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maskil Le'David Torah, Brit Milah, and the Splitting of the Sea

On the verse in *Tehillim* (114:3), "The sea saw and fled," Chazal expound (*Midrash Tehillim* 9, 114:3), "What did it see? It saw the coffin of Yosef."

The question is, Chazal tell us (*Bereishit Rabba* 5:4): Rabbi Yochanan said, "Hashem made a condition with the sea that it should split for Yisrael, as it says (*Shemot* 14:27), 'And toward morning the water went back to its power.' Do not read 'to its power' (לִיאֲתוֹ) but 'to its condition' (לִתְנִיאוֹ)." This being the case, the sea should have split for Bnei Yisrael even without seeing Yosef's coffin because this was a condition that Hashem made when the sea was created.

Furthermore, the Midrash says (*Shemot Rabba* 23:12) the sea split for Bnei Yisrael because it saw that they observed the mitzvah of Brit Milah. The Netivot Shalom asks: The sea had to split because of the condition Hashem set in place at the very beginning of creation; why suddenly, upon seeing the mitzvah of Brit Milah, did the sea agree to split?

These questions can be answered by first introducing another topic. We know that Avraham Avinu fulfilled all the mitzvot and the entire Torah even before it was given. He performed the mitzvot out of his own will even though he was not yet commanded to do so, as it says (*Bereishit* 26:5), "Because Avraham obeyed My voice, and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs."

This gives rise to a question. Would it cross our minds that Avraham would transgress G-dly commands? Of course he obeyed Hashem's word! What is the verse telling us?

It seems there is room to think that Avraham Avinu might not have observed the mitzvot since he was not yet circumcised. Only one who is circumcised enters into a covenant with Hashem and has the power to observe Torah and mitzvot and thereby be protected from all spiritual damage. Circumcision is a sign of the holy covenant and the symbol of Judaism.

In support of this idea, we can quote the Gemara (*Nedarim* 32a) that offers two interpretations on the verse (*Yirmiyahu* 33:25), "If My covenant with the night and with the day would not be." One explanation says that "covenant" refers to the covenant of Torah, because without Torah the world cannot exist, while the second opinion says that "covenant" refers to Brit Milah, also without which the world cannot exist. This shows us that circumcision and Torah are intertwined, the reason being that one who is circumcised is endowed with the power to observe the mitzvot and study Hashem's Torah.

However, Avraham Avinu, even before undergoing circumcision, meticulously observed the Torah and mitzvot with great self-sacrifice, not for the sake of receiving a reward, and always prepared to selflessly carry out Hashem's Will.

Furthermore, Avraham Avinu enabled the whole world to recognize the Creator by converting many people, as it says (*Bereishit* 12:5), "And the souls they made in Charan." Chazal say (*Bereishit Rabba* 39:14) this means he brought them under the wings of the Shechina and transformed them into believers in the Creator of the world. Avraham withstood all kinds of tests, seemingly despite the lack of a covenant between him and Hashem. This is what caused Hashem to choose Avraham as the one from whom the Chosen Nation would descend.

Now we can understand the condition that Hashem made with the sea, that it should split for Bnei Yisrael. This condition was specifically for those who had been circumcised, those upon whom the Name of Hashem was proclaimed, but not for those who were uncircumcised. Presumably, many of the *Eirev Rav* (Mixed Multitude) who were not yet circumcised were among those who approached the sea, or it could be that some of Bnei Yisrael were not circumcised, for example those who had just been born, or those who were sick and therefore did not have an obligation of Brit Milah. But how did the sea know to differentiate between the uncircumcised and circumcised Jews?

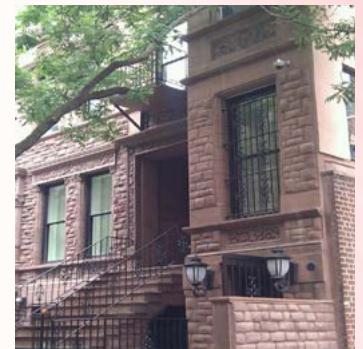
It seems that this is the meaning of the verse (*Tehillim* 114:3), "The sea saw and fled." What did it see? It saw the coffin of Yosef. Seeing the coffin of Yosef among Bnei Yisrael was a sign for the sea that all of Bnei Yisrael were circumcised and safeguarded this holy sign, like Yosef who guarded the holy covenant and abstained from sin, even while in Egypt (*Vayikra Rabba* 32:5).

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17 Nissan 5786
4 April 2026

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**Shabbat Chol
Hamoed Pesach**



Hilula

17 Nissan
Rabbi Yehuda Yosef
Wengrower

18 Nissan
Rabbi Aharon Hagadol
of Karlin

19 Nissan
Rabbi Yehoshua Falk

20 Nissan
Rabbi Hai Gaon

21 Nissan
Rabbi Chaim Greineman

22 Nissan
Rabbi Yisrael Kalish,
Admor of Verka

23 Nissan
Rabbi Menachem Mendel
Taub, Admor of Kaliv





PEARLS OF THE CHAG

Inspiring Reflections

Avodat Hashem Involves Challenges

“I love Him, for Hashem hears my voice” (*Tehillim* 116:1).

We all want Hashem to listen to our prayers. How do we accomplish this?

Harav Shach *zt”l* told over the following story. An Admor told his chassidim that each one should pray for something that is really important to him and he will then tell them if Hashem accepted their prayers. Of course, they each went to pray and then immediately approached the Admor and asked, “Did Hashem accept our prayers?”

The Admor replied, “Before I tell you what Hashem replied, I will tell you what you asked for. You said as follows: ‘I have problems, I lack money, good health etc., and so put a million dollars in my bank account, not for me to use but just for the feeling of serenity. I also want to ask for a fixed income of ten thousand dollars, and *nachat* from the children, and success with their *shidduchim*. If You give me this, I promise to change. I will be in the *beit kneset* from sunrise to sunset.’

“This is what you prayed, right?”

The chassidim confirmed the Rebbe’s words and then asked, “And what did Hashem answer?”

“He said, ‘Don’t do Me any favours!’”

Rav Shach explained, Hashem wants us to fulfil the mitzvot amid difficulties. It is no big deal to fulfil mitzvot when everything goes easily, therefore we must pray for *siyata d’Shmaya!* We can ask for help, but realize that Hashem does not need the favor of serving Him free of any challenges or difficulties! (*Umatok Ha’or*)

Don’t Forget to Pray when Times are Good

“As He has inclined His ear to me, so in my days shall I call” (*Tehillim* 116:2).

Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin *zt”l* said that with this verse David Hamelech is teaching us a powerful lesson:

Not only in times of trouble and distress should one call out to Hashem and await His salvation, but also in more tranquil times when one does not lack anything, one should still call out to Him (*Otzrot HaTorah*).

Fleeing From Who?

“He turned the sea to damp land and the water split” (*Shemot* 14:21).

In the name of Hashem, Moshe ordered the sea to split but it did not consent. Moshe showed it his stick but still it did not consent. To what can this be compared?

To a king who had two gardens, one within the other. He sold the inner one. The buyer wished to enter but the guard did not allow him to. The buyer said to him, “I order you in the name of the king,” but the guard did not consent. The buyer showed him the king’s seal but the guard did not consent, until the king himself arrived. When the king arrived the guard began to flee. The buyer said to him, “The entire day I have been demanding in the name of the king, but you did not consent, so why just now do you flee?”

He answered, “I am not fleeing from you but from the king.”

In the same way, Moshe came and stood by the sea and ordered it to split in the name of Hashem, but the sea did not consent. He showed it his stick but it did not consent. When Hashem Himself appeared, the sea began to flee as it says, “The sea saw and fled.”

Moshe said to it, “The entire day I have been demanding in the name of Hashem but you did not consent, and now, ‘What ails you, O sea, that you flee?’” The sea replied, “Not before you, son of Amram, but before the Lord’s Presence.” (*Yalkut Shimoni*)

Who Desires Money?

On Shevi’i Shel Pesach night, chassidim were sitting around the table of the holy Yesod Ha’avodah of Slonim. Suddenly the *tzaddik* turned to them and asked, “Is there anyone here who desires money? Who wishes to inherit some ‘spoil from the sea?’” But not one chassid asked for money for his livelihood.

Only one elderly man stood up and called out to the Rebbe:

“Rebbe, what we want is the faith that our fathers possessed when they stood by the sea...”

The *tzaddik* was very impressed with this reply and praised it greatly. (*Misod Siach Chassidim*)

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Nevertheless, the sea did not yet agree to split until Nachshon son of Aminodov jumped into the sea with self-sacrifice and the waters reached his thigh, the place of the holy covenant. Then indeed the sea understood that Bnei Yisrael were circumcised, and it was for these people that Hashem created the condition that it would have to split when they leave Egypt. And so the sea split its waters for Bnei Yisrael. This explains why Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael to be circumcised before they left Egypt, so that the sea would split for them.

Had they arrived at the sea uncircumcised, unwilling to serve Hashem with self-sacrifice, how would the sea show self-sacrifice and split for them?

Although a condition had been made, the condition was specifically for those Jews who observed the Torah and mitzvot with self-sacrifice. For this reason Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael to be circumcised – the sea needed to see their self-sacrifice for Torah and mitzvot in order to split for them.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto**, *shlita*

On the Road toward Fear of Heaven

I was once driving with my escort, when suddenly we were pulled over by the police. I realized I wasn't wearing a seat belt, so I hurried to reach for it but the seat belt was stuck and I couldn't fasten it in place.

One of the officers noticed my feeble attempts and began reprimanding me, "Now you're trying to buckle up?! Now it's already too late! You should have done it at the beginning of the trip, not when you're caught red-handed!"

I immediately got out of the car and kissed the police officer on his head. Then I removed a few bills from my pocket. "Here is the money to pay the fine. You can do as you wish: either write out a ticket, which I deserve for driving without a seat belt, or take the money for yourself to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the invaluable lesson you have taught me." The policeman was stunned, so I clarified my words.

"The lesson you taught me is the following: Unfortunately, I was more fearful of you, an ordinary officer of flesh and blood, than I am of Hashem. Now I had a tangible demonstration of what *yirat Shamayim* should be. I was afraid of being caught without a seat belt, but do I feel such fear after I sin? I would like to thank you for teaching me just how much one must fear Hashem, never allowing Him to catch us 'red-handed,' as you put it."

The police officer still did not seem to understand me but refused to accept the money. He finally sent me back to the car with the following words, "If you learned what you were supposed to, I will forego the fine. Travel safely and good luck!"



TIMELY TOPIC

Is The Rebbi Really Still Alive?

The great *tzaddikim* demonstrated extreme fervor when reciting the "Song of the Sea," to the extent that Rabbi Mordechai of Lechvitch *zt"l* declared, "There is a bird that hums and sings *shira* to Hashem until its stomach splits, while I pray and nevertheless remain perfectly healthy. What significance does my prayer have?"

Rabbi Yitzchak of Neshchiz *zt"l* was told that there is a certain zoo that has a bird which sings *shira* to Hashem once in its lifetime. This *shira* is so full of emotion, from minute to minute its voice grows louder and louder and then, out of its great exertion to sing, it falls and dies. When the Rebbi of Neshchiz heard this, he was so overcome with awe that he decided to see it for himself.

He travelled to that town and booked a room in the guesthouse. He sent his attendant to tell the manager of the zoo that he came specially to see how this bird sings, and could the manager please summon him as soon as the bird begins to sing.

"The will of those who fear Him He will do." Hashem fulfilled Rabbi Yitzchak of Neshchiz's will and just a few days later the manager sent a message to the *tzaddik* that the bird had begun to sing. He immediately went over to the zoo and as soon as he arrived he heard the bird singing an indescribably melodious tune, with powerful emotion. And so it sang for a few hours, from moment to moment its voice growing stronger and more poignant, until it fell and died from exertion!

The Rebbi of Neshchiz thanked the manager and returned to the guesthouse. He considered the fact that if a bird which has neither a *yetzer hara* nor a *yetzer tov* sings *shira* to Hashem with such sweetness, emotion, and self-sacrifice until it actually dies, what then is *his* prayer worth if he prays and remains healthy?

He contemplated the matter that night and began to understand how he should pray the *Shacharit* prayer appropriately. When he rose in the morning, he began his *avodat hakodesh* in holiness and purity, reciting *Korbanot* and *Pesukei Dezimra* with great enthusiasm and sweetness. When he came to *Shirat Hayam*, the Song of the Sea, he began singing a most tuneful melody, with powerful emotion and fervor. It appeared as though his soul was about to leave him out of his great enthusiasm, and in fact, due to his fiery emotion, one of his lungs tore!

An expert professor was called to his bedside and pronounced that there was no hope; his days were numbered. The Rebbi of Neshchiz declared to Hashem, "Did I wish to pray only one prayer in this way? I want to pray more!" He was healed and regained his strength.

Some time later, he happened to be in another town and his chassidim came to bask in his presence. The professor passed by and saw many people streaming by. He asked, "Where are all these people flocking to?" And he was told, "The *tzaddik* from Neshchiz is here!" In great surprise he claimed, "Is he still alive?!" He could not believe it and went to see for himself

(*Sifran Shel Tzadikim*).

a NOVEL LOOK AT THE CHAG

A Second C.T. Scan? On Whose Account?



The Holy Ohr HaChaim gives us a glimpse into why it is possible to carry out a repeat C.T. scan without fear.

When Moshe Rabbeinu ordered the sea to split, it did not wish to listen to him, saying, "I am older than you, since I was created on the third day of creation while you were created on the sixth day." Moshe Rabbeinu told Hashem that the sea does not agree to split. What did Hashem do? Hashem placed His right hand on Moshe's right and the sea split.

There is a well-known story written in the Gemara (*Chulin* 7a) about Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair who went to redeem captives. He arrived at the Gina'i River and wished to cross it. Rabbi Pinchas called out, "Gina'i, split your waters and then I will be able to cross!" The angel appointed over the river said, "You are on your way to fulfil your Creator's Will and I am on my way to fulfil my Creator's Will. While it is questionable whether you will be successful, I will certainly be successful." (According to the Gemara, a doubt never overrides a certainty.)

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair replied, "If you do not split, I decree upon you that no water will ever flow in you!" The river split.

Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair crossed and the river continued flowing. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair then called out, "There is someone who is bringing wheat for baking matzot and if the wheat gets wet, it will become *chametz*. Split once again and allow him to cross." The river split, the wheat owner crossed, and then once again the river resumed its flow. Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said, "There is a Yishmaeli who is accompanying us. Split once more for him so that others should not say, 'This is how those who accompany are treated?'" Indeed, the river split a third time.

The Gemara points out that the Splitting of the Sea was a one-time incident, while Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair split the river three times.

The Holy Ohr Hachaim asks: Why did Moshe Rabbeinu not use the same tactic as Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair? Would it cross one's mind to think that Moshe Rabbeinu was of lesser stature than Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair and could not threaten the sea that he would dry it up?

The answer is that when Hashem created the world, He made a condition with the entire creation that it must subjugate itself

to the Torah and those who toil in it; and the reign and control over nature possessed by those who toil in Torah is like the reign of Hashem.

According to this, when Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair declared, "If you don't split I will decree that you should dry up," it was nothing special; it was simply the nature of creation. But Moshe Rabbeinu arrived at the sea before the Giving of the Torah. The sea's retort implied, "You are coming to me without the Torah? If so, I am older." To this Moshe Rabbeinu had no reply, so Hashem placed His right on Moshe's right because "from His right hand He presented the fiery Torah to them" (*Devarim* 33:2). Hashem was hinting to the sea, "You should know that Moshe Rabbeinu is considered a *ben Torah* even before the Giving of the Torah, therefore you must split for him."

This is a most wonderful principle: Whenever any *tzaddik* commands a creation to do something, it is obligated to carry out his command because this was the condition for creating the world!

Rabbi Shlomo Levenstein *shlit"á* heard the following story from Harav Chinkis *shlit"á*. When Harav Chinkis was sitting *shiva* for his mother, Rabbi Ron Ilan *shlit"á*, who serves as Rosh Kollel in Beit Shemesh, came to pay him a condolence call and told him how some time ago one of his Kollel *avreichim* phoned him at two in the morning, crying.

"What happened?" he inquired.

The *avreich* told him that his youngest son had not been feeling well so they took him to Hadassah Hospital for tests. The results showed that he had a very dangerous growth in his head and according to the doctors, his situation was hopeless!

"So how can I help you?" asked the Rosh Kollel, sharing in his pain.

"I would like to go with you to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky."

"Okay. Come to me an hour before *vasikin* and we will travel together to Bnei Brak. After the *vasikin* prayers we will speak to the Rav."

They travelled to Bnei Brak and spoke to Rabbi Chaim who told them to bring the child to him.

Several hours later they returned with the child.

Rabbi Chaim turned to the child and asked him, "What do you wish to be when you grow up?"

"I want to be like the Rav," was his answer.

When Rabbi Chaim heard this, he asked the Rabbanit to bring some wine reserved for *siyumim*. He poured some for all those present and they drank a "*l'chaim*."

After that he told the father, "Go back to the hospital in Yerushalayim and ask them to do another C.T. scan. If they demand that you pay for it, pay however much they ask, as long as they agree to do another test."

They went back to Yerushalayim and the father told the doctor that Rabbi Chaim had instructed them to do another C.T. scan.

"There's no way," answered the doctor, "Just yesterday evening we did the test. There is no medical justification and it is an expensive test."

"No problem," answered the father, "I am prepared to pay the full amount, but I have a condition. If the results are exactly the same as yesterday, indeed there was no justification to re-do the test and I will pay for it. But if other findings turn up, it will mean that it was worthwhile performing the test a second time and then the insurance must pay for it."

The professor agreed and they performed the test. To their great shock, the new scan showed his head was completely clear!

But the doctors still did not agree to release the child; they wanted to do one more test in case the previous one had not been performed accurately.

They repeated the test a third time and once again it was completely clear. The child was released and his father took him straight to Bnei Brak, back to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky.

When they came in and the Rav saw their jubilant faces, he said to everyone present, "You certainly think that some miracle happened here, maybe due to the wine of the *siyumim*, but you should know: When I heard the child aspires to become a *talmid chacham*, I told his father to re-do the test. I meanwhile prayed to Hashem that He should have mercy on the child, for I think one must exert oneself in prayer for a child who wishes to become a *talmid chacham*. And Baruch Hashem, my prayer was answered..."

This is a demonstration of "they [the powers of nature] should subdue themselves to the Torah and those who toil in it!" (*Umatok Ha'or*).