

### A Wonderful Revelation from Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk "And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea" It Is Possible to See Miracles Like Krias Yam Suf Even when Walking on Dry Land

We are approaching **Shabbas Shirah**. On this auspicious Shabbas Kodesh, we read parshas Beshalach, which contains Shiras HaYam—the song sung by Moshe and Bnei Yisrael memorializing the miraculous splitting of the sea—Krias Yam Suf. We find that the text describes this miracle in two distinct stages. Here is the text describing the first stage (Shemos 14, 21): יויט משה את ידו על הים ויולך ה' את הים ברוח קדים עזה כל הלילה וישם את הים לחרבה ויבקעו המים. ויבואו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה והמים להם ."חומה מימינם ומשמאלם Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and Hashem moved the sea with a strong east wind throughout the entire night, and he turned the sea to damp land and the waters split. And Bnei Yisrael entered the sea on dry land; and the water formed a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Here is the text related to the second stage of the miracle. Moshe causes the waters of Yam Suf to return to their original state and drown the Egyptians (ibid. 23): "וירדפו מצרים ויבואו" אחריהם כל סוס פרעה רכבו ופרשיו אל תוך הים... ויאמר ה' אל משה נטה את ידך על הים וישובו המים על מצרים על רכבו ועל פרשיו, ויט משה את ידו על הים וישב הים לפנות בוקר לאיתנו... וישובו המים ויכסו את הרכב ואת הפרשים לכל חיל פרעה הבאים אחריהם בים לא נשאר בהם עד אחד. ובני ישראל מימינם ומשמאלם". Mitzrayim הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים והמים להם חומה מימינם ומשמאלם". pursued and came after them-every one of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen—into the midst of the sea . . . Hashem said to Moshe, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the waters will go back over Mitzrayim, over its chariots and over its horsemen." Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and toward morning the water went back to its power . . . The waters came back, and they covered the chariots and the horsemen of the entire army of Pharaoh, who were coming behind them in the sea-there remained not a one of them. And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea; the water formed a wall for them, on their right and on their left.

In phase one of the miracle, the Torah informs us: "And Bnei Yisrael entered the sea on dry land." So, why was it necessary to reiterate this fact in its description of phase two of the miracle: "And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea"? Additionally, in the first stage, it says: בתוך "הים ביבשה—mentioning the sea before the dry land. Whereas, in the second stage, it says: "ביבשה בתוך הים"—mentioning the dry land before the sea.

### There Were Those Who Only Entered the Sea after It Had Already Become Dry Land

Several of our great luminaries present a similar explanation. They include the Kli Yakar (Beshalach), the Kol Eliyahu and Ohel Yaakov (Nasso) citing the Gaon of Vilna, zy"a, and the Yismach Moshe, and the esteemed Chasam Sofer, zy"a, citing the Mateh Aharon. In short, they all explain that at the time of Krias Yam Suf, Yisrael was divided into two distinct factions. The first consisted of tzaddikim and people with unwavering emunah and faith such as Nachshon ben Aminaday and the entire Shevet Yehudah. As we learn in the Gemara (Sotah 37a), they did not hesitate to enter the sea. Once the waters were high enough to endanger their lives, they cried out to Hashem (Tehillim 69, 2): הושיעני אלקים כי באו מים עד נפש"—save me, O G-d, for the waters have reached the

**soul.** In the merit of their act of faith, the sea split for them and was transformed into dry land. In contrast, however, the second faction did not leap into the sea immediately; rather, they waited for the sea to split and become dry land; only then did they enter its midst; their faith and trust were lacking.

This enlightens us as to why the Torah repeats the fact that Bnei Yisrael walked through the sea on dry land. The earlier passuk depicts the situation encountered by the tzaddikim, who jumped into the sea without hesitation. Hence, it says: "היבואו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה"—when they entered, it was still an intact sea; only afterwards did it split, so that they could traverse it on dry land. The later passuk, on the other hand, depicts how those whose emunah in Hashem was on a lower level entered the sea. They waited until there was a path of dry land in front of them. Hence, the Torah reverses the order and states: "ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים"—it was already dry land when they entered the sea.

#### A Fantastic Insight from the Noam Elimelech

In this essay, we wish to present and enjoy the illuminating words of the renowned Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy"a, in the Noam Elimelech (Likutei Shoshanah). Here is how he interprets the second passuk: "And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea":

At Krias Yam Suf, Yisrael witnessed the wondrous feats of the Blessed One along with His greatness and exaltedness. There are tzaddikim who live constantly with this heightened level of devotion . . . They recognize His wondrous feats even on dry land—that they are endless and immeasurable concerning everything that exists and happens in this world. This is the message conveyed by the passuk: "And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea"—even on dry land, they walked with the same exalted attitude as they did in the sea. In other words, this passuk refers specifically to tzaddikim who recognize that even when they are on dry land, miraculous feats are being performed on their behalf.

Now, it gives me immense pleasure to introduce an incredible concept the Ramban teaches us in his commentary at the end of parshas Bo (Shemos 13, 16):

Through the great, overt miracles, a person recognizes the concealed miracles, which are the foundation of the entire Torah. For, a person has no portion in the Torah of Moshe Rabeinu until he believes that everything we do and experience, everything is a miracle; they are not due to nature or natural causes, whether they benefit the general public or an individual. If a person abides by the mitzvos, His reward will ensure his success. If, however, he violates them, His punishment will cause his extinction. Everything is decreed from above. In other words, the ultimate purpose of all the miracles and supernatural feats that HKB"H performed during Yetzias Mitzrayim was to teach us to recognize the daily miracles that He performs on our behalf disguised as natural phenomena.

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Now, if we combine the wonderful elucidation of the Noam Elimelech with the exalted insight of the Ramban, we can better appreciate why the Torah presents two different versions of how Yisrael traversed the sea. The first passuk relates to the fact that the people of Yisrael that exited Mitzrayim had sunk to the forty-ninth level of tumah. Hence, it was necessary to fortify their emunah in Hashem. To accomplish this, HKB"H performed the incredible feat of Krias Yam Suf, of which it says: "And Bnei Yisrael entered the sea on dry land; and the water formed a wall for them on their right and on their left."

In contrast, the second passuk relates to after the sea was returned to its full-strength and drowned Pharaoh, the Egyptian chariots, and their horsemen. As we learned from the Ramban, the purpose of the overt miracles is to instill in Jews the emunah in the daily, concealed miracles that surround us. Therefore, after the miraculous splitting of the sea and the return of the waters to their initial strength: "Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea"—even when Jews are walking on dry land, they recognize the miracles and wondrous feats performed on their behalf just like at Krias Yam Suf.

## HKB"H Prevents the Oceans from Inundating the World Every Day

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I will latch onto the coattails of the Noam Elimelech and add a bit of spice to his sacred remarks concerning the passuk: "ובני ישראל הלכו
"ובני ישראל הלכו —i.e., that tzaddikim recognize that miracles are being performed on their behalf similar to Krias Yam Suf even in their day-to-day lives on dry land. Let us refer to Yirmiyahu's rebuke of Yisrael (Yirmiyah 5, 22): "האותי לא תיראו נאם ה' אם מפני

לא תָּחִילוּ אֲשֶׁר שַׂמְתִּי חוֹל גְּבוּל לַיָּם חָק עוֹלֶם וְלֹא יַעַבְּרְנְהוּ וַיִּתְגָּעֲשׁוּ וְלֹא Will you not fear Me?—the word of Hashem—will you not tremble before Me? For I have set sand as boundary against the sea, as a permanent law that cannot be broken. Its waves rage forth but cannot succeed, they roar but cannot cross it. Rashi explains that the sea is not worried about being punished and does not expect to receive any reward; nevertheless, it fears G-d and does not trespass the boundaries that He has set for it.

We find a similar exposition in the Midrash Shochar Tov (Tehillim 2): This sea, its wave rises and intensifies as if it will flood the world; yet, when it reaches the seashore, it flattens out before the sand. This teaches us that the sea, due to its disdain for the inhabitants of the earth, who pursue their hearts' desires, wants to inundate the entire world with its waters. Yet, it is afraid to trespass the sandy boundaries that HKB"H has set for it. This is meant to teach mankind a vital lesson; he, too, should confine himself within the boundaries that the Creator has set for him; he should act in accordance with that which is prohibited and that which is permissible.

Let us embellish this notion based on what Rabeinu Chaim Vital, zy"a, writes in Sha'arei Kedushah (Part 1, Sha'ar 1) in the name of his mentor, the Arizal. A man's being is composed of four basic elements: fire, wind, water, and dust. All negative, human character traits—midos—are attributable to them. He describes in detail how each element is responsible for particular bad midos. Regarding the basic element of water, he writes: The desire for pleasure stems from the element of water. Water gives rise to all sorts of pleasure. It has two derivative branches: (1) the tendency to covet and steal another person's money, wife, and everything else he owns for the sake of his own pleasure and enjoyment and (2) jealousy of his fellow man's wealth and the like, which he would like to enjoy.

With this understanding, we can explain why the sea wants to cover the entire world with its waters. The sea witnesses how mankind transgresses the boundaries set for it by pursuing the negative traits stemming from the element of water; they seek to satisfy all that their hearts crave and lust for in Olam HaZeh. This incites the sea to follow suit and trespass the borders HKB"H set for it by inundating the entire world with its waters. This is precisely what transpired in the generation of the mabul. On account of the pervasive

Now, this enlightens us with regards to the wonderful interpretation of the Noam Elimelech of the passuk after the miracle of Krias Yam Suf: "בני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים". He said that this refers to tzaddikim who recognize the hand of Hashem in the miraculous feats that surround them daily on terra-firma; they are every bit as miraculous as Krias Yam Suf. They are perceptive enough to realize that the sea yearns to deluge the entire world with its waters; yet HKB"H, due to His infinite compassion and mercy, prevents it from trespassing the boundaries set for it. In other words, they acknowledge the wondrous feats that HKB"H performs on their behalf daily. Just as he turned the sea into dry land at Krias Yam Suf, He prevents the sea from submerging the dry land of the earth every single day.

# HKB"H Prevents the Sea from Deluging the Entire World in the Merit of Yisrael Who Are Compared to Fish since They Live in the Sea of Torah

I would like to propose a fascinating idea explaining why HKB"H prevents the sea from inundating the entire earth. Let us begin by referring to the berachah Yaakov Avinu bestowed upon Ephraim and Menasheh (Bereishis 48, 16): יוידגו לרוב "בקרב הארץ"—and may they flourish like fish within the land. Rashi comments: Like those fish that reproduce and multiply, and the evil eye does not affect them. This can be understood in light of the following elucidations in the "מאי דכתיב ותעשה אדם כדגי הים, למה נמשלו בני אדם :Gemara (A.Z. 3b) כדגי הים, לומר לך מה דגים שבים כיון שעולין ליבשה מיד מתים, אף בני אדם What is the meaning כיון שפורשין מדברי תורה ומן המצוות מיד מתים". of that which is written (Chabakuk 1, 14): "You have made man like the fish of the sea"? Why are human beings compared to the fish of the sea? To teach you that just as the fish of the sea die immediately if they go up onto dry land, so, too, do people who separate themselves from the words of Torah and from the mitzvos die immediately.

Elsewhere in the Gemara, we are taught (Kiddushin 30b): "יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום ומבקש המיתו, שנאמר צופה רשע לצדיק "ומבקש המיתו"—a man's yetzer overwhelms him daily and attempts to kill him, as it states (Tehillim 37, 32): "The wicked one watches for the tzaddik and seeks to kill him." Additionally, they teach (ibid.) that HKB"H announced to Yisrael: בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים" בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו"—My son, I created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand. Furthermore, we know that the Torah is compared to water (B.K. 17a): "אין מים אלא תורה שנאמר הוי כל צמא לכו למים"—there is no water other than Torah, as it says (Yeshayah 55, 1): "Ho! All that are thirsty, go to the water."

This explains very nicely the analogy of Yisrael to fish; their existence relies wholly on the waters of Torah. When they study it diligently, they are able to overcome the deadly, spiritual influence of the yetzer hara. Yet, when they abandon the waters of Torah, chas v'shalom, they perish spiritually under the influence of the yetzer hara. Now, Ephraim and Menashe represent the entirety of Yisrael. This is evident from Yaakov's berachah (Bereishis 48, 20): בך יברך ישראל לאמר "ישימך אלקים כאפרים וכמנשה.—by you shall Yisrael bless saying, "May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Menashe." Hence, he bestowed upon them the berachah above: "וידגו לרוב בקרב" "הארץ" —that all Jews should never forget their resemblance to fish; they can only exist and survive, if they live within the waters of the Torah.

In this manner, we can explain Rashi's comment above beautifully: Like those fish that reproduce and multiply, and the evil eye does not affect them. In the Gemara (Berachos 61b), our blessed sages tell us about the self-sacrifice Rabbi Akiva endured in order to study Torah publicly:

"תנו רבנן, פעם אחת גזרה מלכות הרשעה שלא יעסקו ישראל בתורה. בא פפוס בן יהודה ומצאו לרבי עקיבא שהיה מקהיל קהילות ברבים ועוסק בתורה. אמר ליה עקיבא אי אתה מתיירא מפני מלכות. אמר לו אמשול לך משל למה הדבר דומה, לשועל שהיה מהלך על גב הנהר, וראה דגים שהיו מתקבצים ממקום למקום, אמר להם מפני מה אתם בורחים, אמרו לו מפני רשתות שמביאין עלינו בני אדם.

אמר להם. רצונכם שתעלו ליבשה ונדור אני ואתם כשם שדרו אבותי עם אבותיכם. אמרו לו, אתה הוא שאומרים עליך פיקח שבחיות, לא פיקח אתה אלא טיפש אתה, ומה במקום חיותנו אנו מתיראין, במקום מיתתנו על אחת כמה וכמה. אף אנחנו עכשיו שאנו יושבים ועוסקים בתורה, שכתוב בה (דברים ל-כ) כי הוא חייך ואורך ימיך כך, אם אנו הולכים ומבטלים ממנה על אחת כמה וכמה".

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The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: Once, the wicked regime (Rome) decreed that the Jewish people should not engage in Torah-study. Pappus ben Yehudah came and found Rabbi Akiva as he was convening public assemblies and engaging in Torah-study. He (Pappus) said to him, "Akiva, are you not afraid of the regime?" He replied to him, "I will provide you with a parable to which the situation is comparable. It is comparable to a fox who was walking alongside a river and saw fish that were gathering from place to place. He said to them, "What are you fleeing from?" They said to him, "From the nets human beings are bringing to catch us."

He said to them, "Is it your wish to come up onto dry land, and we shall dwell together just as my ancestors dwelt with your ancestors?" They said to him, "Are you the one they describe as the cleverest of the animals? You are not a clever one but a fool! If in the place that sustains us, we are afraid, in the place that will cause us to die, all the more so." The same applies to us. Now, as we sit and engage in Torah-study, about which it is written (Devarim 30, 20): "For it is your life and the length of your days," we are in danger; if we go and neglect it, all the more so!

### Even on Dry Land Jews Are Aware that They Can Only Exist within the Waters of Torah

We learn a valuable lesson from the words of Rabbi Akiva concerning the study of Torah. We know that the yetzer hara tries to convince Jews that it is a waste of time to study Torah; it argues falsely that if a Jew would spend more time with the frivolous pursuits of Olam HaZeh like the goyim do, he will be better off and have a better life. A Jew should know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is precisely the persuasive argument the fox used with the fish: "Is it your wish to come up onto dry land, and we shall dwell together just as my ancestors dwelt with your ancestors?" To rebut this lie, it is imperative to rely on the "kal-va'chomer" of the fish: "If in the place that sustains us, we are afraid, in the place that will cause us to die, all the more so."

This is precisely why Yaakov Avinu blessed Ephraim and Menashe by saying "וידגו לרוב". He wished to impress upon them the profound analogy of Rabbi Akiva. A Jew must cling to the Torah which is compared to water like fish who reproduce and multiply in the water, and the "ayin hara" has no power over them. In other words, they will not be affected or influenced by the "ayin hara" of the fox, who tries to persuade them to exit the water and live with him in peace. For, they realize that to do so means immediate death for them.

Let us embellish this thought. Why did Rabbi Akiva choose to compare Jews studying Torah to fish living in the water? In Likutei Torah (Vayechi), our teacher, the Arizal, teaches that Rabbi Akiva was a "nitzotz" of Yaakov Avinu—a spark from his neshamah. He brings a remez from the passuk (Bereishis 49, 24): "מידי אביר יעקב"—from the hands of 'Avir Yaakov' (the mighty power of Yaakov). Now, the words אבי"ר יעק"ב are an anagram for "גב"י עקיב"א. So, since Rabbi Akiva was a "nitzotz" of Yaakov Avinu, he employed the analogy of the fish just as Yaakov did in the berachah he bestowed upon Ephraim and Menashe: "וידגו לרוב בקרב הארץ".

We can now postulate that this is the reason that HKB"H prevents the sea from trespassing the boundaries He set for it; thereby, preventing the sea from inundating the world with its waters. It is in the merit of the tzaddikim who dedicate themselves to the study of Torah despite much self-sacrifice. For, they are forever conscious of the analogy of Rabbi Akiva and the berachah of Yaakov Avinu comparing Yisrael to fish who are dependent on the water for there survival. So, too, the survival of Yisrael depends on the Torah. Therefore, although they are walking and living on terra-firma, they are aware that they resemble fish whose survival is related to the waters of Torah. Therefore, "midah k'neged midah," they possess the power to prevent the sea from washing out the entire world, in the merit of living their lives daily in the waters of Torah.

Incredibly, we can now truly appreciate the elucidation of the of the Noam Elimelech regarding the passuk: "And Bnei Yisrael walked on dry land in the midst of the sea." Tzaddikim, even when they are walking on dry land—in routine, everyday life situations—picture in their minds every second that it is as if they are "in the midst of the sea." They

are aware that Yisrael are compared to fish, who can only live and survive in water. Hence, they cling to Hashem's Torah every step of the way in Olam HaZeh and do not heed the duplicitous counsel of the fox—the yetzer hara. They know that it would be foolish and fatal to abandon the sea of Torah and go out onto the dry land to pursue the pleasures of Olam HaZeh. In this merit, the water forms a wall for them on their right and on their left—i.e., the holy Torah, which is compared to water, protects them!

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### "Zevulun shall dwell by seashores"—Where the Sea Wants to Inundate the Entire World

At this point, I am eager to offer "chizuk"—moral support—to every Jew who fulfills the role of Zevulun in Olam HaZeh—i.e., someone who must work for a living to support his family and to support those who study Torah full-time, the Yissachars of the world. Fortunately, many of them should be applauded for also establishing fixed times for their own Torah-study. So, let us focus on the berachah Yaakov Avinu bestowed on Zevulun (Bereishis 49, 13): ״בולון "מים ישכון והוא לחוף אניות וירכתו על צידון". "לפילון ימים ישכון והוא לחוף אניות וירכתו על צידון". Aevulun shall dwell by seashores; and he shall be at the ship's harbor, and his end is at Sidon.

Here Rashi comments: His land will be on seashores ... "And he" will constantly be found at "the shore of ships," at the harbor, where ships bring merchandise. For, Zevulun would engage in commerce, and provide food for the tribe of Yissachar, while they would engage in Torah-study. This is the meaning of Moshe's statement (Devarim 33, 18): "Rejoice Zevulun in your going forth, and Yissachar in your tents." Zevulun would go out to engage in commerce, and Yissachar would engage in Torah-study in tents.

We will endeavor to explain the profound intent of Yaakov Avinu when bestowing this specific berachah on Zevulun: "Zevulun shall dwell by seashores"—that his livelihood would be specifically associated with seashores. It seems obvious that there is an intimate relationship between Zevulun's role providing financial support for Yissachar, enabling him to devote himself to the study of Torah, and Zevulun's "parnasah" at the seashores. To explain the matter, let us consider the Gemara's teaching above that HKB"H says to Yisrael, "My son, I created the yetzer hara, and I have

created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torahstudy, you will not be delivered into its hand."

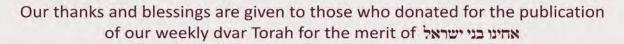
Regarding this arrangement, one might ask: Okay, talmidei-chachamim are like Yissachar; they study Torah all day long. Thus, they already possess the antidote to the yetzer hara. But what about those who are relegated from above to be like Zevulun? They roam around among the goyim engaging in business activities. At those times, they resemble fish out of water. How are they supposed to combat the yetzer hara who waits in the marketplaces and streets to ambush them and trip them up?

The answer is quite simple. With the money they earn as Yissachars, they should provide for their children, enabling them to learn Torah, and give tzedakah generously to support the Yissachars of the world, whose lives are dedicated to Torah-study and the service of Hashem. Thus, while they are outside dealing with mundane, everyday matters related to Olam HaZeh, their counterpart Yissachar, the pillar of Torah, is sitting in the Beis Midrash studying Torah thanks to them. According to this arrangement, the kedushah of Yissachar's Torah extends to Zevulun as well and affords him protection from the yetzer hara.

This illuminates for us the profound intent of Yaakov Avinu. He foresaw via his "ruach hakodesh" that the role of Zevulun is to engage in commerce and to provide for Yissachar. This meant that Zevulun would face the spiritual danger of drowning and sinking in the waters of earthly desires and temptations. This prompted Yaakov to formulate the berachah: "זבולון לחוף ימים ישכון"—so that Zevulun would constantly see the waves of the oceans and seas and the imminent danger they pose. For, as we have learned, it is their nature to want to inundate the entire world with their waters. It is only by the grace of HKB"H that they are stopped at the seashores by the boundaries He set for them. This is intended to teach him a vital lesson: Although it is essential for him to engage in commerce and worldly affairs, he should never trespass the boundaries that HKB"H set for him. It is imperative that he designate time for tefilah three times a day and establish fixed times to study Torah.



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