

Late that night, a flash fire broke out in the church, destroying part of the rectory. There was no desk, no document, no evidence that anything had happened. When there seems to be no escape from a dilemma, one must never lose faith in the infinite wisdom and power of *Hashem Yisborach*.

TORAH GEMS

אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה'
ויאמרו לאמר אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה וכו' (ז-ז)

This *shabbos*, in which we read *Parshas Beshalach*, is called *Shabbos Shira*, referring to the *Shiras Hayam* that was sung by Moshe and the Jewish people after the splitting of the Red Sea. With the miracles of the *mann*, Miriam's well, the water at Marah and the war with Amalek, *Parshas Beshalach* definitely does not lack for miracles. Why then do we name this *shabbos* specifically after the *shira* - song?

R' Eliyohu Kitov ZT"l writes that the *shira* which *Moshe Rabbeinu* sang in conjunction with *Bnei Yisroel*, is a part of the *Torah* which has been ritually incorporated into our daily lives in prayer. The intensity of the *shira* and the level of the people who sang it at that time was so great that the *shira* has become a universal song, transcending time. The *shira* is also unique in that the Jewish people sang it in praise of *Hashem*, reversing the typical pattern in the *Torah* where *Hashem* speaks and the Jewish people listen.

Song in fact, is central to our service of *Hashem*. As the *Navi Yishayahu* said in the name of *Hashem*, (מג-כא) "עם זו יצרתי לי תהלתי יספרו" - "*I have created this nation for me so that they may recount my praises.*" On a basic level, we fulfill this mission with our daily recitation of the *Shiras Hayam*. However, when we read the *shira* from the *Torah* in public, we do so with a special melody, *Ta'am elyon*. The variations in our recitation of the *shira* tell us something about *shira* in general. Although we thank *Hashem* on a daily basis for sustaining us, there are those moments in our lives which call for greater displays of praise in song.

**הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים למען אנסנו
הילך בתורתי אם לא וגו' (טז-ד)**

Hashem tells Moshe that He will bring down the Mann - Heavenly Bread, as a test of sorts to see if the Jews will follow in the ways of the Torah. Rashi comments, "If they will observe the mitzvos connected with the mann; not to leave over from it and not to go out on Shabbos to collect it."

The **Kli Yakar, R' Shloime Efraim Luchitz** **ZT"l**, puts this into perspective. There are two kinds of hindrances that stand in the way of a person involving himself in *Torah*-study: one is internal, the other, external. The internal hindrance is food, which, due to its physical character, blocks the mind, and prevents it from absorbing *Torah*, which is totally spiritual. For this reason, after the cloud purified him from the food that he had previously eaten, Moshe refrained from eating for the first forty days that he was on *Har Sinai*, enabling him to learn the entire *Torah* during that short period. The external hindrance is one's constant quest to make a livelihood, which does not let a person relinquish his mundane thoughts to immerse himself in the sea of *Torah*. That is why *Hashem* fed *mann* to the generation that received the *Torah*. Here was a food that was purely spiritual - the same food that sustains the angels - and would not interfere with the *Torah* that they would learn. At the same time, here was a food that came to them effortlessly, leaving them free to study *Torah* fully, without interference. For forty years they received spiritual food, without a worry in the world. Now they really had no excuse not to study *Torah* constantly and to grow in it. This was the test that faced *Bnei Yisroel* in the desert.

מה שהפסיד ע"י שמירת השבת. וזהו מה שמצינו במדבר, שאותם אנשים שיצאו ביום השבת ללקוט המן לא מצאו מאומה, ורק מי ששמע בקול ה' נתן לו השי"ת ביום הששי מן גם בשביל ש"ק ולא הבאיש כלום. והכל להראות שבזכות השבת באה ברכה בששת ימי המעשה למלאות השפעת השי"ק. ומי יודע אם המשבר הקשה (Great Depression) השורר במדינות ארצות הברית כעת, שהרבה עשירים אבדו ממונם וירדו מנכסיהם,

מעשה אבות... סימן לבנים

אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה סוס ורוכבו רמה בים וכו' (טו-א) - משפיל גאים עדי ארץ ומגביה שפלים עדי מרום וכו'

One of the citizens of Apt was a very wealthy man, who owned several factories and had wide real estate holdings. He was the most influential and highly respected citizen of the community. One day, he told his *Rebbe*, **R' Yehoshua Heschel ZT"l**, that he was much bothered by the *posuk* in the daily prayers: “*Hashem lowers the mighty to the ground, and lifts the down-trodden to the heights of heaven.*”

"In what manner could G-d humble me?" he asked. "If some of my businesses were to fail, others would still survive. And if in some way I was to lose all of my assets, my children are independently wealthy. How would G-d single me out to lower me to the ground?" The *Rebbe* rebuked him sharply. "Do not be so foolish as to challenge *Hashem*. Simply accept on faith that nothing is beyond Him."

Later that day, the wealthy man began to be plagued by the thought that he should convert to another religion. At first, he was able to dismiss the thought as an absurdity, but it gradually increased in intensity and he could not dismiss it from his mind. Soon he was totally consumed by an irresistible urge, and as one possessed, found himself in the priest's rectory, professing his desire to convert. Seized by this strange, passionate desire, the man fell to his knees and began crying, pleading with the priest to accept him. The priest, noting his tears said, "I have difficulty in accepting your sincerity. However, if you genuinely wish to convert, you must demonstrate this by transferring title of everything you own to the church. If you do this, then I will believe you are sincere."

Unable to resist the intense urge which had overtaken him, the man wrote out a document giving everything he owned to the church. The priest put the document into his desk, and told the man to wait a bit, for he would return shortly for the conversion ritual. No sooner had the priest left, then the strange urge abruptly disappeared. As if awakening from a nightmare, the man looked about him. "What on earth am I doing inside a church?" he said, and promptly ran out. The man then remembered what had transpired. He realized that he was now financially impoverished. He owned nothing. He was poor and terribly alone. It was late at night when it occurred to him that the *Rebbe* might have compassion, for the holy *Apter Rov* never turned anyone away. He broke into profuse tears, and confessed to the *Rebbe* what he had done. The *Rebbe* looked at him with pity. "Now, my child," he said, "do you see how simple it is for *Hashem* to humble someone?"

"I am doomed forever. Nothing can save me," cried the man. "But you forget the second half of the prayer," the Rebbe said. "*He elevates the downtrodden to the heights of heaven.*" You must now have faith that *Hashem* can do this too. Go home, sleep, and trust in *Hashem*."