

The hidden waters of Shavuot

By Rabbi Fabian Werbin

The creation of water

Talmud Babli 12A

Rab Judah further said that Rab said: Ten things were created the first day, and they are as follows: heaven and earth, Tohu [chaos], Bohu [desolation], light and darkness, wind and water, the measure of day and the measure of night. Heaven and earth, for it is written: In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Tohu and Bohu, for it is written: And the earth was Tohu and Bohu. Light and darkness: darkness, for it is written: And darkness was upon the face of the deep; light, for it is written: And God said, let there be light. Wind and water, for it is written: And the wind of God hovered over the face of the waters. The measure of day and the measure of night, for it is written: And there was evening and there was morning, one day. It is taught: Tohu is a green line that encompasses the whole world, out of which darkness proceeds, for it is said: (Ps. XVIII, 12.) He made darkness His hiding-place round about Him. Bohu, this means the slimy stones that are sunk in the deep, out of which the waters proceed, for it is said: (Isa. XXXIV, 11) And he shall stretch over it the line of confusion [Tohu] and the plummet of emptiness [Bohu].

Water as a symbol of salvation

- First extension of Gan Eden- Four rivers
- Noah saves humanity from corruption and immorality
- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have stories around the wells.
- Abraham's servant identifies Rebecca through water

- Moses is rescued from the waters
- The Nile (Egypt's god) becomes blood in the first plague
- Egyptians drown in the sea as the ultimate salvation

Water in Festivals

Pesach: Crossing the Red Sea, twice we wash hands in the Seder, Karpas in salty water

Sukkot: Simchat Beit Hashoeva. Asking for rain

Shavuot: Where is the water?

Liquids in minor Festivals

Chanukah: Oil

Purim: Wine

Some statistics for fun:

Percentage of water in wine: 80-85 %

Percentage of water in oil: 0.02 to 0.06%

Percentage of water in human body: up to 60%

The book of Ruth

Ruth 1:1 “And it happened in the days when the judges judged that there was famine in the land...”

The Book of Ruth starts with drought, famine. The waters are hiding.

Ruth 1:19-20 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women

exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?” “Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter.

Exodus 15:22-25

²² Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. ²³ When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) ²⁴ So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

²⁵ Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.

There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test.

Rashi: HERE HE MADE FOR THEM [A STATUTE AND AN ORDINANCE) — At Marah He gave them a few sections of the Torah in order that they might engage in the study thereof; viz., the sections containing the command regarding the sabbath, the red heifer and the administration of justice (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 15:25; Sanhedrin 56b).

Sforno: שם נסהו, to find out if they would be willing to accept statutes (laws not given to our intelligence to understand,) as well as social legislation and they would not ignore it when they were not in a state of crisis as now when they needed water through a miracle. אלו קיד'אם שמוע תשמע לקול ה, to accept the statutes which would follow as a way of life, not merely as emergency regulation in the desert, and if from now on they would הישר בעיניו תעשה והאזנת למצותיו וגו, carefully

observe G'd's commandments endeavouring to live according to their understanding of what is pleasing to Him, then they would be permanently spared any of the afflictions that G'd had brought upon the Egyptians. The implication was that betraying G'd's trust would have painful consequences. **The entire experience is a reminder of the manner in which the Rabbis relate to a potential convert to Judaism.** One does not present Judaism in rosy attractive colours so as to encourage him to convert, but on the contrary, one apprises him first and foremost of the עול המצות, “the yoke of the commandments,” telling him of all the things he would have to forego by joining the Jewish people, i.e. the Jewish religion. Moreover, one advises him that whereas up until now he was able to eat certain foods, such as **chelev**, not only would he no longer be able to eat these foods, but violation of the commandment would carry the penalty of karet, loss of entitlement to his afterlife, etc. Only after he has duly absorbed this information does one proceed with teaching him the intricacies of Judaism. What happened at Marah was preparatory to accepting Judaism at Mount Sinai. If the people had not gone through this process it is doubtful that they would have said ונעשה ונשמע, “we will do, now let us learn G'd's Torah,” when the time came for this a few weeks later.

Gematria of רות = 606

Gematria of חלב = 40

Percentage of water in milk: 85 to 95%

Ruth 4:18-22

This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,

¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab,

²⁰ Amminadab the father of **Nahshon**, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed,

²² Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

Mechilta DiRabbi Yishmael BiShalach- Masechta Vayehi Parsha 5

One said, 'I'm not going in first,' and another said, '*I'm* not going in first,' as it says, "Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit," (Hoshea 12:1). **Since they (Bnei Yisrael) were taking advice/debating/arguing (over which course of action to take), Nachshon ben Amminadav jumped (into the Red Sea), and his tribe followed him into the sea. Therefore, he merited to have the kingdom (was zocheh), as it says, "When Israel left Egypt, the house of Yaakov [left] a people of a strange tongue, Yehuda became His holy nation," (Tehillim 114:1-2)...**