



# טעמו וראו

A taste of the  
Rebbe's teachings

## Parshat Beshalach



### The Emphasis on Women

The Torah contains nine 'songs.' The Song of Moses, the Song of David, the Song of Miriam, and so on. Jewish tradition seems to cherish the songs of the women. Why so?

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# Part 1 - The Haftorah History

## Source 1

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer 12:1



Moses, our teacher, ordained that the Jews should read the Torah publicly on Shabbat and on Monday and Thursday mornings, so the [people] would never have three days pass without hearing the Torah.

## Source 2

Talmud, Bava Kama 82a  
(Steinzaltz translation & commentary)



**It was taught:** “And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; **and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.**” Those who interpret verses metaphorically said that **water** here is referring to **the Torah, as it is stated** in Isaiah metaphorically, concerning those who desire wisdom: “**Everyone who thirsts, come for water.**”

The verse means that **since** the Jews **traveled for three days without** hearing any Torah they **became weary**, and therefore the **prophets among them arose and instituted for them that they should read** from the Torah each Shabbat, and **pause on Sunday, and read again on Monday, and pause on Tuesday and Wednesday, and read again on Thursday, and pause on Shabbat eve, so they would not tarry three days without** hearing the Torah.

הלכות תפילה וברכת כהנים, פרק י"ב הלכה א'.

מִלְשָׁה רַבָּנוּ תִקַּן לָהֶם לִישְׂרָאֵל  
שְׂיִהוּ קוֹרֵין בְּתוֹרָה בְּרַבִּים בְּשַׁבָּת  
וּבְשֵׁנִי וּבַחֲמִישִׁי בְּשַׁחֲרִית כְּדֵי  
שְׁלֹא יִשְׁהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים בְּלֹא  
שְׂמִיעַת תּוֹרָה.

תלמוד בבלי, מסכת בבא

קמא, דף כ"ב עמוד א' (עם ביאור שטיינזלץ)

דתניא [שכן שנינו בברייתא:]  
על הפסוק "זילכו שלשת ימים  
במדבר ולא מצאו מים, דורשי  
רשומות שדרשו ברמז לשון  
המקרא אמרו: אין מים אלא  
תורה, שנאמר: "הוי כל צמא  
לכו למים, כיון שהלכו שלשת  
ימים בלא תורה נלאו (התעייפו)  
והתחילו להתאונן כמפורש שם,  
עמדו נביאים שביניהם שהיו  
באותו דור ותיקנו להם  
שיהו קורין בתורה בשבת,  
ומפסיקין ואין קוראים  
בתורה באחד בשבת,  
וקורין בתורה ביום שני,  
ומפסיקין בימים שלישי  
ורביעי, וקורין בחמישי,  
ומפסיקין ערב שבת, כדי שלא  
ילינו שלשה ימים רצופים בלא  
תורה.

## Source 3

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Prayer 13:1



The common custom throughout all Israel is to complete the the Torah in one year. The cycle begins on the Shabbat after the Sukkot festival, reading “Bereshit.” On the following Shabbat, we read “Eleh toldot [noach]”; on the third, “Vayomer Hashem el Avram [lech lecha]”. We continue reading according to this order until the Torah is completed during the Sukkot festival. There are those who finish the Torah reading in a three-year cycle. However, this is not a widely accepted custom.

משנה תורה, הלכות תפילה וברכת כהנים, פרק י"ג הלכה א'.

המנהג הפשוט בכל ישראל  
שממשלימין את התורה בשנה  
אחת. מתחילין בשבת שאחר חג  
הסוכות וקורין בסדר “בראשית”.  
בשניה “אלה תולדות”. בשלישית  
“ויאמר יי' אל אברם”. וקוראין  
והולכין על הסדר הזה עד  
שגמרין את התורה בחג הסוכות.  
ויש מי שמשלים את התורה  
בשלוש שנים ואינו מנהג פשוט:

## Source 4

Tosfot Yom Tov, Tractate Megillah 3:4



The reason we read the Haftorah is explained in Tishbi, root 289: He found a source which stated that the evil Antiochus, the Syrian-Greek king, decreed that the Torah not be read in public. What did the Jews do? They read a segment of the prophets that was similar to the Torah portion of that Shabbat. In our day, although the decree has been rescinded, the custom has been preserved.

תוספות יום טוב, מסכת מגילה, פרק ג' משנה ד'.

טעמא דהפטרות, כתוב בספר  
תשבי שרש פטר, שמצא כתוב  
שאנטיוכס הרשע מלך יון גזר  
על ישראל שלא יקראו בתורה  
ברבים. מה עשו ישראל? לקחו  
פרשה אחת מנביאים שענינה  
דומה לענין מה שכתוב בפרשה  
של שבת ההיא. ועתה אף שבטלה  
הגזירה, המנהג הזה אינו בטל.

# Part 2 - The Songs of the Women

## Source 5

Exodus 15:1, 20-21



Moses and the Israelites then sang this song to G-d. It went: I will sing to G-d for His great victory, horse and rider He threw into the sea...

Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the drum in her hand and all the women followed her with drums and dancing. Miriam led them in the response, "Sing to G-d for His great victory, horse and rider He threw in the sea."

שמות ט"ו.

א אֲזַי שִׁיר־מִשָּׁה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לַיהוָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
לֵאמֹר אֲשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי־גָאָה גָּאָה  
סוּס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם:...

כ וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אַחֹת  
אַהֲרֹן אֶת־הַתֶּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתִּצְאֶן כָּל־  
הַנְּשִׂימ אַחֲרֶיהָ בַּתְּפִים וּבְמַחְלֹת:  
כא וַתַּעַן לָהֶם מִרְיָם שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה  
כִּי־גָאָה גָּאָה סוּס וּרְכָבוֹ רָמָה בַיָּם:

## Source 6

Judges 5:1-2



Deborah sang—as well as Barak son of Abinoam—on that day, saying: When vengeance are inflicted upon Israel and the people dedicates itself [to G-d], bless the L-rd...

ספר שופטים פרק ה'.

א וַתִּשֶׁר דְּבוֹרָה וּבָרַק בֶּן־אֲבִינוֹעַם  
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר: ב בְּפָרַע פְּרָעוֹת  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַתְּנַדֵּב עִם בְּרַכּוֹ יְהוָה:

## Source 7

Samuel II 22:1



David spoke to G-d the words of this song, on the day G-d delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

ספר שמואל ב', פרק כ"ב.

א וַיִּנְדְּבֵר דָּוִד לַיהוָה אֶת־דְּבָרָי  
הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת בַּיּוֹם הַצֵּיל יְהוָה  
אֶתּוֹ מִכַּף כָּל־אֹיְבָיו וּמִכַּף שָׂאוּל:

## The Rebbe, Part 1

### Why the Women's Song?

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Twenty years ago, on the last day of Passover in 1938, my father-in-law the Rebbe spoke about this week's Haftorah.

He related that his great-grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, shared that his own grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, had once asked: Why is the Song of Deborah the Prophetess the chosen Haftorah for this week, instead of the Song of David, which is, in fact, the Haftorah of the seventh day of Passover [when the exact same Torah portion is read].

This week's Parsha contains a song of men and women, respectively. First Moses and all the men sang praise to G-d, and then Miriam and the women took out musical instruments and sang praise to G-d as well. So, why was the song of a woman, the Song of Deborah, chosen to be the Haftorah?

The Alter Rebbe proceeded to share a long story (which is published in the above-mentioned talk). He concluded, that although both the men and women sang praise to G-d when they left Egypt and crossed the sea, the women did so with music and dancing. They sang their praise in a much more joyous way. Therefore, the Song of Deborah—a woman—was chosen for the Haftorah.

### Why Were they More Joyous?

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But now, a new question arises: Why, indeed, weren't the men as joyous as the women?

The answer is quite simple: When we receive something without investing effort, it is impossible to experience the same level of joy and gratification as an individual who worked long and hard to attain the same exact thing. Our Sages say, "Reward comes according to the anguish." The joy and satisfaction will always reflect the effort and toil that had been invested.

When the Israelites left Egypt and sang praise to G-d for their salvation, the men could not have possibly felt the same sense of joy that Miriam and the women felt at that moment.

The worst of the Egyptian persecution began during Miriam's childhood. The greatest atrocity—was the drowning the newborn boys in the Nile. All of their suffering—slaving away in inhuman conditions—paled in comparison to the terrible decree of the killing of the newborns. Our sages also related that this came after a different atrocity occurred: Pharaoh would bathe in the blood of Jewish children.

This is experienced by mothers more than fathers. Therefore, when they finally escaped Pharaoh and his evil decrees, the joy of the women was far greater.

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## Source 8

Exodus 1:22



Pharaoh gave orders to his people: “Every boy who is born must be cast into the Nile, but every girl should be allowed to live.”

שמות פרק א' פסוק כ"ב.

וַיֵּצֵא פַרְעֹה לְכָל-עַמּוֹ לֵאמֹר כָּל-  
הַבֵּן הַיְלֹוֹד הַיְאֲרָה תִשְׁלִיכֶהוּ וְכָל-  
הַבֵּת תְּחִיּוֹן:

## Source 9

Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 1:34



**During those many days:** They are called “many,” because they were days of suffering... **The king of Egypt died:** He was inflicted with leprosy, and a leper is considered dead... **The Israelites were groaning:** Why were they groaning? Because the Egyptian wise men told Pharaoh that his only cure was to slaughter one hundred and fifty Israelite infants each morning and evening and bathe in their blood. When the Israelites heard this terrible decree, they began to groan and grieve.

שמו"ר פ"א, ל"ד.

וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הֵהֵם, יָמִים  
שֶׁל צַעַר הָיוּ, לְפִיכֵן קִוְּיָא אוֹתָן  
רַבִּים... וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם,  
שֶׁנֶּצְטַרַע וְהִמְצַרַע חָשׁוּב כְּמָת,  
...וַיִּאָּנְחוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, לָמָּה  
נִתְאַנְחוּ, לָפִי שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲרָטְמֵי  
מִצְרַיִם אִין לָךְ רְפוּאָה אִם לֹא  
נִשְׁחַט מִקִּטְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאָה  
וַחֲמִשִּׁים בְּעֶרְבַּ וּמֵאָה וַחֲמִשִּׁים  
בְּבֹקֶר, וַרְחֵץ בְּדַמֵּיהֶם שְׁתִּי  
פְעָמִים בַּיּוֹם כִּיּוֹן שֶׁשְׁמְעוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
גְּזֵרָה קָשָׁה, הִתְחִילוּ מִתְאַנְּחִים  
וְקוֹנְנִים.

# Part 3 - Which Song Deserves a Title?

## The Rebbe, Part 2

### Why is this Shabbat Called 'Shirah'?

This Shabbat is called "Shabbat Shira," the Shabbat of Song, because our Torah portion speaks of a song—the Song of Moses and the People of Israel. In addition, the Haftorah is also a song—the Song of Deborah.

However, there are other Torah portions with songs. Why are those weeks not called Shabbat Shira?

For example: Parshat Chukat contains a short song by the People of Israel, "Rise, O well, respond to this song..." as explained in Rashi's commentary. However, this is not such a strong question. After all, the song is only a short segment of the Torah portion which contains a wealth of topics.

The question is from Parshat Haazinu, which contains a song as well. This song, in fact, covers more of the Torah portion than the Song of Moses in this week's portion.

Regarding the Haftorah as well: On the week of Parshat Haazinu, we read the Song of David. Seemingly, the name "Shabbat Shira" should be given to Parshat Haazinu and perhaps to this week's portion as an addition. But for some reason, this week is called Shabbat Shira and the other is not.

### The Women's Song is More Significant

One explanation: The [previous] Rebbe gave a well-known talk about this week's Haftorah. He noted that it was not the song of a man, like the Song of David in the Haftorah of Haazinu, rather, it was the song of a woman, the Song of Deborah (in commemoration of the Song of Miriam and all the women in the Parsha) [for the reasons he explained there].

This is associated with the teaching of our sages: "In the merit of righteous women of that generation, Israel was redeemed from Egypt." The Haftorah, which is associated with a concept of exile, therefore focuses on the key to our redemption: the influence

of Jewish women. And, as the Midrash says, the future redemption will be in the merit of Jewish women as well.

Therefore, we call this week Shabbat Shira—specifically in the week where we read a woman’s song, both in the Parsha—the Song of Miriam, and also in the Haftarah—the Song of Deborah.

## Women Will Bring the Redemption

Torah is all about action. When we study in the Torah about the importance of the Song of Miriam and the Song of Deborah, it is a message that we should once again highlight the merit and the responsibility which is placed on “the righteous women of the generation.” And when they show true leadership, all other women and girls follow along just as they followed Miriam, and they will all sing together, “Sing to G-d for His great victory.”

And their own daily conduct, and the conduct of their households as well, will reflect the will of G-d. As in the words of the song, “*ki ga’o ga’ah*, G-d is exalted beyond all exalted”—there is no reason to fear anything, because G-d transcends all obstacles.

And this will bring the redemption from the Torah—into reality.

Motzaei Shabbat, 11 Shevat, 1971  
Toras Menachem vol. 63 pg. 173

