

Parashat Beshalach, 5778, 2018:

Hashem Will Reign Forevermore

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechiel, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, Chaim Mordechai Hakohen ben Natan Yitzhak, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Avraham Yechezkel ben Yaakov Halevy, Shayna Yehudit bat Avraham Manes and Rivka, the *refuah shlaimah* of Devorah bat Chana, Yitzhak Akiva ben Malka and Shoshana Elka bat Etel Dina, and the safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

One of the outstanding sections of our Torah portion is the *Shirat HaYam Suf* (Song of the Sea of Reeds), the song of joy and thanks to Hashem for having miraculously saved us from Pharaoh and his hordes of chariots and soldiers. Toward the end of this unparalleled poetic hymn we find, “*Hashem yimloch le’olam vo’ed.*” (“The L-rd will reign to all eternity,” *Sefer Shemot* 15:18, all Bible and Rashi translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*) Many of our classic Torah commentators discuss whether our verse refers to the actual moment of salvation at the Sea of Reeds, or a yet-to-be realized period in human history when Judaism’s ultimate visions will be realized. The Ramban (Nachmanides, 1194-1270) presents both of these approaches in his *Commentary on the Torah*:

This is to say that, at this time, He enabled the world to see that He is the King and the Ruler over everything, and that He is the One who saves His servants, and destroys those who rebel against Him. So, too, should it be His will before Him to act in this manner throughout all generations forevermore. [This means] that He will never withhold [the favor] of His eyes from before the righteous, nor hide His eyes from before the wicked who act in an evil manner. There are numerous verses that underscore these ideas: “The L-rd will reign forever! Your G-d, O Zion, to all generations. Halleluj-ah,” “May the name of the L-rd be blessed from now and to eternity,” “And the L-rd shall become King over all the earth; on that day shall the L-rd be one, and His name one.” (*Sefer Tehillim* 146:10, 113:2, *Sefer Zechariah* 14:9, Ramban translation and brackets my own)

While the Ramban essentially views our verse as a statement of both present day reality and that which will one day be, the Netziv (Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893), in his work, *Ha’emek Davar*, opines that it is a prayer of hope that all people will

one day recognize Hashem's kingship over the entire universe:

They [i.e. the Jewish people at the Sea of Reeds] prayed that His kingship would be eternal. This means that, in the future, the whole world will recognize that He, [and He alone,] may He be blessed, is the driving force (*manhig*) behind the Kingship of Heaven. And this prayer will be fulfilled in the Days of the Messiah, for then Hashem will be [recognized as] King over the totality of the Cosmos. (Commentary on *Sefer Shemot* 15:18, translation and brackets my own)

My rebbe and mentor, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik *zatzal* (1903-1993), known as “the Rav” by his students and followers, adopts a different, but complimentary, approach to both the Ramban and the Netziv. He interprets our verse as referring to a crucial distinction that obtains between the natural law, which has been in effect since the creation of the world, and the moral law, wherein Hashem's sovereignty is yet to be recognized:

In one sense, G-d is the sovereign now, but in another sense, He will only be sovereign in the future. G-d's reign expresses itself in two ways: through the natural law and the moral law. At this time, the Kingdom of G-d is to be found solely in the natural law. His primordial Will created and regulates all of creation, both organic and inorganic, intelligent beings as well as the beast. Nature behaves in accordance with regulated patterns, a behavior which attests to His absolute sovereignty. Man has no control over the laws of nature; no one can rebel against G-d in this sense, since no one can change the natural law. We therefore do not need to pray for the establishment of G-d's sovereignty over nature. “Hashem yimloch le'olam vo'ed” denotes that G-d is currently King of the Universe. (*Noraos Harav*, Vol. 15, pp. 13-16)

Unfortunately, as the ongoing cruelty of humankind attests, there is a marked contrast between our recognition of Hashem's sovereignty in the natural realm and the acknowledgement of His dominion over the moral law:

As far as the moral law is concerned, G-d's sovereignty is not yet universally accepted... [Therefore,] this verse expresses our belief that in the future all of humanity will eventually crown Him as King of the Universe. Man will ultimately accept the moral law in the same way that he now acknowledges the natural law. (Ibid.)

May the time come soon and in our time when Hashem's moral hegemony will be universally recognized, so that all people will enjoy the benefits of true and lasting peace and witness the fulfillment of Zechariah's most celebrated vision: “The L-rd shall become

King over all the earth; on that day shall the L-rd be one, and His name one.” *V’chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

Past *drashot* may be found at my blog-website: <http://reparashathashavuah.org>

They may also be found on <http://www.yutorah.org/> using the search criteria of Etengoff and the parasha’s name.

The email list, *b’chasdei Hashem*, has expanded to hundreds of people. I am always happy to add more members to the list. If you have family or friends you would like to have added, please do not hesitate to contact me via email <mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com>.

*** My audio *shiurim* for Women on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

*** I have posted 164 of [Rabbi Soloveitchik’s](#) English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link.