

Inspirations From the Haftarah Parshas Beshalach

by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

The parsha and Haftarah are known to be connected by the fact that both have a Shirah as a major theme. Most of the Parsha is devoted to the epoch of how Hashem delivered us from the armies of Mitzrayim who were pursuing us with a passion to punish us for being runaway slaves and the song we sang afterwards when we were saved. Similarly, the Haftarah discusses another deliverance we experienced when the Canaanite armies were pursuing us and they were driven into Nachal Kishon and afterward Devorah and Barak sang a song of triumph. Both of these songs were not mere songs but great prophecies whose words remain with us in our Torah and Tanakh.

From the Gemara in Pesachim 118b we see that the Haftarah is actually a continuation of the Parsha and the telling over of Hashem's endless miracles. The Gemara tells us that after Hashem delivered the Bnai Yisroel from the armies of Mitzrayim and drowned them in the Yam Suf, Bnai Yisroel were fearful that maybe their enemies had also crossed over the dry land and were hiding in order to launch a surprise attack. To calm their fears, Hashem told the Yam Suf to spit out the bodies of the soldiers to show Bnai Yisroel that their enemies were truly defeated. The waters of the Yam Suf did not want to cooperate at first. The Yam Suf felt that it should not have to give up the six hundred chariots back after they were already received. So Hashem promised that at a later time in history they will be rewarded 150%. This took place in the days of the battle which we read about in the Haftarah when nine hundred Chariots were delivered into the waters of Nachal Kishon. The fish then broke out into song and shouted "And Hashem's truth is forever." The Maharsha [a famous commentator on the Talmud known to explain midrashim who lived 1555-1631] explains that the point of this story is actually taken from the first verse of this Psalm which is "Praise Hashem all nations" Just as at the Yam Suf all nations knew the great miracles Hashem did for Bnai Yisroel because the waters split everywhere in the world, so at this time the nations saw that Hashem was fighting for Bnai Yisroel 'from the stars' as Devorah expressed.

As we read this Parsha and Haftarah each year we should be overwhelmed by Hashem's great miracles. However, these miracles should not be seen as events of the distant past and have no bearing on our lives today. Hashem does miracles for us constantly even though they may not be as open as in the past. Moreover, just as Hashem did open miracles for us in the past at the beginning of our history, we are promised by our Neviim and Chazal that we will see open miracles again at the time of the final geulah. At that time, all of the nations will praise Hashem for the miracles done for His people and all will see that Hashem's name is called upon us and they will shout out as well, "And Hashem's truth is forever."