



January 31, 2026

Beshalach — Shabbat Shira

13 Shevat, 5786

The Name's the Same

How is it possible that, after 210 years of enslavement in an alien environment, the Jews left Egypt as Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, and not as "Rameses" or "Potiphar"? The secret lies in the way they first entered Egypt: "These are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt... Reuben, Simeon, Levi, etc."

When Jews enter Egypt, a land whose way of life and general outlook is the very opposite of their own, the first vital step is to ensure that the children do not forget who they are and who their parents were. They must always know and ever remember that they are the Children of Israel, Jewish children, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. They must cling to their Jewish names with pride; their daily conduct must immediately identify them as Jewish children, as a Reuben, a Simeon, a Levi, and a Judah.

Such pride can only be instilled by a deep-rooted Jewish education, which imbues children with the strength of character to remain a separate, unique, distinct people, despite the severest hardships of the Egyptian exile. Such education builds an inner strength and provides the assurance that we will leave Egypt with all our children intact, with our sons and daughters proud, intense, and wholesome Jews.

Eternal Torah proclaims an ever-relevant message for all ages and for all lands — a message of particular pertinence and importance in our day and in this land: The survival of the Jewish people, the unity of the Jewish home, and the guarantee that our children will remain proud and aware Jews, is completely dependent upon a thorough, Torah-true education without compromise and without dilution.

(by Rabbi Yitschak Meir Kagan from www.chabad.org)

Constant Miracles

And Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and HASHEM led the sea with the strong east wind all night, and He made the sea into dry land and the waters split. (Shemos 14:21)

The livelihood of a person is as difficult as the splitting of the sea. (Pesachim 118.)

The matching of someone with a mate is as difficult as the splitting of the sea. (Sota 2:)

There is a classic and obvious question here crying out for an answer? "Is anything too wondrous for HASHEM!?" It's a rhetorical question. Affirmatively stated, HASHEM can do anything! So, the question is about these two statements from the Talmud equating the difficulty of splitting the sea with earning livelihood and finding a marriage partner. Nothing is hard for HASHEM! There are many illuminating answers and approaches to this question. I would like to try two on for size.

People have often asked me, "Rabbi, do you really believe that HASHEM split the sea?" My answer is simple. "Yes!" However, the questioner needs an explanation that will first fit into his world view before stretching, challenging his assumptions and shattering his paradigm. What we call nature is really repeating miracles. If something happens one time, we call it miraculous. If it happens repeatedly and predictably, then we call it nature. If a baby was born on the edge of a tree, the world would be astonished. If it is done over and over again on trees across the fruited plain, it would be a nuisance. All that changed was the regularity of the event.

Some events happen once in history, like the splitting of the sea. It was not hard for HASHEM to do. HASHEM can do anything. Other things happen once in a lifetime, like finding a life mate. It is no less miraculous than the splitting of the sea, and even though it happens with so many people, it should not be less astonishing to us. There are some events that happen every day, like making a living. Even though it is going on all the time, we are being told that it is not less wondrous in its enormity and individualized generosity than the splitting of the sea.

What was the reaction of the Jewish People when they were entering into the Land of Israel, at the end of forty years in the desert, and after having lived during that entire time on Mana from Heaven, and then they saw trees with colorful fruits hanging from the branches?! Since it was new to them, they considered it astonishingly miraculous, and more so than the Mana which had become commonplace. For us, trees don't do it, but if Mana fell, we'd be amazed.

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