

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Beshelach:*** **Exodus 14:19-31**
 Haftarah: **Judges 4:12-16**
 B'rit Chadasha: **John 6:34-35**

Then Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea.

[Exodus 14:21]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 78:9-14;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #14, *Retzeh* [Intimate Relationship]

Vayisa malach ha-Elohim ha-holech lifnei machaneh Yisra'el – Then the Angel of the Holy One, who had been moving in front of the Camp of Israel ... *vayelech me'achareihem* – took up a position behind them Exodus 14:19a.

We knew that something was not right the moment dust clouds billowed up on the horizon. The rumbling of chariot wheels soon confirmed our worst fears. Behind the wall of racing chariots, we knew, were cavalymen advancing at a gallop. Behind the horses, we understood, marched legions of archers. Behind the archers, we knew, a sling corps would be deployed. Behind the sling corps, we were fully aware, vast hordes of spear-wielding foot-soldiers would be approaching at double-time. There was no doubt about it – this was not a drill. They were not just coming – they were coming *for us*. They would be upon our defenseless camp before sundown. Hemmed in by the Sea of Reeds we had no way of escape. There was nothing we could do about it. We were helpless – like lambs led to the slaughter.

Major Test of Emunah, Coming Right Up!

Pharaoh rode high in the saddle of his armored steed. At first sight of us he raised his fist threateningly - as narcissistic despots love to do. He shouted: “*Show no mercy!*” Thousands of bloodthirsty Egyptian soldiers began to chant: ‘*NO MERCY! NO MERCY! NO MERCY!*’ Alas for the disdain in which we, our ways, and our God are held by the brainwashed minions of this world’s socio-political elites!

Genocidal bloodlust distorted the soldiers’ faces, giving them the appearance of gargoyles. Straight toward us they charged, with murder and mayhem on their minds. These men had bought into Pharaoh’s propaganda and lies. They had chosen to condemn us for something we did not - and would never - do. We looked

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everywhere – but there was no way of escape. We were hemmed in by the sea. There was nowhere we could run. There was not even a boulder behind which we could hide. Fathers looked for stones, sticks, or anything they could find to try to defend their wives and children against the army that was bearing down on us. Mothers grabbed their children and tried to shelter them the way a hen shelters her chicks. Children screamed. The sick and elderly bowed their heads, whispered *Baruch atah Adonai ...* and waited for the slicing blow of the sword. Forgive us, Dear Reader, if, as we stared death in the face that afternoon, we trembled in fear. Don't judge us too harshly for beginning to wonder why the Holy One had gone to all the trouble of bringing us out of the house of bondage just to die horrible, bloody deaths in the desert.

Was this really where our beautiful dream of freedom was going to die? Would this obscure place by the Sea of Reeds become known as the scene of our holocaust? Was the journey that began just a few days ago with so much promise and hope for mankind really going to end with a *bloody massacre at Pi Ha-Chirot*? Again, forgive us for daring to ask such questions. But, before you judge us too harshly, just remember... you weren't *there*. You are just sitting in a comfortable chair, reading about it like it was a fairytale. For you, it is just literature; for us and our families, on the other hand, it was REAL.

How will this end? You probably know, because you have heard or read this epic story before. There will indeed be a holocaust – but it will not be the one Pharaoh envisioned. The shedding of Hebrew blood is not the reason that this day is going to be remembered. The Yeshua of the Holy One is about to take center stage on earth for the first time since Creation. Ah, but I am getting ahead of myself, aren't I? Let's go back and set the stage for the epic, world-changing story of deliverance that the world has ever witnessed.

The Holy One's Strategy Unfolds

In His Wisdom the Creator of the Universe has choreographed everything that is going to happen at Pi Ha-Chirot today down to the last detail. The sea of Reeds was carefully and lovingly sculpted with this exact moment in mind. It is all part of the Holy One's Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and the Restoration of Creation. The Holy One knows that what is about to happen here is going to change the world. We, however, had no such knowledge. We were not briefed in advance. We had no idea how the Egyptian chariot charge is going to turn out. We had to experience it in 'real time'. We had no clue how the stunning events about to occur here at this minor sea would reshape the course of human history – and

change God-man relations - forever. We will have to learn these things in real time. If the Holy One had told us what was going to happen here in advance, you see, here is no way that most of us – whether born of Avraham’s physical lineage or as part of the mixed multitude - would have agreed to come. For all our professed love of ‘truth’, you see, in reality it seems that truth is not something human beings handle well at all. So, the Holy One keeps things close to the vest. The future – and the details of how the Holy One intends to work all things together for good is *Heaven’s secret*.

Located between Migdal and the sea of Reeds, *Pi Ha-Chirot* is not a place we would have ever planned to visit. It is, however, where the forward movement of the great pillar of fire and cloud stopped. It was there that the Creator ordained that we would halt our march out of Egypt and set up camp. Our Courtier-King has plans for this place. He is going to make it a place to remember for good, and not for evil. And remember it for good we will – generation after generation, Passover after Passover, until the end of time.

In Egyptian, *Pi Ha-Chirot* supposedly means *the place where the sedge grass grows* – in other words, the *place of reeds*. In Hebrew the meaning is more like the *mouth of the caverns*. Why was *Pi Ha-Chirot* chosen? Precisely because it is, by human reasoning at least, the ultimate inescapable death trap. Exit is completely blocked on the East by the waters of the Sea. The potential exits to the North and the South – also along the shore of the Sea - are easily cut off by any armed force worth its salt. To the West are Pharaoh’s chariots. *Oy veh* - Where can we go? Which direction can we head? What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to cope? How are we supposed to prepare? How are we going to survive? The Pillar of Cloud that led us here - will it ever lead us anywhere ever again? We are trying to get used to letting the God of our fathers - the God of Moshe - make the important life-decisions for us. We are trying to adjust to a whole new lifestyle of *trusting His leadership, His provision, and His protection*. But the encampment at *Pi Ha-Chirot* is presenting a challenge. We had thought we were over the fear of man. But now ... THIS HAPPENS! Oh how quickly things can change in the wildernesses and way stations of life.

Just when we thought our time at *Pi Ha-Chirot* was supposed to be just a pleasant little sea-side sojourn before we headed off again into the hot, dry desert to our next adventure ... Pharaoh’s army showed up! We could not out-flank them. We could not out-think them. We could not out-fight them. We could not outlast them. There was suddenly no place to run, no place to hide, no place to stand and fight - and seemingly no way to survive.

Has Our Trust Been Betrayed? Has Our Allegiance Been Misplaced?

We had thought we had seen the last of Pharaoh. We had thought we had heard the roar of Egyptian chariots and the bloodthirsty cries of his charioteers for the last time. We had thought we would never have to fear the disdain, the wrath, the whip, or the lance of an arrogant, cruel, hate-filled Egyptian *ever again*. We had been wrong on all counts. Now vultures hover overhead. Now the howling of jackals sends shivers down our spines. Now sheer terror has seized our hearts. Now there is a sick feeling in the pit our stomachs. Now our palms are sweating and our pulses are racing. Now our children are screaming. Now our wives are crying. Now we feel completely helpless – and cruelly betrayed. Now our strongest men are gathering rocks and sticks in hopes of holding off the rushing chariots at least long enough that a few of the stronger women and children might somehow miraculously manage to escape.

In the face of the approach of six hundred Egyptian chariots Moshe instructed us to stop our futile preparations, take control of our thoughts and emotions, take up positions along the shore of the *Yam Suf*, and *see et-yeshuat Adonai [i.e. the deliverance/salvation of the Holy One]*". **Exodus 14:13**. Moshe seems convinced that the Holy One has everything in control. He even declared: "***The Holy One will fight for you, and you will have shalom.***" **Exodus 14:14**.

Oh how we wish we had Moshe's confidence. Perhaps when we have spent as much time in the Holy One's company as Moshe has we will learn to trust Him the way Moshe does. But for now we simply have no choice. Yielding to panic, complaining, assigning blame, and gathering rocks and sticks are not going to help us now. If the Holy One does not perform a miracle ... well, let's just say this great adventure of redemption is definitely NOT GOING TO END WELL. *Arise, O Holy One! May your enemies be scattered; and may those who hate You flee from before Your Face!"*

Introducing The Ultimate 'Sign' of the Covenant: Et-Yeshuat Adonai – i.e. The Yeshua of the Holy One

Today's aliyah is one of those that literally makes me *tremble* every time I read it and weep every time I talk about it. This is what I like to call the aliyah of *ha-yad gedolah* - the Mighty Hand. In this aliyah we stand along with all Israel and the mixed multitude that followed Moshe out of Egypt by the shores of the *Yam Suf*, and *see with our own eyes et-yeshuat² Adonai* – the *defense, deliverance, rescue,*

² Yeshua is a noun form of the Hebrew verb root *yasha, yod, shin, ayin*, Strong's Hebrew word #3467. Yeshua means help, liberation, victory, deliverance, and/or saving intervention.

and *salvation* of the Holy One our God. What makes me tremble about this aliyah however is not so much the demonstration of the Holy One's *power*; what really makes me tremble is the demonstration of the depth and the height and the breadth of the Holy One's fierce covenant *love for His Beloved*. Let us savor this aliyah. Let us bask in it. It contains, after all, the narrative of our first *mikveh* – our radical act of self-immersion in living water in preparation for our Sinaitic commitment to our Bridegroom.

In yesterday's aliyah Moshe stood up boldly in our midst and declared:

Al-Tirah [Do not fear!] ***
for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.
[Exodus 14:13]

In yesterday's aliyah the "salvation of the Holy One" was *promised*. In today's aliyah the "salvation of the Holy One" is *clearly revealed*. It will come in 5 distinct stages. Let's talk about those stages one by one.

Phase I: The Interpositioning

We are trapped - with absolutely no place to run, nowhere to hide and, from all appearances no hope whatever of escape. Enter *Et-Yeshuat Adonai*, stage right. Torah records it thusly:

Vayisa mal'ach ha-Elohim ha-holech l'fnei machaneh Yisra'el
And the angel of G-d had been traveling in front of the camp of Israel,

vayelech me'achareihem
but now it moved and went behind them.

V'yisa amud he'anan mip'neihem
The pillar of cloud thus moved from in front of them

vaya'amod me'achareyhem
and stood at their rear.

V'yavo beyn machaneh Mitzrayim uveyn machaneh Yisra'el
It came between the Egyptian and the Israelite camp.
[Exodus 14:19-20]

The first phase of the *Yeshua* of the Holy One consists of the Holy One physically placing Himself between the nation – or individual – He has redeemed and whatever which threatens that nation or individual's safety, security, and welfare. It involves the Holy One *personally assuming responsibility for His Redeemed's protection*.

We see this first phase of *Yeshuat* in verse 19 of today's aliyah, where we learn that "the 'angel of the Holy One' and the pillar of cloud, which had been going in

front of the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them, and stood between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel. The effect of this move was to create a “force field” around the Redeemed – a force field that the Egyptians, their chariots, their swords, and even their arrows could not penetrate.

Picture a bully on a playground, picking mercilessly on a younger, smaller child who knows better than to fight back. Hear the bully blustering and threatening and intimidating the little guy. Picture him taking off his jacket and rolling up his sleeves, just to let the little one know he is about to get his face smashed in – and that there is nothing he can do about it. Got the picture? Now picture this. The moment the bully takes the first menacing step toward his outmatched little victim, from seemingly out of nowhere the latter’s big brother – a big, strapping brute about twice the bully’s size and with a well-earned reputation as *one tough hombre* – steps in front of the bully. Picture the big brother standing like a statue between the bully and his little brother, as if to say – “*Okay, hot shot, this is my little brother, see - and if you want a piece of him, you’re going to have to go through me to get it.*”

I have a name for that. I call it ‘*the interpositioning*’. The big brother in my story has *interpositioned* himself between the bully and his little brother. Keep in mind now that the little brother probably didn’t do anything to *deserve* this intervention. He may have not had a single nice thing to say to the big brother in weeks if not years. He has probably griped and complained and aggravated the big brother no end. The little guy has probably been more than a little bratty lately, and a lot too big for his britches. He may in fact if the truth be known have even *deserved* a bit of a thrashing. But not *at the hands of some bully*. And not *under these circumstances*. And *absolutely, positively, not on the big brother’s watch*. Not for anything the little one had done to deserve it, but solely because his heart is the size of Texas, and because he is fiercely loyal to his family, the big brother steps right in, ready to take the blows himself – and dish a few out if necessary, for the sake of THE RELATIONSHIP.

If you understand the parable I just told you then perhaps you can understand what the Holy One does as the sun is going down on the day we read about in today’s aliyah. Pharaoh is *the bully*. The unarmed camp of the redeemed are *the bratty little brother*. And *the interpositioning big brother* is none other than *malach ha-Elohim* – the Angel of God.

Remember all the ‘*Were there not enough graves in Egypt?*’ and ‘*Why didn’t you just leave us alone and let us serve Pharaoh?*’ questioning we read about in

yesterday's aliyah? The redeemed community did not in any way *deserve* to have a redeemer intervene on their behalf. But the 'Angel of the Holy One' saw through all that, to THE RELATIONSHIP. He is a fiercely loyal protector/defender of those with whom He is *in covenant*. Hence, we read:

vayehi he'anan v'ha-choshech vaya'er et ha-laylah

There was cloud and darkness that night,

v'lo-karay zeh el-zeh kol ha-laylah

And no approach could be made all through the night.

Thus, the first phase of the Holy One's "salvation" - the first element of Yeshua's work - is *setting us apart unto Himself*. In the Song of Shlomo [Solomon] this process of setting us apart is described in the following words:

You are a garden enclosed, My Sister, My Bride;

you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.

[Song of Shlomo 4:12]

Are you impressed yet? If not, just stick around awhile. The Holy One is far from through. Get ready for Phase II of *et-yeshuat Adonai*.

Phase II: Let The Wind Blow

This night was going to be very, very long. All night long the Angel of the Lord would stand interpositioned, *keeping vigil* between Pharaoh's army and the camp of the redeemed. But standing vigil is by no means all that the Holy One is going to do this night. Picture the first moments of the first 'day' of creation, when '*the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the waters.*' What happened then? Genesis 1:2 says: The *Ruach* [Breath/Spirit] of the Holy One *moved upon the face of the deep*.

Déjà vu! Just as He had done on 'the first day' of creation, the Holy One caused His *Ruach* to move upon the face of the waters. Here is how Torah records the events of the first hours of darkness:

Vayet Moshe et-yado al ha-yam

Moshe extended his hand over the sea.

v'yolech Adonai et ha-yam

And the Holy One drove back the sea

b'ruach kadim azah kol ha-laylah

with a powerful east wind that blew all night.

V'yasem et ha-yam l'charavah vayibak'u ha-mayim

And he transformed the seabed into dry land. The waters were divided.

The descriptive phrase that Torah uses to describe the force that separated the waters of *Yam Suf* and transformed the seabed is '*ruach kadim*' as *East wind*. That is a perfectly good translation, as *ruach*, though literally meaning '*breath*', can and sometimes does refer to 'wind', and *Kadim/Kedem*, though literally meaning '*from before the first, that was in the very beginning*' can and sometimes does refer to the direction we know as 'East'. But just for fun let's consider how we would translate the phrase '*ruach kadim*' if we were going to do it literally. If we translated the phrase literally, it would be '*breath from before the first, that was in the very beginning*'. What – Whose – breath was that? And what did that Breath *from before the first, that was in the very beginning* do? What was its effect? There were two consequences. First, *the seabed became dry land* [instead of mucky mud and slime]; and second, *the waters were divided*. Usually we think of it the other way around. We who have 'seen the movie' picture the strong wind blowing, causing the waters to part, making a channel between the parted waters. As a result the area of the seabed that was in the channel was left open to the wind. In 'the movie' version the wind then continued to blow, gradually drying up the mud and slime in the now exposed portion of the seabed and making it passable. But that is not the way Torah tells us it happened. According to Torah the first thing the Holy One did - *before* dividing the waters –was to make the seabed 'dry land'. How could He do that? How could He make the seabed 'dry land' *when the water was still on top of it?*

1. Making the Sea Bed Dry Land

Think back to Creation again. We have already discussed the 'first day'. Now think of *Yom Sh'lishi* - the third day. What did the Holy One do in the darkness hours of that day? On that dark night the Holy One said: ***Water under the sky, BE GATHERED to one place; dry ground, 'APPEAR'***. Genesis 1:9.

Could it be that at *Yam Suf* the Holy One merely repeated this process? Could it be that He first caused all the waters to lift up off the sea bed [gathered to 'one place – not two as would be the case if they were 'divided'] and just hover in the air? Could it be that He then 'called forth' dry land to come and fill in the place where the sea bed was, just as He had 'called forth' the dry land on day 3 of Creation?

2. The Dividing of Waters

What does it mean that after the Holy One caused the sea bed to be 'dry land' He '*divided*' the waters? The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'divided' in this verse is a form of the verb root *baqa*³. That verb root literally means to '*break open*'. The first Biblical usage of this verb is in Genesis 7:11, where it is used to

³ Baqa is *beit, kuf, ayin*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #1234.

describe what the Holy One did with the ‘fountains of the deep’ in the days of Noach to commence the great Flood. Could it be that the Holy One broke apart, or broke open, the mass of water hovering over the newly called forth ‘dry land’ the way we break a loaf of *challah* on *Erev Shabbat*? Could it be that He placed the two newly-divided portions onto the new dry land in a way which would leave a channel of dry land in which Israel could travel?

Of course I do not know these things. But neither did the people who made ‘the movie’. I am not trying to start a new doctrine or develop a new theology. I am merely trying to assist all of us who have gotten ‘familiar’ with this story and have relegated it to the ‘history’ of Israel to *take a step back* from what you think you know and to *look afresh* — with wide-eyed wonder - at the events that took place that fateful day at the *Yam Suf*. Whatever the Holy One did, and however He did it, it was *life-changing*.

A Fresh New Look at ‘That Day’

Imagine just for a moment that *you were THERE*. Imagine there were sweaty Hebrew and mixed multitude folks all around you trying to sleep. Imagine that you cannot sleep – what with all the babies crying, the mothers singing lullabies, and the terrifying knowledge that Pharaoh and his army lie just behind the strange cloud that has settled in like a thick fog at the Westernmost end of the camp, and are just waiting daylight to come or for the fog to lift to *attack and massacre everyone that makes up your world*.

Imagine the thoughts that would be racing through your mind. Imagine the way your heart would be pounding. Imagine the emotions you would be feeling. Imagine the weight of the crisis squeezing the breath out of you. Imagine squinting in the darkness to see 80-year old Moshe standing like a statue by the sea in the middle of the night holding his arm over the water. Imagine wondering “*What’s he up to now?*” Imagine shaking your head and saying to yourself “*I think the desert heat has finally made him crazy!*”

Now imagine out of nowhere, a sound – a sound *as of a mighty rushing wind*. Imagine your hair beginning to blow straight out. Imagine everything in the camp not tied or weighted down starting to blow away. Imagine the immediate temperature change, and the tangible change in barometric pressure. Imagine bundling yourself up and huddling with your family as everyone in the camp awakened and scampered for whatever shelter they could find. Imagine the sensation of the quaking of the earth below you as the sea rose over the sea bed, and as if on Divine Command, a firm layer of dry land arose from layers of the

earth far below the surface and displaced the muck and mire of the sea bed.

Imagine the *sound of many waters* as the mighty wind unlike any you had ever experienced began to move upon and reposition the hovering waters, and then pour them back out on the solid ground, separated by a channel. Imagine looking into the channel thus created and seeing a wall of water 20, 30, 40 feet high on either side, seemingly held up by an Unseen Hand.

Can you believe your eyes? Imagine thinking to yourself “*What does this all mean?*” Perhaps, you speculate, the desert heat has made *you* go crazy as well. And then you hear the voices of your fellow refugees rising in a collective gasp, and feel your heart jump into your throat, as one of your own, just one young man among so many in the camp, gets up, runs toward the wind tunnel that now exists between the two walls of water, and literally leaps off the rocks on the shore into what used to be – was when you looked before, at least – *the sea*⁴.

Imagine the sense of wonder and puzzlement you feel as the young man comes to a stop between the walls of water, jumps up and down a few times to test the soil conditions, and then turns around toward the camp and yells at the top of his lungs:

“*It’s solid ground!*” “*It’s dry land!*” “*Our God has made a way for us!*”
“*Get up! Get up, everyone!*”
“*Come with me, and we will escape the Egyptians!*”
“*Our God has made a way!*”

Imagine gathering everything you brought with you, and all your family members, and rushing, just like the young man has just done, into the *wind tunnel*, between the two walls of water. But enough imagining for now. Here is how Torah describes what happened:

V’yavo’u b’nei-Yisra’el betoch ha-yam b’yabashah
The descendants of Israel entered the seabed on dry land.

V’ha-mayim lahem chomah miyeiminam umismolam
The water was on their right and left like [two] walls.

[Exodus 14:21-22]

⁴ Hebrew legend identifies this young man as *Nachshon*, the head of the tribe of Y’hudah [Judah]. According to the sages, even before the waters parted, in blind faith that a miracle would happen, Nachshon leaped into the waters of the sea. The waters did not, according to the legend, begin to part until Nachshon was up to his nostrils in the Sea. At the last possible moment before Nachshon drowned, the legend says, he prayed: *Save me, Holy One, for the waters have reached until the soul ... I have entered deepest waters, a rushing current sweeps me away.* In response to this prayer the waters parted. See **Sotah 37a**. For this reason a *Nachshon* is the colloquial Hebrew term for “trailblazer”, and any act of blind faith is called a *Nachshon’s leap*.

Pharaoh thought that he had the Holy One's redeemed trapped, with *no way of escape* and with *no option but to submit to his wrath*. He was very proud of himself. He was going to have his way. It was just a matter of time. That is what Pharaoh and his bloodthirsty soldiers *thought*. And from a purely natural standpoint – not taking into consideration the 'God-factor' – they were absolutely right. But the Holy One is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He made the sea and He made the sand. He even made Pharaoh. And He is not intimidated by Pharaoh – or his mighty army - one little bit. He has no intention of surrendering the apple of His eye to Pharaoh ever again. So *the Wind blows*. So *the earth shakes*. So *the sea divides*. And so a way out of Pharaoh's trap - and a way into the next phase of the Holy One's Divine Courtship - is provided. Then, though not one of them understood it or knew exactly what would happen next, first one person, then two, then ten, put one foot in front of the other, in the place where water had just been ... and *started walking*. And lo, the seabed held them up. The waters piled up in heaps to their right and their left. Seeing this, the multitudes rushed forward - and they found the seabed held every one of them up as well. The waters of the sea stood as walls on either side. And they passed through, one-by-one, two-by-two, family-by-family – amazed, in absolute awe, but *totally unharmed!* *Selah* - i.e. *pause for a moment, and quietly meditate on the wonder of that!*]

Phase III: The Holy One Totally Confuses and Confounds Pharaoh and His Army

At some point in the night, when the Holy One determined the time was right, the Angel of the Lord moved out of the way, and let Pharaoh see what was going on. Imagine their puzzled shouts: "*What on earth happened? The refugees are escaping the trap! This is not the way Pharaoh said it was going to happen at all!*" Torah says it was at that point when:

Vayirdeifu Mitzrayim v'yavo'u achareihem

The Egyptians gave chase and went after [the Hebrews].

kol sus Pharaoh richbo ufarashav el-toch ha-yam

All of Pharaoh's horses, chariot corps and cavalry went into the middle of the sea.

[Exodus 14:23]

What on earth do you think possessed the Egyptians to pursue the redeemed into the sea? They surely could see that this was a supernatural occurrence. They surely realized that the same God Who had brought upon them all the plagues, and taken the life of their firstborn, was behind it. Surely they had to at least be a little suspicious that if the God of the Hebrews had brought them this far He *might not just stand by and watch them get massacred now*. But if Pharaoh and his generals realized such things their *hatred and bloodlust* were stronger than their intellect.

They charged forward – right into the sea, in hot pursuit of us all. Bad mistake. Once Pharaoh's chariot and cavalry corps were in the seabed, you see, the Holy One sprang into action again. With one glance of His Eye the Holy One changed everything. What a God!

Vayehi b'ash'moret ha-boker

Toward the end of the night [i.e. around 2:00 or 3:00 am]

v'yash'kef Adonai el-machaneh Mitzrayim b'amud esh v'anan

the Holy One stared down at the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud.

V'yahom et machaneh Mitzrayim

And he caused the Egyptian army to panic.

[Exodus 14:24]

I cannot even fathom or imagine what it means for the Holy One to 'stare down at the Egyptian army from the pillar of fire and cloud.' The stare of the Holy One must be very, very powerful. Because *with just a stare* the Egyptian army went into total panic. And that was just the beginning:

V'yasar et ofan markevotav v'yenahageihu b'ch'vedut

The chariot wheels spun/turned aside/bogged down and they moved only with great difficulty.

[Exodus 14:25(a)]

What's *wrong with our chariot wheels*, they must have asked? Why will they not turn? Why are we not moving? And then the realization set in – the chariot wheels were *not going to turn - not ever again*. They now know *they are not going to catch up to a single fleeing refugee*. They now know that *it is they who have suddenly become the hunted*, and that the Hunter is no one other than the Hebrew God – the same God Who inflicted horrible plagues on Egypt over the past few months and recently struck down every Egyptian firstborn. Right about then I imagine is when the Egyptian army's panic turned into terror.

Vayomer Mitzrayim anusah mip'nei Yisra'el

Then Egyptians cried out, 'Let us flee from Israel!'

ki Adonai nilcham lahem b'Mitzrayim

For the Holy One is fighting for them against Egypt!'

[Exodus 14:24-25]

The Egyptians now realized they were in trouble. But it was too late to run. The trap – the real one - was sprung. And all it awaited was ... *the signal*. Torah tells us what the signal was that would spring the great trap the Holy One had set for our enemies:

Vayomer Adonai el-Moshe Neteh et-yadcha al-ha-yam

And the Holy One said to Moshe, 'Extend your hand over the sea.'

V'yashuvu ha-mayim al-Mitzrayim al-richbo v'al-parashav

The waters will come back over the Egyptians, covering chariots and cavalry.'

[Exodus 14:26]

Now it is the Egyptian army that isn't going anywhere. They *run in circles*, in *total confusion*. And even if they could figure out, in the darkness, which way the shore was, the now immobilized chariots block their way. Mercifully, the nightmare the bloodthirsty predators are experiencing will end as quickly as it began. There will be a holocaust on this very special day - but it will most definitely *not* be the kind of holocaust they and their maniacal leader had in mind when the day started.

Phase IV: The Enemy is Vanquished

We have no way of knowing exactly how long the army of Pharaoh stumbled around in a panic that night. But we do know they never saw the light of day. For Torah tells us that just before morning came, Moshe extended his hand over the sea, and *the sea returned to its normal condition*. The Egyptians tried to escape. but Torah tells us:

vayeina'er Adonai et-Mitzrayim betoch ha-yam

but the Holy One swamped the Egyptians in the middle of the sea.

Vayashuvu ha-mayim v'yechasu et ha-rechev v'et ha-parashim

The waters came back and covered the cavalry and chariots.

l'chol cheyl Paro ha-ba'im achareihem b'yam

Of all Pharaoh's army that had followed [the Israelites] into the sea,

lo nish'ar bahem ad-echad

not a single one remained.

v'yosha Adonai b'yom hahu et-Yisra'el miyad Mitzrayim

Thus, on that day, the Holy One delivered/saved/rescued the Israelites from Egypt.

[Exodus 14:27-28]

We have not raised a sword or fired a single arrow. And yet 600 of Egypt's best chariots now lay beneath the waves of the Yam Suf. The lifeless bodies of thousands of horses and their riders, as well as the corpses of whole divisions of infantrymen and archers, float face down in the sea. The mighty army of Egypt is completely destroyed. And Pharaoh is standing all alone on the Western shore of Yam Suf, powerless to ever harm us again. All his boasts of 'not knowing' the God of Avraham, of Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, and Moshe – are revealed to be the cause of all his – and his nation's – problems.

Phase V: Safe Passage

As He had done in Egypt during the plagues so the Holy One at the Sea of Reeds again made a glorious and inescapable distinction between the Egyptians and His

own People. For the inspired narrative tells us:

Uv'nei Yisra'el halchu vayabashah betoch ha-yam
Meanwhile, the Israelites walked in the midst of the sea on dry land.

V'ha-mayim lahem chomah miyeminam umismolam
The water was on their right and on their left like [two] walls.
[Exodus 14:29]

The miracle of the Sea is not about military conquest. What it is about is *Covenant faithfulness*. What the Holy One did for us at *Pi Ha-Chirot* was merely what was necessary to demonstrate His faithfulness to the Covenants He made with Avraham, with Yitzchak and with Ya'akov and their descendants. *Et-yeshuat Adonai* – the deliverance of the Holy One - is always about the fulfillment of those ancient Covenant promises.

Do not underestimate the power of the Holy One to provide you safe passage to the next phase of your Covenant calling and mission. Our Divine Courtier will do whatever is necessary to assure His Covenant Partner safe passage to the *chuppah* He is preparing at Sinai. To bring you and me to Himself, and to the place of fulfillment of our destiny and our purpose in life, He will do *whatever He has to do*. If, as, and when the situation requires it, He will even *make a way for us when there seems to be no way*. *Safe passage* is, you see, an essential element of the *yeshuat* of the Holy One in all ages and circumstances. Read Matthew 14:22-33, Acts 27, and Revelation 12:1-6 and see what I mean. We are all on this journey. And we are all called to be firsthand witnesses to this deliverance.

Phase VI: The Awestruck Afterglow

When the sun rose the refugees looked back and saw that it was all over. Here is how Torah puts it:

Vayar Yisra'el et-Mitzrayim met al-s'fat ha-yam
The Israelites saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Vayar Yisra'el et ha-yad ha-g'dolah
And Israel saw the Mighty Hand

asher asah Adonai b'Mitzrayim
that the Holy One had unleashed against Egypt,

vayir'u ha-am et-Adonai
and the people were in awe of the Holy One,

vaya'aminu b'Adonai uv'Moshe avdo
And they trusted in the Holy One and in his servant Moshe.

The stunned former slaves cannot have known exactly what had happened, or why.

The events they have just witnessed were too surreal, too stunning, to comprehend. It would take years – maybe generations - to sort out all the ramifications. All the redeemed remnant knew for sure was that *their enemy's army was destroyed*, and that though they had been on the brink of certain death, *they were now 100% safe and sound*. To them it was not a matter of doctrine, or systematic theology, or history. To them, it was *a redemption they knew they did not deserve and a deliverance they could not even begin to comprehend*.

Beyond Soteriology

In years past I - like many others over the millennia - tried in vanity of mind and arrogant self-importance to extrapolate doctrines of 'soteriology' [the so-called science of salvation] from the passage we have read today. As I was taught I have in past years strived to examine at this passage theologically and empirically. I thought I had to detach myself from the raw truth and power of what the words recorded on these pages of Torah describe. But I do not take that approach any more. Now I just take a deep breath and *tremble*. And now I realize to my embarrassment that this passage has very little to do with soteriology, or doctrine, or any similar man-glorifying and reason-exalting brand of cheap religious fool-speak. And I realize that the most profound thing I could possibly say about the passage, in concluding, is merely to echo the words of the children of Simon of Cyrene, as given voice by the songwriter:

***Daddy, Daddy, what have we seen here today?
There is so much that we don't understand.***

Real scholars, after all, do not think of themselves more highly than they ought. Real scholars forever remain *like little children, ever in awe of their Father*. And real scholars never forget how it feels *to bury their heads in His Chest and tremble at His Word*.

Questions For Today's Study

1. As today's aliyah begins Pharaoh's chariots and army are charging with all their anger and military might toward the rag-tag remnant of escaped slaves who followed Moshe out of Egypt. A slaughter seems imminent - and it *is*. But who is the *hunter* and who is the *hunted*? Who is in control? Things are not as they seem. Enter *el matador*, stage right.

[A] The first clue that it was Egypt's army, not the redeemed remnant, who was in trouble, was the appearance of the "*Angel of the Holy One*". Look up the phrase "*Angel of the Holy One*", and list at least three Biblical passages where that phrase is mentioned.

[B] Who do you think the "*Angel of the Holy One*" is - and what makes you think that?

[C] Torah says the pillar of fire gave the redeemed remnant light all night long. What do you think the redeemed did all night?

[D] Our aliyah indicates that, at the critical moment, the Holy One “caused the sea to go back” by a strong wind. From what direction did the wind blow.

[E] Is there any other reference in Scripture to a wind blowing from that direction? If so, state the book, chapter and verse, and describe what that wind brought or did.

[F] What do you think a wind from that direction symbolizes or represents?

[G] In verse 24, the Holy One does something that the NIV describes as “discomfiting” the Egyptians. The KJV calls it “troubling”. Look up this word in Strong’s, and write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[H] What do you think the Holy One did that is described by that word?

2. In today’s haftarah aliyah from the book of Judges the forces of Sisera (enemy of Israel), including 900 chariots and all his infantry, enter the Kishon River valley determined to crush Barak and D’vorah’s measly force of 10,000 men.

*They told Sisera that Barak the son of Avino`am was gone up to Mount Tavor.
Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron,
and all the people who were with him, from Haroshet of the Goyim, to the river Kishon.*

*D’vorah said to Barak, **Up; for this is the day
in which the Holy One has delivered Sisera into your hand;
hasn’t the Holy One gone out before you?***

So Barak went down from Mount Tavor, and ten thousand men after him.

*The Holy One confused Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host,
with the edge of the sword before Barak;*

and Sisera alighted from his chariot, and fled away on his feet.

*But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, to Haroshet of the Goyim:
and all the host of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; there was not a man left.*

[A] Compare what the Holy One did to the forces of Pharaoh in Exodus 14 to what He did to the forces of Sisera in today’s haftarah. What similarities do you see?

[B] In Strong’s, look up the word translated as “sword” in verse 15. Write the Hebrew word. [Note, the first letter is “ch”, not an English “h”].

[C] Why did Sisera *abandon his chariot*, and try to flee on foot?

[D] Who does the Bible say was the champion of this battle? Who deserved the glory?

3. In today’s B’rit Chadasha aliyah the people ask the Master to give them “*the bread that comes down from heaven*”. They are referring to a duplication of the miracle of the manna in the wilderness, but Yeshua responded in a way they were not expecting. He *said to them: **I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will***

not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

[A] How did Yeshua describe Himself to the people?

[B] What do you think it means that Yeshua identified Himself as the “bread of life”? Can you relate this to the matzah that those who left Egypt ate with the Pesach lamb, then carried with them as they departed, and ate again at Sukkot?

[C] What does Yeshua say will never happen to one who “comes” to Him?

[D] In Strong’s, look up the Greek word translated as “comes” in verse 35. Write the Greek word and its definitions. What Hebrew word picture do you think Yeshua and his listeners were thinking about?

[E] What do you think “coming” to Yeshua means from a Hebraic standpoint?

[F] What does Yeshua say will never happen to one who “believes in” Him?

[G] In Strong’s, look up the Greek word translated as “believes” in verse 35. Write the Greek word and its definitions. What Hebrew word picture do you think Yeshua and his listeners were thinking about

[H] What does “believing in” Yeshua mean? Describe the process and its impact, *as you have experienced it* - not as you have heard from others that it was supposed to be.

[I] How can one believe on, trust in, and follow Yeshua in a way consistent with the Torah? What would that consist of, and what do you think a person who related to Yeshua, His teachings, and His example, in a way consistent with the Torah *look like*?

May you, and your children, and your children’s children, know et-yeshuat Adonai.

The Rabbi’s son

Meditation for Today’s Stud

Psalm 78:9-14

*The children of Efrayim, being armed and carrying bows,
turned back in the day of battle.*

*They didn't **keep** [sh'mar – i.e. treasure, cherish, cling to affectionately, and guard] God's covenant,
for they refused to walk in his Torah.*

They forgot his doings - His wondrous works that he had shown them.

He did marvelous things in the sight of their fathers,

In the land of Mitzrayim, in the field of Tzo`an.

He split the sea, and caused them to pass through;

He made the waters stand as a heap.

In the daytime he also led them with a cloud,

and all night with a light of fire.