

Hebrew/English Source Sheet
Torah Portion of B'shalach
“*When the Wood Meets the Water*”
by Rabbi Shmuel Simenowitz

The sources are presented in the order they appear in the commentary.

תהילים פרק צו

א שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה, שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ; שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה, כָּל-הָאָרֶץ.
ב שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה, בְּרֹכּוֹ שְׁמוֹ; בְּשָׂרוּ מִיּוֹם-לְיוֹם, יְשׁוּעָתוֹ.
ג סִפְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם כְּבוֹדוֹ; בְּכָל-הָעַמִּים, נִפְלְאוֹתָיו.
ד כִּי גָדוֹל יְהוָה וּמְהֻלָּל מְאֹד; נוֹרָא הוּא, עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים.
ה כִּי, כָּל-אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים; וַיהוָה, שְׁמַיִם עָשָׂה.
ו הוֹדוּ-וְהִדְרֹּ לְפָנָיו; עַז וְתַפְאֶרֶת, בְּמִקְדָּשׁוֹ.
ז הָבוּ לַיהוָה, מִשְׁפָּחוֹת עַמִּים; הָבוּ לַיהוָה, כְּבוֹד וְעֹז.
ח הָבוּ לַיהוָה, כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ; שְׂאוּ-מִנְחָה, וּבֵאוּ לְחֻצְרוֹתָיו.
ט הִשְׁתַּחֲווּ לַיהוָה, בְּהַדְרַת-קִדְשׁ; חִילוּ מִפְּנֵיו, כָּל-הָאָרֶץ.
י אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם, יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ-- אֶף-תִּכְפוֹן תִּבְל, בַּל-תִּמּוֹט;
יָדִין עַמִּים, בְּמִישְׁרִים.
יא יִשְׁמְחוּ הַשְּׁמַיִם, וְתִגַּל הָאָרֶץ; יִרְעַם הַיָּם, וּמְלֵאוּ.
יב יַעֲלוּ שָׂדֵי, וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ; אֶז יִרְנְנוּ, כָּל-עֵצֵי-יַעַר.
יג לְפָנָי יְהוָה, כִּי בָא-- כִּי בָא, לְשִׁפֹּט הָאָרֶץ;
יִשְׁפֹּט-תִּבְל בְּצַדֵּק; וְעַמִּים, בְּאֲמוּנָתוֹ.

Psalms 96

1. Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth.
2. Sing to the Lord, bless His name, announce His salvation from day to day.
3. Tell of His glory among the nations, among all peoples His wonders.
4. For the Lord is great and very much praised; He is feared over all divine powers.
5. For all the gods of the peoples are nought, but the Lord made the heavens.
6. [They ascribe] beauty and majesty before Him; might and glory in His sanctuary.
7. Ascribe to the Lord, [you] families of peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and might.
8. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; carry an offering and come to His courtyards.
9. Prostrate yourselves to the Lord in the majestic sanctuary; quake before Him, all the earth.
10. Say among the nations, "The Lord has reigned." Also the inhabited world will be established so that it will not falter; He will judge peoples with equity.
11. The heavens will rejoice and the earth will exult; the sea and the fullness thereof will roar.
12. The field and all that is therein will jubilate; then all the forest trees will sing praises.
13. Before the Lord, for He has come, for He has come to judge the earth; He will judge the inhabited world justly and the peoples with His faith.

בראשית כד:א

וַיָּרֶץ הָעֶבֶד, לְקִרְאָתָהּ; וַיֹּאמֶר, הֲגִמְיָאֵינִי נָא מֵעַט-מִיַּם מִכַּדָּךְ.

Genesis 24:1

And the servant ran toward her, and he said, "Please let me sip a little water from your pitcher."

בראשית כט:ב

וַיֵּרָא וַהֲנִיחַ בְּאֵר בְּשִׂדְהָ, וַהֲנִיחַ-שָׁם שְׁלֹשָׁה עֲדָרֵי-צֹאן רֹבְצִים עָלֶיהָ--כִּי מִן-הַבְּאֵר הַהוּא, יִשְׁקוּ הָעֲדָרִים; וַהֲאֵבֹן גְּדֹלָה, עַל-פִּי הַבְּאֵר.

Genesis 29:2

And he looked, and behold! a well in the field, and behold! three flocks of sheep lying beside it, because from that well they would water the flocks, and a huge rock was upon the mouth of the well.

בראשית ל:לח

וַיֵּצֵג, אֶת-הַמְּקֻלוֹת אֲשֶׁר פָּצַל, בְּרֵהוּטִים, בְּשִׁקְתוֹת הַמַּיִם--אֲשֶׁר תִּבְאֵן הַצֹּאן לְשִׁתּוֹת לִנְכַח הַצֹּאן, וַיִּחְמְנָה בְּבִאֵן לְשִׁתּוֹת

Genesis 30:38

And he thrust the rods that he had peeled, into the gutters in the watering troughs where the animals would come to drink opposite the [other] animals, and they would come into heat when they came to drink.

בראשית לו:כד

וַיִּקְחֶחָה--וַיִּשְׁלַכּוּ אֹתוֹ, הַבְּרָה; וַהֲבוֹר רֶק, אִין בּוֹ מַיִם.

Genesis 37:24

And they took him and cast him into the pit; now the pit was empty there was no water in it.

בראשית מא:א

וַיְהִי, מִקֶּץ שְׁנַתַּיִם יָמִים; וַיִּפְרָעָה חֵלֶם, וַהֲנִיחַ עֹמֵד עַל-הַיָּאֵר.

Genesis 41:1

It came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh was dreaming, and behold, he was standing by the Nile.

שמות טו:כה

וַיִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה, וַיִּוְרָהוּ יְהוָה עָץ, וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶל-הַמַּיִם, וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם; שָׁם שָׁם לֹו חֹק וּמִשְׁפָּט, וְשָׁם נִסָּהוּ

Exodus 15:25

So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord instructed him concerning a piece of wood, which he cast into the water, and the water became sweet. There He gave them a statute and an ordinance, and there He tested them.

רש"י שמות טו:כה

שם שם לו - במרה נתן להם מקצת פרשיות של תורה שיתעסקו בהם שבת ופרה אדומה ודינין (סנהדרין מ)

ושם נסהו - לעם וראה קשי ערפן שלא נמלכו במשה בלשון יפה בקש עלינו רחמים שיהי לנו מים לשתות אלא נתלוננו

Rashi- Exodus 15:25

There He gave them In Marah, He gave them some sections of the Torah so that they would busy themselves with them, namely [they were given the laws governing] the Sabbath, the red cow, and laws of jurisprudence. — [from Mechilta and Sanh. 56b]

and there He tested them [He tested] the people and saw how stiff-necked they were, that they did not consult Moses with respectful language, “Entreat [God to have] mercy upon us that we should have water to drink,” but they complained. — [from Mechilta]

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת בשלח סימן כד

והלא מים מתוקין שאתה נותן לתוכן מלח מיד נפסדים, הא כיצד נותן דבר המחבל לתוך דבר המחבל לעשות בו נס, א"ל הקב"ה למשה לא כך הוא אומנתי אלא במה שאני מכה בו אני מרפא הלכך הואיל ואלו המים מרים אני מרפאן בדבר מר וכן הצדיקים במה שהן מקנתרין בו הן מתקנין תדע לך שבשעה שקנתר משה באז קנתר שנאי (שמות ה) ומאז באתי אל פרעה לדבר בשמך וגוי, אמר משה באז סרחתי באז אני מתקן ואומר שירה לכך נאמר אז ישיר משה.

Midrash Tanhuma (Warsaw) Portion of Beshalah, 24

And isn't it true that fresh water is wasted as soon as you add salt to it? How could [Moshe] put something detrimental into something detrimental and make a miracle? The Holy One Blessed be He said to Moshe, “Such is not my method. Rather I heal with that which I damaged.” Therefore, [he said] “These bitter waters I will heal with a bitter thing.” So too the *tzadikim*, with the same thing they incited, they repair. An example is that when Moshe complained to G-d, he complained with the word “Az” (since) saying, “Since I came to Pharoa to speak in your name [it has only worsened the plight of the children of Israel].” Moshe said, “with [the word] Az I blemished, so with [the word] Az I shall repair and sing, and he sang the Song of the Sea beginning with the words “Az *Yashir*.” (translation: Sareet Benayahu)

רמב"ן שמות פרק טו פסוק כה

וטעם ויורהו ה' עץ - שהראה אותו עץ ואמר לו השלך את העץ הזה אל המים וימתקו. ובעבור שלא מצאתי לשון מורה אלא בענין למוד, ויורני ויאמר לי (משלי ד ד) למדני, וכן כלם, נראה בדרך הפשט כי העץ ההוא ימתיק המים בטבעו, והוא סגולה בו, ולימד אותה למשה. ורבותינו אמרו (מכילתא ותנחומא כאן) **שהיה העץ מר** והוא נס בתוך נס, כענין המלח שנתן אלישע במים (מ"ב ב כא). ואם כן אמר "ויורהו" כי לא היה העץ נמצא במקום ההוא, והקב"ה הורהו את מקומו. או שהמציאהו אליו בנס. ושוב מצאתי בילמדנו (מדרש תנחומא כאן) ראה מה כתיב שם, ויורהו ה' עץ, ויראהו לא נאמר אלא "ויורהו", הורהו דרכו. כלומר שהורהו ולמדהו דרכו של הקב"ה שהוא ממתיק המר במר:

Ramban Exodus 15:25

And the reason "the Lord instructed him concerning a piece of wood" is that he showed him a piece of wood and said "cast this piece of wood into the water and it will be sweetened." Since I cannot find a single use of the word "instructed" except regarding learning, [as in] (Proverbs 4:4) "And he instructed me, saying, teach me..." and likewise with all the other [instances], it seems to me that the simple meaning of the passage is that this wood would by its nature sweeten the water, as part of its inherent qualities, and this He taught to Moshe. And our sages have taught (Midrash Mechilta and Tanhuma, Exodus 15) that this tree was bitter, and it was doubly miraculous, as in [the miracle where] Elisha cast salt into the water (Kings 2 2:21). According to this [Midrash] the word "he instructed him" appears because this tree was not to be found in that place, and God guided [Moshe] to its location. Or He miraculously materialized it for him. Again I found in the "Yelamdenu" (Midrash Tanhuma Exodus 15), "And the Lord instructed him concerning a piece of wood"- It doesn't say "He showed him" rather "He instructed him" [in Hebrew the difference is one letter] meaning, "He instructed him in His ways". Meaning, He instructed and taught him the ways of the Holy One Blessed be He who sweetens the bitter with bitter. (translation: Sareet Benayahu)

Sources not included

Likutei Sichos 6:393

Unless otherwise noted, All English Translations from Judaica Press,
available online at www.chabad.org