

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

For the first time since their departure from Egypt the Israelites do something together. They sing. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel." Rashi, explaining the view of R. Nehemiah in the Talmud (Sotah 30b) that they spontaneously sang the song together, says that the holy spirit rested on them and miraculously the same words came into their minds at the same time. In recollection of that moment, tradition has named this week Shabbat Shirah, the Sabbath of Song. What is the place of song in Judaism?

There is an inner connection between music and the spirit. When language aspires to the transcendent and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song. Music, said Arnold Bennett is "a language which the soul alone understands but which the soul can never translate." It is, in Richter's words "the poetry of the air." Tolstoy called it "the shorthand of emotion." Goethe said, "Religious worship cannot do without music. It is one of the foremost means to work upon man with an effect of marvel." Words are the language of the mind. Music is the language of the soul.

So when we seek to express or evoke emotion we turn to melody. Deborah sang after Israel's victory over the forces of Sisera (Judges 5). Hannah sang when she had a child (1 Sam. 2). When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the "sweet singer of Israel" (2 Sam. 23: 1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3: 15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the 'Verses of Song' with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing God's praises.

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as a refuah shelaima for
Basha bas Esther Ralyah
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by her friends
"hey hey, we're the Monsey's!"
רפואה שלמה !

Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called 'the music of the spheres'. This is what Psalm 19 means when it says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands... There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music ("kavam", literally "their line," possibly meaning the reverberating string of a musical instrument) carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world.' Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator.

So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and maariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the Yamim Noraim, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the haftarah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah, for studying Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. There is a map of holy words and it is written in melodies and songs.

Music has extraordinary power to evoke emotion. The Kol Nidrei prayer with which Yom Kippur begins is not really a prayer at all. It is a dry legal formula for the annulment of vows. There can be little doubt that it is its ancient, haunting melody that has given it its hold over the Jewish imagination. It is hard to hear those notes and not feel that you are in the presence of God on the Day of Judgment, standing in the company of Jews of all places and times as they pleaded with heaven for forgiveness. It is the holy of holies of the Jewish soul. (Lehavedil, Beethoven came close to it in the opening notes of the sixth movement of the C Sharp Minor Quartet op. 131, his most sublime and spiritual work).

Nor can you sit on Tisha B'av reading Eichah, the book of Lamentations, with its own unique cantillation, and not feel the tears of Jews through the ages as they suffered for their faith and wept as they

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remembered what they had lost, the pain as fresh as it was the day the Temple was destroyed. Words without music are like a body without a soul.

Each year for the past ten years I have been privileged to be part of a mission of song (together with the Shabbaton Choir and singers Rabbi Lionel Rosenfeld and Chazanim Shimon Cramer and Jonny Turgel) to Israel to sing to victims of terror, as well as to people in hospitals, community centres and food kitchens. We sing for and with the injured, the bereaved, the sick and the broken hearted. We dance with people in wheelchairs. One boy who had lost half of his family, as well as being blinded, in a suicide bombing, sang a duet with the youngest member of the choir, reducing the nurses and his fellow patients to tears. Such moments are epiphanies, redeeming a fragment of humanity and hope from the random cruelties of fate.

Beethoven wrote over the manuscript of the third movement of his A Minor Quartet the words *Neue Kraft fhlend*, "Feeling new strength." That is what you sense in those hospital wards. You understand what King David meant when he sang to God the words: "You turned my grief into dance; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent." You feel the strength of the human spirit no terror can destroy.

In his book, *Musophilia*, the neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks (no relative, alas) tells the poignant story of Clive Wearing, an eminent musicologist who was struck by a devastating brain infection. The result was acute amnesia. He was unable to remember anything for more than a few seconds. As his wife Deborah put it, 'It was as if every waking moment was the first waking moment.'

Unable to thread experiences together, he was caught in an endless present that had no connection with anything that had gone before. One day his wife found him holding a chocolate in one hand and repeatedly covering and uncovering it with the other hand, saying each time, 'Look, it's new.' 'It's the same chocolate', she said. 'No', he replied, 'look. It's changed.' He had no past at all. In a moment of awareness he said about himself, 'I haven't heard anything, seen anything, touched anything, smelled anything. It's like being dead.'

Two things broke through his isolation. One was his love for his wife. The other was music. He could still sing, play the organ and conduct a choir with all his old skill and verve. What was it about music, Sacks asked, that enabled him, while playing or conducting, to overcome his amnesia? He suggests that when we 'remember' a melody, we recall one note at a time, yet each note relates to the whole. He quotes the philosopher of music, Victor Zuckerkandl, who wrote, 'Hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once. Every melody declares to us that the past can be there without being remembered, the future without being foreknown.' Music is a form of sensed continuity that can sometimes break through the most overpowering disconnections in our experience of time.

Faith is more like music than like science. Science analyzes, music integrates. And as music connects note to note, so faith connects episode to episode, life to life, age to age in a timeless melody that breaks into time. God is the composer and librettist. We are each called on to be voices in the choir, singers of God's song. Faith teaches us to hear the music beneath the noise.

So music is a signal of transcendence. The philosopher and musician Roger Scruton writes that it is "an encounter with the pure subject, released from the world of objects, and moving in obedience to the laws of freedom alone." He quotes Rilke: "Words still go softly out towards the unsayable / And music, always new, from palpitating stones / builds in useless space its godly home." The history of the Jewish spirit is written in its songs. The words do not change, but each generation needs its own melodies.

Our generation needs new songs so that we too can sing joyously to God as our ancestors did at that moment of transfiguration when they crossed the Red Sea and emerged, the other side, free at last. When the soul sings, the spirit soars. ©2011 Chief Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and *torah.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“Israel saw the great hand that G-d inflicted on Egypt and the people revered G-d and they and they had faith in G-d and in Moses His servant” (Exodus 14:31)

In this week's Parsha, we read of one of the greatest miracles of all, the splitting of the Red Sea. It was a moment when all of the Jewish people experienced G-d's miracles. Rashi quotes a famous Midrash which teaches that even the simplest handmaid at the Red Sea experienced prophecy which was more powerful than that of one of the greatest prophets: Ezekiel (Rashi on Exodus 15: 2).

A couple of weeks ago, we saw how G-d made his presence known to our forefathers as E-I Sha-ddai.

The splitting of the Red Sea was the culmination of G-d's promise that the Jewish People had entered a new phase of history in which they would experience G-d by His name and attributes of Hashem (Y-H-V-H). What is the significance of this new perception of G-d and what does it signify about our own relationship to G-d?

Rashi explains that in the past G-d made great promises to our forefathers, but He had not yet fulfilled them. Everything lay in potential, but the promises for the fruition of the Jewish nation had not yet been realized.

The Ramban explains how through the Exodus in general and at the Red Sea in particular, G-d performed miracles showing His power and mastery over the nature. Now, the Jewish people witness G-d as the director of history; rescuing His people and developing the Jewish nation.

Working through history, G-d is acting in partnership with the Jewish people. He has freed His nation of slaves, now He is working together with them to build the Jewish nation that will receive the Torah at Mount Sinai and live out its ideals and its commandments in the Promised Land. To fulfill this role, G-d will require eternal patience. The people will prove to be stubborn, fickle and complex; nevertheless, G-d will make them His partners and work together with them.

Our role and our challenge as the partners of G-d in history is beautifully expressed in a story about one of the great Jewish leaders of the Twentieth Century, Rabbi Shimon Schwab (1908-1995).

Rabbi Schwab writes in his memoirs that when he was a young man, he thirsted to learn more and more Torah. He studied at the famous Torah academies of Telshe and Mir, but he was still desperate to learn with the saintly scholar Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan, affectionately known by the title of one of his books, the "Hafetz Haim". Eventually, in 1930, he travelled by foot to Radin, the Rabbi's hometown. It was a long and difficult journey, but eventually he reached the Yeshiva, found a seat and began to study. He studied with great diligence and dedication, but to his dismay there was no opportunity to meet the renowned scholar. He waited patiently, but eventually, after six months, he could bear it no longer. Plucking up his courage, he went to the home of the Hafetz Haim, knocked on the door and - filled with trepidation - he explained what he wanted. The Hafetz Haim welcomed him in to his sparsely furnished house offered him tea and cake and proceeded to offer a first lesson.

The Hafetz Haim, who was a Cohen (descendent of the Priest-teachers who served in the Temple and whose descendants will serve there in the future) asked the young man whether he too was a Cohen. The young man responded that he was not. And then the Hafetz Haim started to teach. This is what he said: When the Messiah comes, he will bring us all to the Land of Israel. We'll sail to the port of Jaffa and

from there we will make our way to Jerusalem. Once we arrive in Jerusalem, there will be tremendous excitement, we will head to Temple Mount and then make our way to the Beit Hamikdash (Temple). But there we will have to separate: I will enter with the Cohanim (Priest-teachers) and you will have to wait outside. I say this not to upset you, but to offer you a challenge.

Years ago, when our ancestors stood at Mount Sinai and then panicked at the disappearance of their leader, they asked Aaron to build a Golden Calf. When Moshe came down from the mountain, he saw the terrible sight of the Jewish people dancing around this idol and proclaimed, "Let those who are for G-d follow me." (Shemot 32: 26). Only one tribe responded - my ancestors, the tribe of Levi. That is why we are the Priest-teachers and you are not. So I beg you, next time when you hear the call of the G-d of history, do not miss your opportunity. Respond immediately.

This was the message of the Hafetz Haim. We are privileged to live in a generation which, like the generation that crossed the Red Sea, is privileged to see G-d working in history. G-d calls to us with a mission to perfect the world according to His vision.

This time we dare not refuse the challenge.

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The miracle of the manna that fell from heaven and nurtured millions of people for forty years is one of the focal points of this week's parsha. The obvious reason for the miracle's occurrence is that the Jewish people had to have daily nourishment simply to survive. However the rabbis of the Talmud injected another factor into the miracle of the falling manna.

They stated that "the Torah could only have been granted to those that ate manna daily." Thus the necessity for the manna was directly associated with the granting of the Torah to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai. No manna, no Torah. Why is this so?

Most commentators are of the opinion that only a people freed from the daily concerns of earning a living and feeding a family could devote themselves solely to Torah study and acceptance of the life values that acceptance of the Torah mandates.

The Torah is a demanding discipline. It requires time and effort, concentration and focus to appreciate and understand it. cursory glances and even inspiring sermons will not yield much to those who are unwilling to invest time and effort into its study and analysis. This was certainly true in this first generation of Jewish life, newly freed from Egyptian bondage and lacking heritage, tradition and life mores that would, in later generations, help Jews remain Jewish and appreciate the Torah.

The isolation of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai coupled with the heavenly provision of daily manna and the miraculous well of Miriam together created a certain think-tank atmosphere. This atmosphere enabled Torah to take root in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people.

In his final oration to the Jewish people, recorded for us in the book of Dvarim, Moshe reviews the story of the manna falling from heaven. But there Moshe places a different emphasis on the matter. He states there that the manna came to teach, "... that humans do not live by bread alone but rather on the utterances of God's mouth,"

In order to appreciate Torah, to truly fathom its depths and understand its values system, one has to accept its Divine origin. Denying that basic premise of Judaism compromises all deeper understanding and analysis of Torah. Thus the manna, the presence of God, so to speak, in the daily life of the Jew allowed the Torah to sink into the depths of the Jewish soul and become part of the matrix of our very DNA.

The Torah could only find a permanent and respected home within those who tasted God's presence, so to speak, every day within their very beings and bodies. The rabbis also taught us that the manna produced no waste materials within the human body.

When dealing with holiness and holy endeavors there is nothing that goes to waste. No effort is ignored and no thought and attempt is left unrecorded in the heavenly court of judgment. Even good intent is counted meritoriously. Let us feel that we too have tasted the manna. ©2011 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

An examination of the first time Jews praised God after leaving Egypt offers an understanding of two distinct models of approaching God.

In the song after the splitting of the sea, the Jews proclaimed: "This is my God and I will glorify him ve-anveihu; the God of my father and I will exalt him, va-aromemenhu." (Exodus 15:2)

One approach to God is that of "Elokei avi, the God of my father," to believe simply because of my inherited history, to believe because my parents believe.

Hence, the text states va-aromemenhu; from the root rum meaning "above." In other words, although God is above me and I have little personal relationship with Him, nonetheless, I accept God because my parents accepted Him.

A second approach is implicit in the first part of the sentence. Here the Jews proclaimed, "This is my

God, zeh Kei-lee,"the God with whom I have a very personal relationship.

Hence, the modifying term ve-anveihu (and I will glorify Him). Anveihu is a compound of ani-Hu. This is what Martin Buber referred to as the most intense of relationships, that of the I-Thou. This points to one who has a personal relationship with God, and believes because he or she has been closely touched by the Almighty.

Which approach is more meaningful and more critical? Since both are mentioned, each has truth. Indeed, when reciting the amidah, we similarly state that, "God is our God Elokeinu" and, "God is the God of our ancestors Elokei Avoteinu, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Note the inclusion of both a personal relationship and a belief in God because He was the God of our patriarchs.

The sequence of these terms in both the biblical text and in the amidah shows us which approach has the most significance. In both instances, God is first described as being a personal God.

An important educational lesson can be learnt here: It is not enough for parents to expect their children to believe simply because they believe. Transmission of a belief in God to our youngsters is not automatic. What is most necessary is an atmosphere wherein a child comes to experience belief through sincere strivings and actions; not merely through rote approaches to prayer and ritual.

Such children are in the best position to maintain their belief and to transmit it to their children and they to their children until the end of time. © 2011 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and President of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School - the Modern and Open Orthodox Rabbinical School. He is Senior Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, a Modern and Open Orthodox congregation of 850 families. He is also National President of AMCHA - the Coalition for Jewish Concerns

RABBI YISROEL CINER

Parsha Insights

This week we read the parsha of B'shalach. "And it was, b'shalach Paroah {when Paroah sent} the nation... And Bnei Yisroel {Children of Israel} came up out of Mitzrayim {Egypt} 'chamushim.' [13:17-18]"

The classic explanation of the word 'chamushim,' brought by Rashi and others, is that the Bnei Yisroel were armed. The Even Ezra, however, offers an alternative explanation. 'Chamushim,' he explains, means that Bnei Yisroel were laden with wealth. As we learned in last week's parsha, Bnei Yisroel, with Hashem's and Moshe's urging, had taken vessels of gold and silver from the Egyptians. They had their hands filled with the booty they had recouped from Mitzrayim.

Moshe, on the other hand (sorry), had his hands filled with a different type of treasure. "Va'yikach

Moshe {And Moshe took} the bones of Yosef with him, being that Yosef had Bnei Yisroel swear (that they would in turn exact an oath from their descendants) to bring his bones out of Mitzrayim with them. [13:19]"

(The Chizkuni writes that this was a very understandable request for Yosef to have made. They had stolen him from Shechem and they were therefore obligated to return him to there. Yosef, of course, was ultimately buried in Shechem.)

The Talmud [Sotah 13A] points out the tremendous love that Moshe had for mitzvos {commandments}. While the rest of Bnei Yisroel were busy with gold and silver, Moshe was busy with the bones of Yosef. The posuk {verse} in Mishlei {Proverbs} which states: "A wise hearted person yikach {takes} mitzvos," is referring to Moshe.

Yosef, the greatest amongst the sons of Yaakov, personally dealt with the burial of his father. For that he merited that Moshe himself, the greatest of Bnei Yisroel, personally dealt with his remains being taken out of Mitzrayim. Moshe, in turn, merited that his burial was tended to by no other than Hashem, Himself.

Let's get an understanding of the difficulty involved in taking Yosef's bones out of Mitzrayim in order to understand the incredible reward Moshe received.

The Medrash relates that while the rest of Bnei Yisroel were busying themselves with the gold and silver; Moshe was searching for three days and three nights to find the casket of Yosef. Serach, the daughter of Asher, saw Moshe and asked why he looked so exhausted. He explained that he hadn't been able to find Yosef's casket and they would not be able to leave Mitzrayim without fulfilling the oath made to him. "Come with me and I'll show you where it is," she said to Moshe. She brought him to the Nile, told him that the Egyptians had made a casket weighing 500 talents and showed him where they had thrown it. The sorcerers had advised Paroah that by doing so it would be impossible to remove the casket-thus ensuring that Bnei Yisroel would never leave Egypt.

Moshe immediately called out: "Yosef, Yosef, you swore that Hashem would redeem your children-do not delay that redemption!"

The casket miraculously floated to the surface and Moshe lifted it onto his shoulder. As Bnei Yisroel were carrying the gold and silver out of Mitzrayim, Moshe was carrying the bones of Yosef.

At that time Hashem declared: "Moshe, the great chesed {kindness} that you have shown will be compensated-I will personally tend to your burial."

The Yalkut Lekach Tov raises an interesting question. We seem to be criticizing Bnei Yisroel by saying that Moshe was involving himself in a mitzvah while they were not. However, as we stated above, they were also commanded to take silver and gold from Mitzrayim. This was a fulfillment of the promise Hashem made to Avrohom that his children would be enslaved in

a land and then would leave with much wealth. If so, why is Moshe's mitzvah viewed so glowingly while Bnei Yisroel's is viewed so disparagingly?

There are mitzvos and there are mitzvos. As we make our way through the marketplace of opportunities that we call life, we are confronted with a dazzling array of different types of mitzvos. Some seem glamorous others a bit drab. Some are alive with excitement others on the more sedate side. Some offer us 'cash-back-benefits' others will just put us further in the hole.

We have limited time, limited resources and limited focus. The root of the word mitzvah is tzaveh-command. It is the vehicle through which we show our allegiance to Hashem. Our recognition that His will must transcend our will as only He has the vision to see what is ultimately in our best interest. Whenever we are dealing with a situation of limited means we must prioritize and see what will most effectively accomplish our objective.

Gathering gold was a mitzvah and gathering Yosef's bones was a mitzvah. However, Moshe was able to transcend even considering the gains he'd have in this world. He chose to deal with Yosef's bones.

This is what was meant by "va'yikach Moshe {and Moshe took}." Yikach means an acquisition. On one hand, choosing how to spend limited resources. On the other hand, that which is acquired affects the person and changes, to a degree, who that person is. Moshe decided on the bones of Yosef. That was the acquisition he chose for himself. "A wise hearted person yikach {takes} mitzvos." He carefully chooses those mitzvos which would best show his allegiance to Hashem.

With this, the posuk {verse} gains an added dimension. "Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him." As the Kli Yakar explains, the acquisition of gold chosen by Bnei Yisroel was temporary-one which would not change their essence and therefore would not be taken with them. Moshe's choice, to fulfill that last wish by performing that last chesed {kindness} for Yosef, was an acquisition that Moshe would take "with him." An acquisition for eternity.

"A wise hearted person yikach {takes} mitzvos."

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MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

“T hen Moshe will sing' [Shemot 15:1]. Moshe said: Master of the Universe, in the same way that I sinned against You I will praise You... I know that I sinned against You with the word 'az,' as is written, 'Ever since (umai'az) I came to speak to Pharaoh he made things worse for this nation...' [5:23]. But You drowned them in the sea, therefore I will praise You with the same word, 'az.'" [Shemot Rabba 23].

"On that day, G-d will be one and His name will be one" [Zecharia 14:9]. The Talmud asks: Isn't His name already one? The answer is that today for bad tidings we recite the blessing "Dayan ha'emet" (the Judge of Truth) and for good news we say "Hatov vehameitiv" (He who does good). In the future the same blessing will be recited for both good and bad - Hatov vehameitiv. (Pesachim 50a). The question is asked: Will there be bad in the future? The answer is that in the future we will say Hatov vehameitiv in cases where today we say Dayan ha'emet, since our outlook will change and we will be able to understand that what seemed in the past to be bad was really on the path to good.

In his sermons (number 11), the RAN writes that Moshe's behavior was hard for the people to understand. Why, after he had told them of redemption, did he ask to leave Egypt for only three days? They also had another question: Why did he tell them, "Every man will borrow from his friend and every woman from her friend, vessels of silver and gold" [Shemot 11:2]? Why didn't he tell them to demand outright, "Give us our wages for enslaving us"? Because of these uncertainties, Bnei Yisrael had doubts about Moshe's prophecy.

The RAN replies that the Egyptians deserved to be drowned in the sea, just like they treated the children of Bnei Yisrael. Therefore, Moshe told Pharaoh that they were leaving for only three days and that they were only borrowing the precious vessels, so that Pharaoh would believe that the people intended to return. When he saw that they did not come back, he pursued them, and the Egyptians drowned in the sea. Then, after the fact, the people understood the wisdom of the Divine guidance. At the shore of the sea they finally understood how all the evil that they had experienced in the past eventually led to good results. Thus, the people at the sea were at a level corresponding to the era of the distant future, and they were able to recite the blessing Hatov vehameitiv with respect to what they had thought was evil. Similarly, Moshe began his praise with the word "az," in order to make amends for his complaint, "Ever since I came to speak..." The Plagues in Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea are the foundations of our faith, as is written, "in order that I will put these signs in his midst... and you will know that I am G-d" [Shemot 10:1-2]. It then became clear that the suffering of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt was the foundation of belief in the entire world.

The RAN adds that in the future process of redemption too there will be events that are not understood properly and will be thought to be bad - and that the good significance of the events will only become clear in the end. "This is certainly true of us, who will become smarter in the future redemption. And that is why the Rambam wrote that the details of what will happen then will not be known to us until they take

place." These words are especially relevant for us today. © 2011 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd the Children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea" (Sh'mos 14:29). Which sea G-d split, and where the Children of Israel crossed it, is the subject of much discussion. Nevertheless, it seems pretty clear that the body of water referred to in the Torah as "Yam Suf" is the Red Sea, which separates Africa from Saudi Arabia, and includes (at its north) the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, which surround the bottom part of the Sinai Peninsula. Since the Children of Israel crossed this body of water, it must have been in or near Egypt, and since it is given as a marker for Canaan's eastern border (Sh'mos 23:31; see Bamidbar 21:4, D'varim 2:1 and M'lachim I 9:26), it must extend eastward from Egypt all the way to the other side of the Land of Israel. The Children of Israel followed this sea's "path" during their journey in the desert (Bamidbar 14:25, 21:4 and 33:10-11), a journey that was not close to Egypt (Sh'mos 13:17), thereby ruling out any land-locked Egyptian body of water. It was also not "the way to the Land of the P'lishtim" (ibid), thereby ruling out the Mediterranean Coast. Why the Red Sea, including (or especially) its northern fork, is called "Yam Suf" is a discussion in and of itself (see http://www.ou.org/index.php/jewish_action/article/67024/), but there can be little doubt that it was the Red Sea (or a part of it) that G-d split in order to allow the Children of Israel to escape from the Egyptians, and in which the Egyptians (along with their horses and chariots) drowned.

Which part of the Red Sea they crossed, and whether they actually crossed it, is also discussed at length. Numerous early commentators say that rather than crossing from one side of the sea to the other (at its width), the Children of Israel exited on the same side that they had entered, traveling in a semi-circle along its length. This suggestion is made for several reasons.

The Talmud (Erchin 15a), demonstrating that the generation of the exodus had little faith in G-d, says that after coming out of the sea they said, "just as we are coming out on this side, so too are the Egyptians coming out on the other side." If they had crossed the sea from one side to the other, why would they care if the Egyptians came out on the other side? Even if they did, they could no longer chase after their former slaves, who were safe on the Canaanite side of sea! Tosfos (d"h "k'shaim") therefore says that they must have come out on the same side they went in, and were afraid that the Egyptians would as well (after which they would resume their chase). However, as Rav Yaakov Emden points out, the map Tosfos provides is inaccurate. [There is no need to cross any water to get to Canaan from Egypt. Tosfos thought that the only way

to get from Egypt to Canaan was either to cross the Nile and enter from the southwest, to go through Edom (or Amon/Moav) from the south, or to go around them and enter from the east; see also Rashi on Bamidbar 34:3.] The Nile is west of Rameses (from where the Children of Israel started their journey, see Sh'mos 12:37), and Nachal Mitzrayim, which is the southwestern boundary of the Land of Egypt (see Bamidbar 34:5) does not connect with any waterway on its southeastern end. (Besides, it is easily crossable.) Therefore, even if the Children of Israel had crossed the Red Sea from Egypt into the Sinai Peninsula (and not come out on the same side they entered), they could still be afraid that the Egyptians might go around the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez and continue to chase after them.

Similarly, since the Yam Suf extends from below the southwestern corner of Canaan all the way to its southeastern corner, it would seem impossible to cross the Yam Suf from Egypt to get to Canaan, thus necessitating coming out on the same (northern) side that was entered. However, since the Sinai desert is on a peninsula, one can cross the western fork and still be north of the rest of the sea.

Among the reasons given by Radak (Shoftim 11:16) that the Children of Israel must have come out on the same side of the Yam Suf that they entered is that they camped by the Yam Suf well after having crossed it (Bamidbar 33:10); why would they return to the sea they had previously crossed? However, since the Yam Suf surrounds the Sinai Peninsula, following the "path of the Yam Suf" along its perimeter could occur even if it was crossed from the Egyptian side into Sinai.

Another argument put forth by several commentators (Ibn Ezra on Sh'mos 14:17, Chizkuni on Sh'mos 14:22, Radak on Tehillim 136:13) to "prove" that the Children of Israel must have come out on the same side that they went in is based on the names of the places they camped at before and after the "crossing." They went from Rameses to Succos (Bamidbar 33:5) to "Eisam, which is at the edge of the desert" (33:6). Yet, after crossing the sea (33:8), they were back in the Desert of Eisam! If they were in Eisam both before and after "crossing" the sea, they must have come out on the same side that they entered from, right? However, before entering the sea the nation camped at Pi HaChiros (Sh'mos 14:2, Bamidbar 33:7), and that trip is described as going back towards Egypt, with the purpose of tricking Pharaoh into thinking they were lost. If the nation traveled back towards Egypt, they very well could have traveled from the northeastern side of the Gulf of Suez back around to its northwestern side, then crossed through the split sea back to the northeastern side; there is no need for them to have to start out on the northeastern side in order to end up there. As a matter of fact, several "modern" diagrams depict the semi-circle trip through the sea to be on the northwestern side, while showing Eisam to be on the

northeastern side! If they could have traveled around the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez twice, once before the splitting of the sea and then again afterwards, they could have done so just the one time before crossing back through the sea.

Even though there is no need to say that the Children of Israel came out of the Yam Suf on the same side they went in, there might be a reason to say that they didn't enter from the western/Egyptian side. They were camped by Pi Hachirus before they entered the sea (Bamidbar 33:8), and it was called such because it was the gateway to freedom for those escaping from Egypt (Midrash Lekach Tov). It makes a lot more sense if this "gateway to freedom" was north of Suez; if it was on the western bank of the gulf, one would still need to go around the northern tip to be free. Rather, Pi HaChirus was by the northern tip, so that anybody who was able to get past that point could easily keep moving eastward. It would also explain why the deity that was located there was called "Baal Tz'fon," the Baal (deity) of the north, as it was near the northernmost part of the gulf. Since the Children of Israel were camped "before Pi Hachirus," it would place them by the shore at the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez (or perhaps just around the bend from the northernmost part of the gulf), crossing the sea from the north to the east (diagonally, moving southeast), coming out by Eisam.

There is one more advantage to suggesting that the Children of Israel crossed the Yam Suf rather than coming out on the same side they had entered. In "Eileh Mas'ay" (1:4), Rabbi Dan Schwartz quotes the Mechilta which says that one third of the wealth Yosef collected during the famine was stored at Baal Tz'fon, suggesting that after the Egyptians drowned in the sea the Children of Israel looted the now unguarded building where these riches were kept. This was the "great wealth" G-d had promised Avraham that his descendants would get when they left Egypt (not just the precious metals attached to the chariots). However, if the area on the western bank was small enough to be able to loot these riches right after coming back out of the sea, wouldn't they have been able to see that the Egyptians didn't wash up on the "other side," i.e. further along the bank? Additionally, the impression left is not that the Children of Israel broke into a strong-house to take things, but rather that they collected the riches the now-dead Egyptians had with them, which had washed up ashore with their corpses. If, however, in the chaos of chasing down their former slaves, surrounding them but being held back by G-d's protective clouds, the Egyptians themselves looted the riches stored at Baal Tz'phon (or in Migdol), they would have had it with them when they continued the chase into the sea. It is also possible that Pharaoh offered these riches to his people as an incentive to chase down the Children of Israel and bring them back to Egypt. After the waters came crashing down on them, and their corpses emerged on the other side, the Children of Israel were able to easily

gather the riches that had washed ashore with them.
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SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

In this week's parashah, we find the beginning of the receiving of the Torah. On the verse (15:25), "There He established for [the nation] a decree and an ordinance, and there He tested it," Rashi z"l comments: "He gave them a few sections of the Torah in order that they might engage in study thereof -- the sections containing the command regarding Shabbat, the red heifer and the administration of justice."

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270) writes: This is wondrous! Why does the Torah not spell out the laws as it does in other places-"Speak to Bnei Yisrael and command them, etc." From Rashi's wording it seems that [Moshe did not teach these laws as "official" commandments; rather] he told them that this is what they would be commanded to keep in the future, when Hashem would give them the Torah at Har Sinai. In this light, says Ramban, we can understand why the Torah calls these commandments a "test." Bnei Yisrael were being tested to see whether they could accustom themselves to mitzvot and accept them with joy.

R' Simcha Mordechai Ziskind Broide z"l (rosh yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim; died 2000) asks: How would these few mitzvot reveal whether or not Bnei Yisrael were ready to receive the whole Torah? He explains:

Ramban teaches (in his commentary to Sefer Devarim) that the Torah expects more of us than merely keeping the mitzvot. We are called upon to learn from the mitzvot what Hashem's Will is. For instance, the Torah tells us not to speak lashon hara, not to take revenge, to stand up for our elders, etc., and from these examples of interpersonal behavior, we are supposed to learn how to interact with our fellow men. When Hashem taught the laws of Shabbat, the red heifer and the administration of justice in our parashah, the purpose was to see whether Bnei Yisrael would look behind those mitzvot to see the Will of Hashem that those laws represent. If Bnei Yisrael succeeded in doing that, it would indicate that they would know what to do with the other mitzvot as well. (Sahm Derech: Ha'yashar Ve'hatov p.19)

"Yisrael saw Egypt 'mait' on the seashore." (14:30) This verse is commonly translated, "Yisrael saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." However, R' Eliezer Nachman Foa z"l (rabbi of Modena, Italy; died 1701) translates it differently: "Yisrael saw the Egyptians dying on the seashore." As a precedent for this translation, he cites Bereishit 35:18, "And it came to pass, as her [Rachel's] soul was departing-ki maitah / for she was dying-that she called his name Ben Oni."

Although some translate "ki maitah" as "she died," this cannot be correct, for how could she give her son a name after she died?

What is the significance of the fact that "Yisrael saw the Egyptians dying on the sea shore"? R' Foa explains that just as the Jewish People saw the Egyptians dying, the Egyptians saw in their last moments that the Jewish People had survived. This increased even more the sanctification of G-d's Name that resulted from the miracle. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Midrash B'chiddush p.110)

"I shall sing to Hashem for He is extremely exalted, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea." (15:1) Rashi writes: Hashem did something that no human warrior can do. A human warrior knocks the rider off the horse and then vanquishes him. Only Hashem could hurl a horse and its rider into the sea together.

R' Yitzchak Yerucham Borodiansky shlita (Yeshivat Kol Torah in Yerushalayim) writes: This is the attribute of Hashem which the Torah refers to as the "Yad Chazakah" / "Strong Hand," and we eat matzah on Pesach to recognize this attribute. Matzah is a mixture of flour and water. Naturally, flour and water that are mixed rise to make a bread dough, but the "strong hand" of the baker can overpower the natural tendency of the dough in order to make unleavened bread.

In the Pesach Haggadah, we say, "The 'Yad Chazakah' is [the plague of] devver / an animal disease." R' Borodiansky asks: The general theme of the haggadah is elaborating on the greatness of the miracles. Why does the author of the haggadah here limit the definition of the "Yad Chazakah"?

He answers: The haggadah is not referring here to the specific plague of devver. Rather, all of the plagues can be classified either as devver or cherrev / a sword, as in the verse (Shmot 5:3), "Lest He strike us dead with the devver or with the cherrev." "Devver" refers to those plagues which involved a change to the nature of a physical object or phenomenon-e.g., blood, animal disease, and darkness-while "cherrev" refers to the plagues that involved an attack from the outside-e.g., frogs, wild beasts, and hail. Based on this understanding, the Yad Chazakah and devver indeed are synonymous, for they both refer to Hashem's mastery over nature, such as when He tossed horse and rider into the sea together. (Siach Yitzchak: Geulat Mitzrayim p.43) © 2011 S. Katz & torah.org

