



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת חקת - בלק

אז ישיר ישראל את השירה הזאת עלי באר ענו לה. באר חפרוה שרים קרוה נדיבי העם במחקה במשענתם וממדבר מתנה. וממתנה נחליאל ומנחליאל במות.

Then Klal Yisroel sang this song: "Rise up, O well! Call out to it! The well that the princes dug, that the nobles of the people excavated, through a lawgiver, with their staffs. A gift from the Wilderness - the gift went to the valley, and from the valley to the heights..." (Bamidbar 21:17-19)

This week's *Sidrah*, Chukas, includes the Shiras Ha'Beir, a song of praise for the well of Miriam. Rashi explains that although the well was granted to Klal Yisroel forty years earlier, this Shirah was composed at this point, after the well revealed the great miracle that Hashem had performed for Klal Yisroel in saving them from the Amorites. When Klal Yisroel expressed gratitude for this tremendous salvation, they also sang to thank Hashem for providing them with the well and its constant supply of water throughout the forty years in the barren Wilderness.

The Midrash (*Tanna D'Bei Eliyohu* 12) tells us that when the people were fulfilling the will of Hashem, the well would spring forth water near their dwellings. However, when their behaviour was not righteous, Hashem would sometimes withhold the water supply, causing a delay of several hours. In these times, the Talmidei Chachomim and young children (who learned Torah free from sin) would approach the well and daven: באר, עלי, Rise up, O well!

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* highlights that this served as a constant lesson for Klal Yisroel about the power of Torah. They found themselves in a hot, dry desert, relying on the well for water. When the water was delayed, they learned that it was only through the prayers of those who were immersed in Torah that they were able to merit receiving water.

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 55a) indicates that the Shirah refers not only to the physical well of water but also to the spiritual well from which the waters of Torah are drawn. As the *posuk* states, הו'י כל צמא, "Ho, everyone who is thirsty, go to the water" (*Yeshayah* 55:1), and the Gemara (*Bava Kama* 17a) explains, אין מים אלא תורה – "water" refers to Torah. The well of Miriam demonstrated the superiority and power of Torah, prompting Klal Yisroel to value it and extol its praises.

Accordingly, the opening phrases of the Shirah can be understood as follows:

באר חפרוה שרים - *The well that the princes dug*. Our Avos, the "princes" of the world, established the deep foundations within the essence of Klal Yisroel, enabling them to later receive the Torah (see Ohr HaChaim).

קרוה נדיבי העם - *That the nobles of the people excavated*. The "nobles" refer to Moshe and Aharon, who brought Klal Yisroel to Kabolas HaTorah. Similarly, all the Gedolim throughout the generations in the chain of Torah tradition ensure that the Torah is preserved among the nation.

במחקה במשענתם - *Through a lawgiver, with their staffs (literal translation)*. The Ohr Hachaim explains that this refers to what the Chachomim of the generations added and innovated in Torah. Accordingly,

the term **בְּמַחֲקָק** means **חֲקִיקָה** – *engraving*, which refers to expanding the Torah from what already exists. These expositions must be **בְּמִשְׁעָנֵתָם** – based on the *support* of the earlier authorities. Every precise detail in Torah must be explained according to their teachings, and anything not grounded in the words of those who preceded them cannot be relied upon.

The Rosh Yeshiva explains the metaphor between Torah and a well. A well serves as a source of water that cleanses a person, and when in the form of a *mikveh*, it also purifies. The water from a well nourishes individuals and has the power to elevate anyone who is submerged in it. Similarly, learning Torah generates incredible powers. Torah study cleanses a person and purifies them from impurity, as stated in the Mishnah (*Avos* 6:1): **וְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְנֶאֱמָן**, *Torah prepares a person to become righteous, pious, upright, and faithful*. (See Ruach Chaim, who elaborates on this, connecting it to the concept of **כְּשָׁרוֹת** and *kashering* vessels, which refers to making things fit for use. Just as the process of **הַגְעָלָה** expels absorbed prohibited substances from vessels, so too does Torah study help a person expel undesirable *middos* that contradict the positive qualities of being righteous, pious, etc.)

The Torah also strengthens those who study it, nourishing them spiritually, as the Torah is referred to as “bread” (see *Mishlei* 9:5, **לֵכוּ לֶחֶמוֹ בְּלֶחֶמִי**, “Come, eat of my bread”). Moreover, the Torah has the power to elevate a person who is deeply engaged in its study to great heights. This concept is found in the Gemara (*Nedarim* 55a) through an allegorical interpretation of the phrase: **וּמִמֶּדְבָּר מִתֵּנָה**, *and from the wilderness, Hashem gives it as an inheritance to Israel*. When a person makes himself like a **מִדְבָּר**, *wilderness* – open to everyone and teaching Torah freely (as Rashi explains) – the Torah is given to him as a **מִתְּנָה**, *gift*, as indicated by the phrase **וּמִמֶּדְבָּר מִתֵּנָה**. Once it is given to him as a gift, Hashem makes it his inheritance, as stated, **וּמִמִּתְּנָה נַחֲלִיאל**. (The term **נַחֲלִיאל** combines the words for **נַחֲלָה**, *inheritance*, and **קָל**, *Hashem*, symbolising the Divine nature of this inheritance.) As a result, after Hashem grants the Torah as his inheritance, the individual rises to **בְּמוֹת**, *heights*, as expressed in the phrase **וּמִנְּחֵלִיאל בְּמוֹת**.

Let us strive to learn the lesson revealed to Klal Yisroel in the *midbar*: the extraordinary power of Torah. Just as the nation witnessed that it was through Torah study that they merited water, we too must recognise the immense potency of learning Torah. Moreover, let us appreciate that Torah is like a wellspring — cleansing, purifying, and spiritually strengthening a person. As we dedicate ourselves to Torah, we nourish our souls, refine our *middos*, and rise to ever greater heights, meriting abundant goodness.