

# WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

## PARSHAT BESHALACH

### The Greatness of Jewish Women

The Haftora for Parshas Beshalach, Shabbos Shira, is about our Shofetes Devora Hanavia (our leader/judge Devora the prophetess).

She summoned her general, Barak, to wage war against the mighty Canaanite general Sisera and his army. Barak insisted that Devora go with him to battle, which she agreed to do, but she told him that he wouldn't be credited with the victory; rather, a woman would have that honor.

They went to war and completely destroyed the Canaanite army, but Sisera got away. He ran to the tent of Chever the Kenite, thinking that he would be safe there, being that there was a good relationship between him and the Canaanite king. Chever's wife was Yael, a courageous woman. She hid him in her tent, giving him a false sense of security. He asked for some water, and she gave him milk, which made him sleepy. As he slept, she took a tent peg and a hammer and drove the peg into his temple, and he died.

Yael is the woman who was credited for the victory, as she put an end to Sisera and an end to the Canaanites.

#### JEWISH WOMEN THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE TAUGHT US TO EXPERIENCE BOTH DEEP PAIN AND DEEP JOY.

Devora sang a song to commemorate the victory, and there was peace for forty years.

The connection to our parsha is that the Parsha tells of the splitting of the sea when we were finally

free from the Egyptians, and the song we sang on that momentous occasion.

The Song by the Sea was sung by both the men and the women; why is the Haftora about women and about a song of a woman, Devora?

When we look at the Parsha. We see that there

was a difference between the way the men sang and the way the women sang. All the men did was sing. However, when the women sang, it says, "And all the women went out... with tambourines and dances." Why was there more joy by the women than by the men? Not only did they sing, but they had tambourines and danced as well? And why did they have tambourines?

"According to the pain, so is the reward." So too, according to the suffering, so is the joy that follows when the suffering is gone. All the Jewish people suffered in Egypt, but the women suffered more. Seeing their newborn babies being thrown into the Nile was worse than the hard labor the men suffered. Although it affected the men as well, what happens to a baby has more of an effect on a mother.

Now that they were finally free of Pharaoh, the joy was so great; not only did they sing, but they danced and played their tambourines as well. And because the women's joy was greater, we read the Song of Devora, a woman.

Our great sages tell us, "In the merit of righteous women, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt, and in the merit of righteous women, we will be redeemed in the future." The Parsha and the Haftora highlight three women, Miriam, Devora, and Yael because we can learn from them about the righteousness of women. The Parsha also mentions "all the women" because there is a lesson to be learned from them as well.

When it mentions Miriam, the Torah calls her "Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister." Why not Moshe's sister? Because it is referring to the time before Moshe was born. The name Miriam comes from the word mar, which means bitter, since she was born around the time that the bitter servitude began. As a little girl, she witnessed Pharaoh's evil decree that "Every boy that is born should be thrown in the river." She prophesied that her parents would give birth to the savior of the Jewish people. She had complete trust in Hashem that this prophecy would come true.



And when Moshe was put in a basket in the river, the Torah tells us that she “stood at a distance to see what would become of him.” And she continued to wait for the next eighty years, knowing that it would surely come to pass. She suffered bitterly and felt the suffering of her people. And now, as they crossed the sea and were free at last, she witnessed with great joy that her prophecy had come true.

From Miriam we learn of the great trust righteous women have in Hashem. This is also seen in all the Jewish women of the time as they prepared tambourines, trusting that Hashem would redeem them. These are the tambourines they took with them as they left Egypt into the desert, trusting that they were in Hashem’s hands, soon to be free.

We know that the women suffered terribly as their babies were being thrown into the Nile. There is a lot of symbolism here. The Nile was Egypt’s god; it was the river that sustained them. In other words, they worshipped making a living. We, on the other hand, serve Hashem and know that our sustenance comes from Him. More than not, most children spend more time with their mother than their father; this means that the mother’s influence is so important. Some make the grave mistake of throwing their children into the river of making a living, to the sacrifice of a proper Jewish education. Because the culture demands it, and because “what will my friends say?” However, the strong Jewish mother puts Hashem first, knowing that our sustenance is from Hashem. She saves her children from the Nile and makes sure to give her babies the best Torah education so that they will grow up in Hashem’s way. This is the greatest nachas a parent could have.

The Haftora calls Devora the wife of (lit. the woman of) Lapidus. The word Lapid means a flame, as she would make the wicks for the Mishkan in Shiloh. Her wicks would light up the Mishkan, and from there, the light would spread to the whole world.

This is the calling of all Jewish women to fill their own Mishkans, their homes, with the light of Shabbos candles, which has a profound impact on her family. It is symbolic of the atmosphere which she sets in her home, as she has an effect on her husband and her children, making her home a dwelling place for Hashem and His blessings.

Devora would judge the people sitting under a date palm. Why? Because a date palm’s fronds are high up on the tree and don’t really give shade. She did this out of modesty, not to be alone with other men, as she judged and advised them. In Devorah’s song, she blesses Yael to be “Blessed among the women of the tent.” Which refers to our matriarchs, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel, and Leah, who were known for their

modesty. The tent also refers to the home, which means her commitment to her spouse.

I am amazed by the greatness of Jewish women, especially because I can see that they sense and feel the pain of the exile more than us men do. When I see how much my wife Dina endures with such grace. Despite everything, she takes the time to be there and lift the spirits of others, I am at a loss for words. Jewish women are simply amazing.

These noble traits of Jewish women is what brought the redemption from Egypt, and these same traits will bring the future redemption, the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

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*Dedicated to my wife Dina, a truly great woman, in honor of our 21st anniversary, which is this Shabbos, Tu B'Shvat.*

*Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.*



DEDICATED IN HONOR OF THE UPCOMING WEDDING OF  
**MOSHE MAIER & DANIELA**  
· BY THE ERMAN & URIARTE FAMILIES ·

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