

# INSIGHTS

## Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated *iL'zecher nishmas Tovia ben Yitzchak z"l*.  
Sponsored by Howard Glowinsky. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS BESHALACH

## The Greatest Type of Mitzvah

*And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him; for he (Yosef) had solemnly sworn the Jewish people; God will surely remember you; and you shall carry up my bones from here with you (13:19).*

The Talmud (*Sotah* 13a) uses this verse to laud Moshe; "see how precious *mitzvos* were to Moshe, even as the Jewish people were busying themselves with looting the Egyptians he was busying himself with performing a *mitzvah* as the verse says; 'The wise heart will collect a *mitzvah*'" (*Mishlei* 10:8).

This can be difficult to understand; while it is true that the Jewish people were focused on getting what they could from the Egyptians, they too were performing a *mitzvah*. In fact, Hashem **pleaded** with them to take items from the Egyptians so that Avraham Avinu wouldn't complain that Hashem didn't fulfill his promise of "and after they will leave with great wealth" (see Rashi 11:2). Since Bnei Yisroel were also fulfilling a *mitzvah* why was Moshe singled out for his wisdom in collecting *mitzvos*?

In general, people are focused on their individual needs like food and shelter etc. A person on a more elevated level will perhaps focus on his spiritual needs as well. While it is true that the Jewish people were following the will of Hashem that they should leave Egypt with great wealth, it was still focused on a personal need — that of

accumulating wealth. Moshe, on the other hand, was focused on fulfilling a community need because Yosef had made the Jewish people swear that they would take out his remains when they left Egypt.

Most of us who get involved in community affairs like building a *mikvah* or volunteering at a special needs school or serving on a *shul* board do so because we have a vested interest. In other words, we get involved because our family needs a nicer *mikvah*, or we want to better organize our *shul*, or because our child is in the school.

While it is a big *mitzvah* to get involved in community affairs, it is seldom without some self interest. In fact, when our children leave the school or our family no longer uses the *mikvah* we usually leave those board and leadership positions. The reason Moshe is given special recognition is because he forsook all the personal *mitzvos*. Instead, he was busying himself with a community obligation in which he had no self interest; that of fulfilling the promise made to Yosef long ago.

**Most of us who get involved in community affairs [...] do so because we have a vested interest.**



## Question of the Week

*Then Hashem said to Moshe, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will follow in my Torah, or not (16:4).*

Rashi (ad loc) comments that the two laws that were being used to test the Jewish people to see if they would follow the Torah were 1) whether they would leave *manna* overnight (which had been prohibited) and 2) whether they would go out to collect *manna* on Shabbos in violation of Shabbos. What about these two *mitzvos* makes them so essential that they are to be used as a litmus test for whether Bnei Yisroel will be able to follow the Torah?

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# Understanding the Value of Enough is Enough

*So Moshe drove Bnei Yisroel from the Red Sea... (15:22)*

Rashi (ad loc) quoting the *Midrash Tanchuma* comments that Moshe had to literally force the Jewish people away from the bank of the Red Sea. The reason for this was because the Egyptians had decorated their horses with much gold, silver, and precious stones. These valuable items were miraculously being brought up from the water's depths onto the banks for the benefit of the Jewish people to collect. In fact, our Rabbis teach that they found more wealth there on the banks than what they were able to "liberate" from the Egyptians as they were leaving Egypt.

Gold, silver, and precious stones, when thrown into the Red Sea, will naturally sink to the bottom and be lost forever. Clearly, Hashem created this miraculous

event to make the Jewish people even richer than they already were after leaving with all the valuables that the Egyptians had given them. Yet if Moshe had to force the people to leave because they were collecting "too much," why would He miraculously bring up so much booty from the depths? Hashem should have simply brought up the proper amount for the people to collect and when there was no more they would have left voluntarily without needing to be forced!

Obviously Hashem wanted the Jewish people to have wealth, but how does one really know when he is wealthy? In other words, at what point does a person feel that he has enough and is sufficiently wealthy? Unfortunately,

most of us keep collecting wealth for the sake of having more. Ultimately, that means that what we have is never enough and therefore we never feel as if we achieve the status of "wealthy."

Hashem is teaching the litmus test for being rich and a lesson for all of us to strive to achieve. When you can walk away from money laying right in front of you and don't make the effort to pick it up, at that point you are truly rich. Hashem's goal for the Jewish people was **real** wealth. The only way to measure that was by having piles of gold and silver laying on the ground in front of them and being able to turn and walk away. At that point they would know they were truly wealthy.

## Did You Know...

There are many sections in *Tanach* referred to as a *shir*, but not all are written in a unique and identifiable pattern as *Az Yashir*. The ones listed below are written in a distinctive pattern:

- 1) *Az Yashir*
- 2) *Shiras Ha'azinu*
- 3) Defeated kings of Canaan (*Yehoshua* 12)
- 4) *Shiras Devorah* (*Shoftim* 5)
- 5) *Shiras Dovid* (*Shmuel Beis* 22)
- 6) *Lakol Zman V'ais* (*Koheles* 3)
- 7) *Aseres B'nei Haman* (*Esther* 9)

The following ones are also called a *shir* but not written in a distinctive style:

- 1) *Mizmor Shir L'yom Hashabbos* (*Tehillim* 92 and composed by Adam Harishon)
- 2) *Shiras Habe'er* (*Bamidbar* 21)
- 3) *Shiras Hagivon* (*Yehoshua* 10)
- 4) *Shiras Chana* (*Shmuel Aleph* 2)
- 5) *Shir Hashirim*

It is interesting to note that *Az Yashir* is written in a format the Talmud (*Megilla* 16b) refers to as "a brick over a half brick," which may also allude to the fact that the ocean divided into walls. However, *Ha'azinu* is written as two pillars which may allude to the fact that Hashem was calling the earth and the heaven to stand as two witnesses to the covenant of *Ha'azinu*.



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