

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
 with Reb Yoel Kahn



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THE YAM SUF'S IDENTITY CRISIS

Krias Yam Suf was planned in advance, 2448 years before it happened.

The *possuk* says, "As the morning arrived, the sea returned to its previous strength (לאיתנו)." The Midrash explains that the word לתנאו has the same letters as לאיתנו, to its condition. This hints that when Hashem created the Yam Suf, He stipulated that it would split for Bnei Yisroel.

Mefarshim ask: This *possuk* is discussing (not the actual splitting of the sea, rather) the return of the sea to its previous state. Seemingly, this stipulation should have been alluded to in the verses discussing the *splitting* of the Yam Suf. Why is it mentioned here, when describing how the water resumed its flow?

The simple translation of this word—"to its previous strength"—is also problematic. Why does the *possuk* find it necessary to write this? Apparently, if not for this word, we might have thought that while the water continued flowing, it did not regain its previous strength. Why would we have thought so?

Yet a third question: There is a well-known principle that when there are multiple interpretations on a single verse, they are all interrelated. What is the connection between these two explanations—to its strength and to its condition?

DIVINE STIPULATION

In order to answer these questions, let's try to understand why Hashem made this stipulation to begin with.

When two individuals strike a deal, it makes sense that they might want to put various provisions in place. Since neither one can control the other, in order to protect their interests, they agree that the deal will only apply if certain conditions are kept.

But Hashem is the ultimate authority over each and every entity that exists. Nothing can stop Him from doing whatever He desires. Why did He need to stipulate with the sea that it would

split? If no stipulation would have been made, He surely would have been able to split it regardless!

This question is a far-reaching one. The same Midrash continues that Hashem made a similar stipulation with every created entity, that when the time would come to perform a miracle for Bnei Yisroel, the entity would obey. Why the need to stipulate?

EXTRA OR ESSENTIAL?

The Tosfos Yom Tov explains that the reason Hashem made this condition with the sea was to demonstrate that the world was created for the sake of Bnei Yisroel.

What does this mean?

When we say that the world was created for our sake, this can be understood in two ways:

1. This idea is an *added* element to the world's existence.
2. It is *part and parcel* of what the world is all about.

How can we determine which one is correct?

If you want to know if a certain element is supplementary or fundamental to something's existence, all you need to do is remove it. If the entity continues to exist, that means the element is just an additional factor that enhances it, but is not crucial to its existence. By contrast, if it ceases to exist, that means the element is a defining part of the entity. Taking it away is therefore tantamount to taking away the entity itself.

YAM SUF: NOT JUST A SEA

This is what Hashem accomplished by making a stipulation with the Yam Suf.

If not for this stipulation, then the Yam Suf's identity would simply be a body of flowing water. Then would come the time when Bnei Yisroel leave Mitzrayim and encounter the Yam Suf on their way to Har Sinai. The Yam Suf's existence—namely, flowing water—runs *contrary* to the Jews' goal of receiving the

Torah. However, since Hashem is the ultimate power, He can split the sea and get the obstacle out of the way. The action of splitting the sea would be *going against* the water's existence.

However, Hashem wanted the splitting of the sea to be an integral part of its existence. To that end, He stipulated that it would split.

Let's say a person betroths a woman on condition that she does a certain act. If that event transpires, the *kiddushin* takes effect. If not, there is no need to annul the *kiddushin*; it was never valid to begin with.

Similarly, if the sea would not split, it would lose its very existence. This is exactly what it was created for—to enable Bnei Yisroel to receive the Torah. When splitting the sea, Hashem didn't need to "break" it; to the contrary, it was as if the sea was *begging* to be split, so its existence could be accounted for!

By making this stipulation, Hashem demonstrated that assisting Bnei Yisroel was not just a nice addition to the sea's existence, rather it was the sea's *very identity*. This is the meaning of the Tosfos Yom Tov's answer. He isn't just saying that the sea was created for Bnei Yisroel, rather that this element is essential to the sea's very existence.

Furthermore: As the Midrash continues, the same is true with every created entity; their very existence is there for Bnei Yisroel.

JEWISH STRENGTH

We can now answer the questions we asked earlier.

The world's existence is weak. It will last for 6000 years and that's it. By contrast, Bnei Yisroel's existence is strong and everlasting, as we are Hashem's handiwork and pride.

By adding the word *לֵאִיתוֹ*, "to its strength," the *possuk* is telling us that through fulfilling Hashem's stipulation, the sea's existence

became stronger. It is not just any other physical entity; it is a creation whose identity is clearly associated with Bnei Yisroel, and it therefore retains a level of strength reminiscent of ours.

This is why it is specifically here that the *possuk* alludes to the stipulation. When describing the actual splitting of the sea, it is not that important to know why it split. But now that it reverted to being an ocean, the Torah tells us what type of ocean it had now become. It was now an ocean with a new level of strength, because its very existence was there only for Bnei Yisroel (as was clearly demonstrated when it split).

THE OBSTACLE'S PLEA

This teaches us an amazing lesson.

It may happen that as we walk along the path toward Har Sinai, trying to fulfill the mission Hashem has given us, we confront obstacles that block our way.

When this happens, all we need to do is be steadfast in our resolve that nothing will get in our way. When we adopt this approach, not only will the obstacles disappear, it will become clear that their very existence is only there for us. Inside, they are *begging* to be removed, to enable us to fulfill our mission! What's more, by not letting them

stop us, we are actually *reinforcing* their existence, revealing that their true existence is Yisroel, which is one with Hashem.

For further study, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, pp. 86ff.

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