - namely, that of Hashem’s salvation of the Jews at the time of Devorah, which is comprised of both narrative and song?

The theme of Parshas Beshalach is that of Emunah - faith in God. Nachshon entered the sea while it was yet wet, trusting that Hashem would split the waters. The Medrash explains that the Jews attained purity of faith once they passed through the sea, as it says upon their passage, “...and they believed in God and in Moshe, His servant.” (See Haggadas Siach Ha’Grid.) Our nation was taught the discipline of Emunah through the Mann, as it was necessary to trust that God would provide new Mann each day; one could not store Mann from day to day, as such Mann would rot - with the exception of Erev Shabbos, when a double portion of Mann was to be gathered by each person, and that Mann would last for Erev Shabbos and Shabbos. (The Hebrew letters of the word “Mann” themselves hint at the concept of faith - “Emunah”.) Bnei Yisroel were punished at the end of the parshah with the arrival of Amalek, which symbolizes lack of belief in God, when the Jews failed in their faith at Rephidim (17:1, 8 with Rashi from Medrash); their emunah was subsequently restored during that war: “And Moshe’s hands were

raised in emunah until the coming of the sun...” (ibid. v. 12) (In fact, the parsha’s siman is “Yad emunah”.) The underlying theme of the entirety of Parshas Beshalach is Emunah.

The theme of the story of Devorah is precisely that of faith against all odds. In her shirah, Devorah related how Klal Yisroel was oppressed at the hands of Sisera, such that Jews could not even walk the streets safely. Our nation was subject to total oppression; a “normal” person in such circumstances would be focused on mere survival. However, Devorah knew that Hashem commanded Klal Yisroel to conquer the Land, and - despite the conditions - she charged Barak with attacking Sisera and his army and conquering the Land, as per God’s command, even though the logistics were on the enemy’s side. Devorah faithfully sought to execute Hashem’s mitzvah of Kibush Ha-Aretz (Conquest of the Land), regardless of what seemed to be impossible odds. Her actions were a throwback to the emunah of Nachshon at Yam Suf: follow God’s commands, no matter what the natural circumstances seem to indicate.

Devorah’s song of thanksgiving was a burst of exhilarant gratitude reflective of her unstoppable emunah in Hashem’s promised salvation; her purity of faith is the precise correlation with Parshas Beshalach, which compellingly warrants the reading of Devorah’s story and song as the haftarah.