



Parashat Hukat



English version

THINKINGaboutME.org

CALM, CONFIDENT AND CONTENT

Why did the Jews say Shira in the desert only on the Well of Water, and not on the Mannah? Because about the Mannah, they made tasteless remarks, "And now our souls are dry, there is nothing..." (Bamidbar 11) G-d said, " I want neither your complaints nor your praise". That is why G-d did not give them permission to say Shira. But on the Well, G-d allowed them to say Shira, because it was dear to them... (Shemot Rabba 7)

How sad. G-d brought them 40 years of Mannah, and no matter how much they would want to say Shira for Manna, G-d was not interested. To say Shira is a privilege. You need permission. If you complain, G-d is not interested in your Shira. You blew it by looking at the negative and complaining.

Saying Shira is not something we should take lightly. Shira is what keeps every element of the world in existence. It is the powerhouse of every creature. When Yehoshua stopped the sun from setting , he said, שְׁמַשׁ בָּגְבֻעַן זֹם, Sun in Givon, silence! (Yehoshua 10) Why 'silence'? Why not 'stop'? Yehoshua commanded the sun to stop saying Shira. Without saying Shira, the sun is powerless, so it froze in its tracks (Chomat Anach (Chida) Tehillim 19).When you feel powerless, when you are not being you, it is because you are not singing Shirah. Shirah is your battery. יִשְׂרָאֵל לְפָנֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא יוֹתֵר מַמְלָאֵכִי הַשְׁرָתָה, שִׁירָאֵל אָוּמָרִים שִׁירָה - בְּכָל שָׁעה (Hullin 91b)

A person's prayer is not heard unless it is in the Shul, as it says לְשִׁמְעָן אֱלֹהִים פְּלִילָה, to hear the praise, and the prayer. Our Rabbis learn from this passuk, בַּمִּקְומָם רָנוּ שָׁם תְּפִילָה, in the place of praise, that is where there should be prayer. Rashi explains that the Shul is special, for that is where the minyan says songs and praises, in a singing, sweet and calm voice (Berachot 6a). The power of prayer is strongest when it is associated with singing G-d's praises.

Why don't we say Shira, why don't we feel like we are singing to G-d His praises when we are in shul? What is stopping our hearts from singing?

Everything that you need to know in life, you were taught in kindergarten. To be a part of a group. To make sure you share your fun with others. To ask yourself, always, what you want to be when you grow up, no matter how old you are. To sing the song when relationships have gone sour, *Let's be friends. Make amends. Now's the time to say I'm sorry.* And most importantly, to learn how to say thank you, even if things did not work out the way you expected. The simplest truisms in life are the most important ones, and, unfortunately, the most forgettable ones. The truths we were taught then keep coming back to us, to remind us what we keep forgetting. Like the lesson of Rick Hanson.

There is a recent study by UC Berkeley-based clinical psychologist Rick Hanson that will help



you to “Reprogram your brain to be calm, content, and confident in 10 seconds”. It explains why so many people are miserable and how to experience more joy. Here it is, in a Torah-based version.

People have a tendency to pay attention to the negative rather than the positive. This is a response of the Nefesh, the animal-survival part of your soul that is hard wired to a “fight or flight” survival response. *Survival depends upon immediately identifying and quickly reacting to life threats.* According to Hanson, “*there is a negativity bias that makes like Velcro for bad experiences, but like Teflon for good ones.*” Therefore, bad experiences tend to stick with us (because they seem IMPORTANT), while good experiences tend to be quickly forgotten. Over time, we tend to accumulate a long laundry list of easily-recalled bad experiences, which seem vivid and significant, while we tend to forget good experiences.

Hanson cites studies that good relationships require at least a 5-to-1 ratio of positive interactions to negative ones. *In other words, you'll probably dislike your boss if he doesn't praise you at least five times more than he criticizes you. Unfortunately, it's the bad experience that sticks.* The Nefesh is busy accumulating negative thoughts, experiences, and worries and sticking big, red, “THIS IS IMPORTANT!!!” flags on them.

Fortunately, you can tap into your Neshama and reprogram yourself to be happy, simply by taking 10 to 30 seconds to focus on how happy you feel when you're experiencing a small pleasure. You instruct your brain to stick a “THIS IS IMPORTANT!!!” flag on the little things that make you happy. Over time, your brain becomes acclimatized to being happy. *The happiest people are those who seem to be able to enjoy whatever is going on at the time, not those who have*

encountered the fewest difficulties in life. Without really knowing what they were doing, those people who seem "naturally happy" have actually been programming their brains to be that way.

If a person does not see the good in the bad, or if he does not trust G-d that there is a good reason for the bad in the good, then G-d does not want his Shira. Because Shira is recognizing how it was, is and will be all good. That G-d is always there in your life, opposite you. *Anyone who says Shira in This World, will merit to say Shira in the Next World, as it says,* עֹז יְהוָה פָּלָה אֲשֶׁרִי יוֹשֵׁב בַּיּוֹתֶר. *Lucky are those who sit in Your House; they will continue to praise You, for eternity (Sanhedrin 91b).* This is the connection of the next passuk we say: אֲשֶׁרִי הָעָם שָׁכַנָּה לוּ אֲשֶׁרִי הָעָם שִׁיקָּנָה אֶלְהָיו. *Fortunate is the nation for whom this is so, lucky is the nation that YHVH is His G-d(Elokim).* The only way you can say Shira is if you can see that G-d’s mercy (YHVH) stands behind all the difficulties in life (Elokim).

In life, we have pain, and we have pleasure. There is no such thing as pain without pleasure. And there is no such thing as pleasure without pain. G-d gives pain and suffering only so that we can see through it to its purpose, and actually love it. חביבין יסורי (Berachot 5b). Shirah is not about thanking G-d for giving you a good life, as much as it is about being thankful to G-d that He used you as a vessel to bring awareness of His G-dliness into the world, that He is running the world at every moment, and He can change reality at any moment (Beit Halevi Beshalach; R Tzadok Sichot Malachei Hasharet 2).

We are here for a purpose, ה' לחתungan על ה'. *To enjoy and appreciate the goodness that G-d gives us and to recognize that it is He who is giving us what we have. שפכי כמים לבך נכח פni ה' Pour out your heart like water, opposite the Face of G-d.* You can pour



your heart like water, out of thankfulness and gratitude, only if G-d is *opposite* you. That is the only way there is meaning in pain and suffering. Only if you are conscious of the fact that G-d is right there in front of you, always, can you praise G-d, because only then is it possible for pain to have a rhyme and reason.

ALLOWING G-D TO DO HIS THING

לעשרה נפלאות גדולות לבדו כי לעולם חסדו To the One Who does great wonders alone, for His kindness is everlasting. (Tehillim 136) The Zohar asks, Why does it say that G-d does His miracles alone? Of course He does everything alone!

The answer is that G-d does miracles that we are not even aware of. (Midrash Tehillim 36) The Zohar explains... Imagine a snake, under someone's bed, waiting for the person to get up, so that he can bite him and inject venom into his veins. The man gets up and puts his foot down, directly on the head of the snake, not having the slightest idea that he has just killed the snake that wanted to kill him. One of G-d's Ways, is that He performs miracles that only He knows about for us. (Zohar 3 Balak page 200b)

This is something we see in our Parasha. The Emorai set up a trap at the Arnon Valley. They knew the Jews would be passing by. The two sides of the valley were about seven miles apart. On one side, there were protruding boulders; opposite them, there were caves. The Emori waited in ambush in the caves, prepared for attack: G-d brought the two sides of the valley together, the protruding rocks fitting perfectly into the caves. Legions of Emorai warriors were crushed as the two sides came together. No one knew about this. – *לעשרה נפלאות גדולות לבדו* – G-d sometimes does His thing, when no one has any clue as to the great miracle that has been performed.

I thought about this for a while. I told it to my wife, when I went to visit her in the hospital after her

This is the main goal in this world, to become a **נכח** Jew, a **ה' לנגידו תמיד פני** Jew. (End of Alei Shur 2) To be aware that G-d is right here in front of us, at all times, waiting for us to sing.

(1289)

having given birth. She liked it, and then told me a Dvar Torah she heard from her Rebbetzin about child birth. The pain of child birth is one of the greatest pains humans go through. The Rebbetzin explained that the pain of childbirth is so intense - the feeling is that the body is unable to contain such complete loss of control. Why do women need to go through this? It is to rectify the sin of Chava, the sin of the Forbidden Fruit. Chava wanted the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, so that she could be G-d-like. Being G-d-like means being in control. In total control. The pain a woman goes through at childbirth is a pain that makes a woman feel, "G-d! I can't do this!! This is too painful for me!! Please! Help me!" – I am totally out of control- and You are totally in control! - and then the baby is born.

I realized that there could be another explanation of the word **לבדו** here. That for G-d to bring about your Geulah, He sometimes waits for you to realize that He does not need you to try so hard - to stress, to lose yourself. Sometimes, for G-d to do His thing, He waits for you to stop doing YOUR thing... so that you can realize that He is doing it alone.

If only men would have the same intensity of insight and understanding of their curse of **בזעה אפיק תאכל לחם**, by the sweat of your brow you will eat bread - their need to work hard for their parnassah - as the understanding that women have, in childbirth! Allow me to explain.

One of the best books on marketing is a book called *Swimming with the Sharks... without getting eaten alive*. It is a great book, and it really gives you witty business advice. Just the name of the book represents the business world. If you want to be in business, you need to realize that business is war. Because any profitable area in business has competition, and you are always in some sort of war with your competitors over the customers. Your competition stays up at night, praying, wishing, dreaming how he can put you out of business. Going out to work is sometimes necessary, if you can't stay in learning; but it is what it is. It's war. It's swimming with sharks.

R' Dessler gives a vivid description of this: He once saw a pack of wolves fighting over a dead animal - fresh flesh. They were all biting and clawing one another, inflicting bleeding wounds on each other...until finally, one wolf came out of the skirmish with the prize: the piece of meat. The victor is wounded, bleeding - but, still, he has won. Rabbi Dessler recognized the parallel to the business world: the wounded winner takes the big prize, the business that has wiped out all competition. But, he is left without gratifying relationships, left with failing health and continuous worry as to how to keep hold of his gains, forever. The competitors are left to lick their wounds. This is the way of the world.

But the Torah's way of making Parnassah, of being in business with competition, is first of all asking yourself the question: Do I REALLY believe that the amount of money I am supposed to have this year was decided on Rosh Hashana? Do I really believe that all G-d wants from me is to work, with the smartest plan I can come up with, and work reasonable hours, and then G-d can do the rest for me? When it comes to business, why can't *Man* realize, *לעשרה נפלאות גדולות לבדו* that G-d sometimes waits for you to stop trying so hard... as if He needs your help? Sometimes G-d is waiting for you to let Him do His thing! Alone!

I got to be close with a very successful business man. He is an observant Jew. I told him about some excellent books on business that I read, like the **Twenty-one Secrets of the Self-Made Millionaire**. He said to me, Yosef! There is no one secret to becoming a millionaire! Of course, the things you told me from the book are all true; but I have friends who are smarter than me, worked harder than me, had more capital than me and never made any money! Yosef, to become rich, you need Mazal!! I told him, yeah, Mazal is an acronym. It stands for Makom – to be in the right place. Zman – at the right time. Limud – with the right amount of experience, or Lashon – knowing the right thing to say. He said, Yosef, call it whatever you want. If G-d wants you to make the money, He does not need you to help Him! (1089)

Exciting news...

I am starting a summer podcasts series for women. These podcasts will be similar to the Women's Chabura classes but in an extremely condensed version. I will present the problem at hand, the Torah Wisdom, and the "Selfie Steps", the concrete tools that will allow you to transform your lives. Sign up via email and you will receive the link to download these podcasts, so that you can listen at your own leisure. I hope these 15 minute bursts of Torah Growth will help you reach your personal summer goals.

 **052-7679186**  **RABBIYOSEFFARHI@GMAIL.COM**  **YOSEFFARHI.COM**

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A'H



CHECK OUT NEW WEBSITE YOSEFFARHI.COM FOR MORE MOTIVATIONAL CONTENT