1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS BESHALACH – WHY WE SING

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

After witnessing the miracle that Hashem performed by splitting the Yam Suf, Moshe and Bnai Yisrael sang to Hashem. This is just the first of many references in Tanach to the role of song in our relationship with the Ribono Shel Olam. Tanach is replete with the theme of singing. While Dovid Hamelech is the ultimate "sweet singer of Yisrael", he also left the legacy of Tehillim in which he repeatedly exhorts us all to sing to Hashem. Indeed, we are commanded to chant the Hallel on the Yamim Tovim. Why do we sing?

Rav Aharon Kotler offers two reasons for singing. The first is that it serves as an expression of joy. The Gemara (Arachin 11a) asserts, "We sing over wine which brings joy to…people." Moshe and Bnai Yisrael gave expression through their song to the simcha they felt upon being saved from the Egyptian army at the Yam Suf. The song that Devorah Haneviah sang was to express her joy over the defeat of the mighty army of Sisera. The song that Chana sang when she gave birth conveyed to her excitement upon bearing the child she longed for.

The second purpose of song is to give expression to our great marvel and awe upon witnessing the breathtaking feats of Hashem. Rav Aharon deduces this from the Medrash (Yalkut Tehillim 720) which explains the pasuk, "O righteous, sing joyfully of Hashem" (Tehillim 33:1):

The psalmist does not state, "sing to Hashem," rather he enjoins, "sing of Hashem." When Bnai Yisrael see [a manifestation of] Hashem they immediately sing joyously. When 'Bnai Yisrael saw the great hand [of Hashem at Yam Suf]', it is written, "Then Moshe [and Yisrael] sang" (Shemos 14:31). Similarly it states, "And a fire went forth from before Hashem and consumed the burnt offering and the fats upon the mizbe'ach; and the people saw and sang joyously" (Vayikra 9:24).

Rav Aharon explains that these songs emanated from a new recognition of Hashem and reflected a spiritual ecstasy.

The Torah commands us, "Now write this song for yourselves" (Devarim 3:19). Chazal explain that the 'song' referred to here is the Torah itself, and this pasuk is the source for the mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah. (See Nedarim 38a). Why is the Torah referred to as a song? Rav Aharon explains that it is because it inspires both types of reactions: joy and amazement. "The Mitzvos of the Torah are upright, gladdening the heart" (Tehillim 19:9). One who delves into the Torah becomes excited and elated in its pursuit. Additionally, the simcha which one feels while learning Torah provides him with the capacity to gain greater understanding of its laws. This may explain why Chazal asserted, "About one who reads the Torah without intonation and studies it without [humming] a tune the pasuk states, '[They feel that] I gave them decrees that were not good and laws by which they could not live'" (Yechezkel 20:25).

The element of amazement and awe occurs when a person delves deeply into Torah and a whole new world of spirituality opens up before him and its secrets are revealed to him. His relationship with the Creator intensifies and takes on a deeper meaning. This is itself cause for him to burst forth with song. The more we appreciate Hashem's miracles – both the occasional ones and the daily ones – and the more we study His Torah, the more reason we have to rejoice and to sing to Hashem and of Hashem.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: Is בורר allowed on יום טוב in a regular way? On יום טוב may I separate my different color Mike and Ikes to separate piles if it is for later in the day?

ANSWER: The rules for בורר on יו"ט are different than שבת. On שבת one may only take the good from the bad, for immediate use and only by hand. On יום טוב any בורר that could not be done before יו"ט is allowed to be done on יו"ט even if it's not for immediate use, and one could even take the bad out, and at times even use a tool. On יו"ט when doing בורר one may not use a tool that is normally used to separate a lot, and one must also do the בורר in a way that is the least טירחא/troublesome. Any בורר that could've been done prior to יו"ט without compromising the food, can only be done on יו"ט if a שינוי is used, or you can do the בורר in a way that it could be done on שבת. A pile of cutlery that was washed before יו"ט is only allowed to be separated and put away if done with a שינוי like taking one at a time. A bunch of jelly-beans that could've been separated before יו"ט can only be separated if done like on שבת or if a שינוי is used. Any salad that is made on יו"ט one can do בורר in a regular way but with the …least טירחא. A pile of toys/cutlery that piled up on יו"ט could be separated in a regular way.

עי' סימן תק"י סעי' ב' ומ"ב ס"ק ז',ח' וביאור הלכה שם ד"ה אם רוצה וכו'

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LET ME PAY TO CUT IN LINE

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Last week, we discussed a story about barbershop drama. Here's another story that occurred in the barbershop.

Avi owned a barbershop. One day it was busy with five customers waiting for their haircuts.Suddenly, a large man in a wrinkled suit and greasy, slicked-back hair came into the barbershop. He seemed very distressed and perturbed. He turned to Avi and said, "I'm in a big hurry. I'll pay you double for the haircut. I'll pay you $40 for the haircut instead of $20 if you let me skip the line and give me the next haircut."

Avi turned to the man and said, "My good sir, it's not up to me. There are five people before you. You'd have to ask them if they would let you cut in line. If you cut in line, you'll be wasting their time."

So the man turned to Avi and said, "Okay, that's fine. You'll be making $20 for each of them, but I will pay for their haircuts and double it. I will pay you $40 for each of the five, so you'll make $200 instead of $100. I'll pay for the other haircuts if you let me cut in line."

Avi then turned to the men and said, "He's offering to pay for your haircut. You'll get a free haircut if you let him go first, and he'll pay me double for them. Do you mind if he goes first?" All five men looked at each other and agreed, "It's worth waiting a few extra minutes for a free haircut," they said. So they let the man go first. The big man sat down, got his haircut, and then pulled out a $20 bill, saying, "Thanks for the haircut, man," and he quickly left.

Avi and all the other men realized that they were duped. The man had promised to pay $240 but only paid $20. So, the five customers said, "Well, we hope you'll keep your end of the bargain. You promised us that we'd get a free haircut if we let him go first. We did. We kept our end of the bargain; he went first. Now, we hope you'll be giving all five of us a free haircut."

But Avi wasn't so sure. "I don't know. I only told you that because I thought he was going to pay, but now that he didn't, why should you get it for free?" But they said, "No, you have to keep your word. Your word is your word. You said if we let him go first, we'd get it for free. You never made it conditional on the fact that he's paying." So, this question was brought to Rav Zilberstein. Does Avi have to give the five customers a free haircut even though he never got paid? Or do the five have to pay for their haircuts because the only reason Avi made the promise was because he thought he would get paid. Now that he didn't, perhaps he would not have to give it to them for free.

What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 236

Regarding last week's question of the man who was embarrassed to go to work because of his cut payos, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the barber was indeed required to give the worker shelves, worker's compensation. He also writes that the barber has to help the man do a mitzvah that he was unable to do in the past, like purchase a mehudar tefillin or mezuzah. This is to rectify all the mitzvos that he made the haircut recipient miss.

YOU'LL FEEL SO GOOD ABOUT IT

Rabbi David Ashear related the following story to Table Talk:

About forty years ago, a man from our community, whom we'll call Freddy, was involved in building an organization that helps care for the sick. At one point, he was trying to convince his friend David to accompany him to visit a sick patient in the hospital.

"That's really not my thing," David replied, "visiting a total stranger." But Freddy persisted. "You'll make his day. You'll feel so good about it." Finally, David agreed to go.

They walked into the room of an elderly patient and tried to make conversation with him. But the gentleman remained stone-faced. They tried to make jokes, they tried to sing and do whatever they could to get a reaction, but the man did not move a muscle. After over thirty minutes of trying, the two visitors decided to leave.

Freddy felt bad because he had told David that it would be an uplifting experience. As they walked the elevator, David realized he had left his bag in the room. He retraced his steps and, when he got to the door, he overheard the patient talking to a nurse. "Did you see those two men who were here? They're from my community. They came all the way here to visit me. Yes, they came just to visit me," he said, repeating it several times.

David derived much satisfaction from those words, which gave him the encouragement to continue visiting sick people and trying to cheer them up. David could have left the hospital that day feeling as if he had wasted his time, but Hashem gave him the chizuk that inspired him for the rest of his life.

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Good Shabbos!