Summary

Pharaoh finally sends the Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. Hashem leads the Jewish People towards Eretz Yisrael with pillars of clouds and fire on a circuitous route which avoids the Plishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves and chases the Jews with his army. The Bnei Yisrael are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but Hashem protects them. Moshe raises his staff, and Hashem splits the sea, enabling the Bnei Yisrael to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by Hashem, commands his army to pursue the Bnei Yisrael, whereupon the waters crash down upon the Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in song thanking Hashem. After traveling for three days only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people start to complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water for them, and in Marah they receive certain mitzvos. The people complain to Moshe and Aaron that they had better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quails so they can have meat and provides the 'Manna' for them. It is a miraculous bread that falls from the heavens every day except on Shabbos. However, on Friday a double portion descends to supply the Sabbath needs. Nobody is able to obtain more than his daily portion, but Manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbos. Some of the Manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations. After the Jews complain again about the lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Amalek then attacks the Jews. Joshua leads the battle while Moshe prays for their welfare.

Commentaries

Imagine

“And they had faith in Hashem and in Moshe His servant…” (14:31)

To conceive and to imagine. We know that we cannot picture the infinite. We understand that our brain, a finite machine, can not imagine infinity. But if we cannot imagine the infinite, maybe we could, at least, conceive of it. Maybe we could probe the borders of the finite with the power of conceptualization, transcending the limit of synapses and neurons, blood and tissue that lie within our heads...

By the time they left Egypt, the Bnei Yisrael had experienced the most earth-shaking miracles in the history of the world. They had witnessed the entire natural order turned on its head. Water becoming blood. Plagues of frogs, lice, dangerous animals, an epidemic, boils, hail, locusts. Darkness engulfing their enemies. And finally the death of all of Egypt’s first-born. Could it be that only now, with the splitting of the sea and the total destruction of the Egyptian army - only now - “they had faith in Hashem”? Didn’t they have faith in Hashem until now?

Obviously, the experience at the parting of the sea elevated Yisrael to some new level of faith in Hashem. What was this new dimension of faith that they reached after crossing the sea?

When Yisrael saw the power of Hashem revealed in Egypt, they thought they had seen the extent of Hashem’s dominion. They thought that even if they could not imagine the infinite power of the Creator, then, at least, they could conceive of it. However, when they saw the even greater miracles at the sea, they realized that not only was Hashem’s power far greater than they had previously conceived, but even what they were witnessing now was not the total extent of Hashem’s dominion. It was this realization which lead to a new level of faith in Hashem, a faith unlimited by what they could imagine, or even what they could conceive...

(Based on the Sfas Emes)
PARSHA THIS WEEK CONTAINS A SONG OF PRAISE TO HASHEM, SO TOO HIS WEEK’S SHABBOS HAS A SPECIAL NAME - SHABBOS SHIRA.

SING, MY SOUL!

“Give praise and song to the G-d Who created the Sabbath.”

Singing zemiros at the Sabbath meals has always been the traditional Jewish way of combining praise and song as an expression of our appreciation of the Sabbath, which Hashem created for the entire world but singed us out as the recipients of the special gift of Sabbath observance and elevation.

The striking contrast between a Jew’s behavior at his festive meal and that of less disciplined nations is pointed out in the description of King Achashveirush’s banquet which Megillas Esther records took place on “the seventh day when the king’s heart was happy with wine.” The Talmud (Megilla 12b) points out that this feast was on the Sabbath when “Jews eat and drink and begin to say words of Torah and sing songs of praise” in contrast to the Persians and Medes who immediately began to discuss lewd matters.

When the Jew’s body is filled with Sabbath food his soul begins to sing.

Haftorah: Shoftim 4:4-5:31

She decided that she would supply wicks for the Menorah in the Mishkan, and her husband agreed to deliver them for her. Devora lovingly made thick wicks of the finest quality, symbolizing her mission to illuminate the Jewish People with the light of Torah. She requested of her husband Barak that he alone should deliver the wicks, and consequently, he became a regular visitor to the Mishkan at Shilo. As Devora had hoped and planned, in Shilo he imbibed the atmosphere of learning and intense devotion to the service of Hashem, with the result that he studied the Torah with such diligence that he grew and grew in spiritual stature. This was all thanks to his wife “The wise amongst the women (who) builds up her household.” (Mishlei 14:1).