

# TORAH SHMOOZE BESHALACH

## *Scriptural Context*

- And Adonai said to Moses: Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel and they will go forward. (Exodus 14:15)

## *Commentary & Midrash*

- According to Rashi, “Moses was standing and praying.” God said to him: “Now is not the time to prolong in prayer, when Israel is placed in distress.” God rebuked Moses for remaining immobilized, waiting passively for divine intervention, while the children of Israel were pursued and threatened by the Egyptians.
- Or Hachayim teaches that it is our deeds that make us worthy of miracles, and the children of Israel “had not yet qualified for . . . a miracle by their deeds.”
- God told Moses that the people would have to act on their faith before they would experience a miracle. So when God asked Moses why he cried out, God was saying, “the matter is not altogether in My hands.” (Or Hachayim)
- R’ Meir said: “When the Israelites stood by the Reed Sea, the tribes strove with one another, each wishing to descend into the sea first.” (Sotah 36b) But R’ Judah said to R’ Meir: “That is not what happened; but each tribe was unwilling to be the first to enter the sea.” (Sotah 37a)
- It was because of the unwillingness of the people to enter the sea that Moses was “engaged for a long while in prayer.” (Sotah 37a) The Midrash says that even after the sea was divided for them, the people still “rebelled” and refused to enter. (Shemot Rabbah)
- Nehama Leibowitz concludes that “miracles do not, necessarily, change human nature and cannot by themselves make man fear and love God.”
- Sforno tells us that Moses did not cry out from fear of Pharaoh, but because “he thought . . . the (people) would not listen to him to enter the sea. Therefore God says to him, ‘Why did you cry out to Me?’ regarding this matter, for indeed you are distrustful of worthy ones. . . . They will not disobey you.”
- In short, God is saying to Moses: Your lack of confidence in the courage of the people and their leaders is misguided; they are only waiting for you to give the order to go into the sea—and they must act before I will act to save them.

## *Questions*

- How do you understand miracles?
- Have you ever experienced a miracle?
- What’s the relationship between *our* deeds and miracles?
- What if anything can we do to increase or decrease the probability of miracles?