

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas BeShalach – Shabbos Shirah

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Parshas BeShalach – Shabbos Shiroh 5771

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The Incredible Lesson from Reciting “Shiras HaYam” Daily: Our Existence on Dry Land Is as Miraculous as the Splitting of the Sea!

In honor of the upcoming Shabbos Shiroh, let us examine several aspects of the “Shiroh.” Our sacred sources teach us that one is to recite the “Shiroh” daily with extreme concentration and focus—imagining that we, ourselves, are standing there by the splitting sea and are being saved from the Egyptians surrounding us. As the Shloh hakadosh (Yoma, Derech Chaim, 46) explains in the name of the Sefer Chareidim (Chapter 73):

“יכוון בשירת הים שאומרים בכל יום, לאומרה בקול ובשמחה רבה כאילו אותה שעה יצא ממצרים, שהרי אמרו במדרש (שוחר טוב תהלים יח) ויסע משה את ישראל מים סוף שהסיעם מעוונותיהם, שנמחלו על ידי השירה שאמרו, שכל מי שנעשה לו נס ואומר שירה מוחלין לו על כל עוונותיו. והנה אחר שצונו ה' לומר שירה זו בכל יום כדכתיב (שמות טו א) ויאמרו לאמר, וכדכתב רשב"י שרוצה לומר, שנאמר אותה בכל יום בשמחה רבה כשעה ראשונה שאמרנו אותה, ודאי כח סגולתה כל יום כשעה ראשונה למהדרינן.”

He instructs us to recite the daily “Shiroh” out loud, with great joy and enthusiasm, as if we were leaving Egypt, at that very moment. As the Midrash states, just as Moshe transported Yisroel away from their transgressions—which were forgiven by their recitation of the “Shiroh”—so, too, anyone who experiences a miracle and recites a song of praise, will be forgiven his sins. Once Hashem commanded us to recite the “Shiroh” daily, it stands to reason that if we recite it with the same great joy as it was originally recited, it will afford us the same powers of salvation and healing as it did back then.

In a similar vein, the Chida writes in Avodas Kodosh:הפליגו בזוהר הקדוש באמירת שירת הים... ועל כן צריך לאומרה בשמחה רבה ובנעימה, ויצייר בדעתו כאילו עומד ביבשה בתוך הים והמצרים נטבעים והוא ניצול, והיא סגולה לכפרת עוונותיו כידוע” —the Zohar hakadosh extols the virtues of reciting the “Shiroh”. . . therefore, it is important to recite it with great joy and in a pleasing manner; one should picture oneself as if he is standing on dry land in the midst of the sea, the Egyptians are drowning and he is being saved; it is known to be a remedy—an atonement for one’s sins.

To put the matter in perspective, we must explain: (a) how is it possible for somebody to imagine himself standing on dry land in the middle of the sea, while the Egyptians are drowning and he is being saved, when, in fact, he is not really there? (b) what benefit do we derive by picturing ourselves in that scenario?

The Three Dimensions of Shiras HaYam

The Zohar hakadosh (Beshalach 54:) also states that anyone who recites the “Shiroh” with great concentration and intensity in this world, will merit to recite it in the world to come, as well. We see

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that there is a common aspect to the recitation of the “Shiroh” that connects the three dimensions of time—the past, the present and the future. In the past, Moshe and Bnei Yisroel sang the “Shiroh” at the time of krias yam suf; in the present, we continue to recite the “Shiroh” in our tefilos every day; as for the future, it will be when we merit to recite the “Shiroh” in the world to come.

What is the common thread that binds these three “Shiroh”s together? Why will we enjoy the privilege of reciting the “Shiroh” in the world to come in the merit of reciting it with fervor every day in this world? Furthermore, since we are destined to experience miracles from HKB”H in the future, above and beyond the miracles He performed previously, what is the purpose of Yisroel repeating the “Shiroh” in the world to come?

Ever Since Yisroel Sang the “Shiroh” HKB”H Sat Back Down on His Throne

Let us begin our journey by explaining the practical relevance of krias yam suf to our everyday lives. The Midrash states (S.R. 23,1) that from the beginning of creation until Yisroel recited the “Shiroh” at the sea, HKB”H did not sit down upon his throne—rather, He stood, as it were; however, from the moment Yisroel recited the “Shiroh”, He sat down, as it were, on his majestic throne. In the words of the Midrash:

“אז ישיר משה, הדא הוא דכתיב (שם צג ב) נכון כסאך מאז, אמר רבי ברכיה בשם רבי אבהו, אף על פי שמעולם אתה, לא נתיישב כסאך ולא נודעת בעולמך עד שאמרו בניך שירה, לכך “אז” ישיר: “אז”—in other words, the Throne of Glory has been fit to be occupied by HKB”H, “מאז”—ever since Yisroel sang the words at the sea beginning with the word “אז” —משה ובני ישראל. We must endeavor to explain what it means that HKB”H did not occupy His Throne of Glory until Yisroel sang the “Shiroh” at the sea.

First, let us explain a peculiarity in the text describing krias yam suf. The Torah repeats the fact that Bnei Yisroel walked through the sea on dry land twice—once before the waters returned to drown the Egyptians and once afterwards. The text reads as follows (Shemos 14,21):

“ויט משה את ידו על הים, ויולך ה’ את הים ברוח קדים עזה כל הלילה, וישם את הים לחרבה ויבקעו המים, ויבואו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה והמים להם חומה מימינם ומשמאלם, וירדפו מצרים ויבואו אחריהם כל סוס פרעה רכבו ופרשיו אל תוך הים... ויאמר ה’ אל משה נטה את ירך על הים, וישבו המים על מצרים על רכבו ועל פרשיו, ויט משה את ידו על הים, וישב הים לפנות בקר לאיתנו... ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים והמים להם חומה מימינם ומשמאלם.”

Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and Hashem moved the sea with a strong east wind all the night, and He turned the sea to damp land and the water split. Bnei Yisroel came into the sea on dry land; and the water was a wall for them—on their right and on their left. Egypt pursued them and came after them—every horse of Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen—into the midst of the sea. . . Hashem said to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, and the water will go back upon Egypt, upon its chariots and upon its horsemen.” Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and toward morning the water went back to its

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power. . . And Bnei Yisroel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea; the water was a wall for them, on their right and on their left.

The commentaries point out the following anomalies: (1) after Moshe split the waters, it says: **Bnei Yisroel came into the sea on dry land**. Why is this fact repeated after the waters return to engulf the Egyptians? (2) The first time, however, the “yam,” the sea, is mentioned prior to the dry land-- **ביבשה בתוך הים**; whereas, in the repetition, the dry land is mentioned first-- **הים בתוך הים** .

Additionally, let us consider the mitzvah to recall the exodus from Egypt daily. The possuk states (Devarim 16,3): **“למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך”**—so that you will recall the day you left the land of Egypt all the days of your life. The Rambam ruled (Hilchos Krias Shema, 1,3): **“ומצוה להזכיר יציאת מצרים ביום ובלילה, שנאמר למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך”**—it is a mitzvah to mention the exodus from Egypt day and night. This ruling accords with the view of Ben Zoma in the Mishnah (Brochos 12:), who expounds: **“ומצוה להזכיר יציאת מצרים ביום ובלילה, שנאמר למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך הלילות”**—the command is to perform this mitzvah all the days of your life,” which also includes the nights. We must strive to make sense of this commandment to recall the exodus every day and every night. By so doing, we will achieve a greater understanding of how best to perform this mitzvah—what should we be focusing on while performing the mitzvah of recalling “yetzias Mitzrayim”?

The Purpose of the Visible Mitzvos Is to Recognize the Hidden Mitzvos

Let us now introduce a vital principle taught to us by the Ramban toward the end of parshas Bo (Shemos 13,16)—a principle so basic to yiddishkeit that it is worth reviewing morning and night. The purpose of all of the supernatural feats performed on our behalf by HKB”H during the exodus from Egypt, was so that we would recognize and appreciate the tremendous miracles we experience daily—but which are concealed by the laws of nature. He writes:

“ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים, אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים שהם יסוד התורה כולה, שאין לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו, עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו, שכולם נסים אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין ביחיד.”

We must believe that every facet of our lives, as individuals or as a community, is a miraculous act from HKB”H; there is no such thing as “nature” that does not emanate from Him. This concept posited by the Ramban accords beautifully with the comments of the Noam Elimelech (Likutei Shoshanah) on the possuk: **“ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים”**—and Bnei Yisroel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea. He points out that there are tzaddikim who perceive miracles and extraordinary feats, similar to the splitting of the sea, even when they are walking on dry land. Let us appreciate his insightful comments:

“על דרך שפירשתי ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים, דהנה ישראל בשעת קריעת ים סוף ראו נפלאותיו יתברך שמו ורוממותו וגדולתו, ויש צדיקים שהולכים תמיד בדביקות, ולבם תמיד ברוממות אל ובגדולתו אף שלא בשעת קריעת ים סוף, שגם ביבשה רואין נפלאותיו, איך הם עד אין קץ וערך בכל דבר ודבר הנמצא בעולם. וזהו הפירוש ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים, פירוש שביבשה הלכו בזה הרוממות אל כמו בים.”

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There is no end to the miracles of Hashem that surround us in our daily lives. Those who live with this heightened level of dedication and devotion to Hashem, appreciate His feats even though they are walking on dry land.

We Must Praise Hashem for Every Breath We Take

Let us expand upon this concept of the Noam Elimelech. We find in the Midrash (B.R. 14,9): **“על כל נשימה ונשימה שאדם נושם צריך לקלס לבורא, מאי טעמא (תהלים קנ ו) כל הנשמה תהלל יה”** —one must praise Hashem for each and every breath one breathes, since it states (Tehillim 150,6): **“כל הנשמה תהלל יה”** — The Midrash plays with the fact that the word “neshamah,” meaning soul, is similar to the word “neshimah,” meaning breath. The Midrash indicates that by natural means man could not remain alive for even a single day; it is only due to HKB”H’s constant supervision that one remains alive for the duration of one’s decreed lifespan in this world. This incredible idea pertaining to the miracles that surround us every moment and every hour is also expressed in the Gemorah (Shabbos 32.):

“אדם יוצא לשוק, יהי דומה בעיניו כמי שנמסר לסרדיוט, חש בראשו, יהי דומה בעיניו כמי שנתנוהו בקולר, עלה למטה ונפל, יהי דומה בעיניו כמו שהעלוהו לגרדום לידון, שכל העולה לגרדום לידון, אם יש לו פרקליטין גדולים ניצול ואם לאו אינו ניצול, ואלו הן פרקליטין של אדם תשובה ומעשים טובים.”

When a person sets out to the marketplace, it should appear in his eyes as if he were handed over to the Roman court; if one experiences a headache, it should appear in his eyes as if they placed him in chains; if one becomes bedridden, it should appear in his eyes as if they brought him up to the scaffold to be judged. For anyone who ascends the scaffold to be judged: if he has powerful advocates, he will be saved; but if not, he will not be saved. And these are a person’s true advocates: repentance and good deeds.

It is clear, according to this, that it is unnecessary for one to experience miracles such as the splitting of the sea in order to strengthen one’s faith; it suffices to walk on dry land and to observe the miracles which accompany every single step one takes. Nearly every single day, one experiences matters akin to “being handed over to the Roman court,” “being placed in chains,” or “being led to the scaffold.” It is only due to HKB”H’s infinite mercy and kindness that one is spared and is allowed to continue living.

This very idea is expressed in the formula of **“מודים”** instituted by the Members of the Great Assembly to be recited in the shemoneh-esreh: **“על חיינו המסורים בידך, ועל נשמותינו הפקודות ועל נפלאותיך וטובותיך שבכל עת ערב ובקר וצהרים”** —here we express our gratitude to Hashem for the miracles we experience daily in the course of our routine, mundane, natural lives.

By Reciting “Modim” We Fulfill Our Obligation to Praise Hashem for Every Breath We Take

Come and see the amazing words of the Toras Chaim (Bava Kama 16.). He teaches us that the reason that the Members of the Great Assembly instituted the blessing of “modim” to be recited in the shemoneh-esreh thrice daily, is in order to fulfill the command of: **“כל הנשמה תהלל יה”** -

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“על כל נשימה ונשימה שאדם נושם צריך לקלס לבורא” —one must praise Hashem for each and every breath one takes. Here are his beautiful words:

“לפי שהוא יתברך עושה חסד עם כל אדם בכל יום ובכל עת ובכל רגע, אלא שאין בעל הנס מכיר בנסיו, סבור עולם כמנהגו הוא נוהג, ואינו מרגיש שכל פסיעה ופסיעה וכל תנועה ותנועה וכל נשימה ונשימה הוא ממנו יתברך שמו, כמו שנאמר (תהלים לז כג) מה מצעדי גבר כוננו, וכתוב (איוב יב י) אשר בידו נפש כל חי ורוח כל בשר איש.

והיה מן הראוי שיודה האדם ויברך בכל עת ובכל רגע על כל פסיעה ותנועה ונשימה, כמו שאמרו חכמים כל הנשמה תהלל יה, על כל נשימה ונשימה חייב אדם להלל יה, וכל מי שאינו מעלה על לבו בכל רגע שהכל מאתו יתברך אלא עולם כמנהגו נוהג, הרי הוא ככופר בו חס ושלו.

ולפי שהוא מן הנמנע שיעמוד אדם מן הבקר ועד הערב, ויתן שבח והודאה על כל פסיעה ונשימה ותנועה, וכל שכן רוב בני העולם הולכים תמיד אחרי הבלי העולם הזה באסיפת ממון וכיוצא בזה, ואפילו הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה והודאה, אמרו חכמים (ברכות לה:): דהוי כאלו מעל וגוזל לכנסת ישראל שנאמר לה' הארץ וגו'.

ולזאת המציאו אנשי כנסת הגדולה תקנה, ויסדו לומר בכל תפלה ערב ובקר וצהרים ברכת הודאה, כדי שיכלול אדם בהודאה אחת את כל הנשימות וחסדים ונפלאות שהוא יתברך עושה עמו בכל רגע, ויוצא ידי חובת כולן בבת אחת בהודאה אחת, ולזה יסדו לומר מודים אנחנו לך וכו', על חיינו המסורים בידך ועל נשמותינו הפקודות לך, דהיינו על כל נשימה ונשימה, ועל נסיך שבכל יום ויום עמנו ועל נפלאותיך וטובותיך שבכל עת ערב ובקר וצהרים וכו'.”

In reality, HKB”H is constantly performing favors on our behalf to which we are oblivious, for the most part. Most of His deeds are taken for granted as part of the daily scheme of things. Every step, every movement and every breath, all emanate from HKB”H. Therefore, it would behoove man to thank Hashem and bless Him every minute of every day. Not to appreciate this kindness is a form of denial, chas v’shalom.

Seeing as it is impossible to stand in praise and thanks to Hashem from morning ‘til night—and most people, unfortunately, are so busy chasing after money and other trivial matters of this world without so much as uttering a berocheh or a word of thanks—the Members of the Great Assembly devised a brilliant solution.

They established a blessing of gratitude to be recited during each of the three daily prayers. In this manner, one can simultaneously fulfill one’s debt of gratitude to HKB”H for all His constant favors and miracles on our behalf with one single expression of thanks. This is the purpose of reciting the formula of “modim anachnu lach”—thanking Hashem for our very lives and every single breath which are under His constant control and supervision.

Only After the Sea Split Did They Walk on Dry Land in the Midst of the Sea

Now, if we combine the Ramban’s principle with the insight of the Noam Elimelech, we begin to appreciate the tremendous importance of “krias yam suf.” In reality, the purpose of creation is that man recognizes HKB”H’s miracles even while walking on dry land—understanding that, in a sense,

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he is in the midst of the sea. Yet, it would be impossible to achieve this faith and awareness concerning the daily miracles we experience during the normal, natural course of our lives, had HKB”H not performed the supernatural feat of the splitting of the sea first. In the words of the Ramban: **”ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים”**—upon witnessing the incredible, well-known miracles one admits to the existence of the concealed miracles.

We can now understand the apparent redundancy in the text—where the mention of Yisroel walking on the dry land in the midst of the sea is repeated. Initially, the Torah teaches us that HKB”H split the sea: **”וישם את הים לחרבה ויבקעו המים”**—**and He turned the sea into damp land and the water split**. At that point, it says: **”ויבואו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה”**—**Bnei Yisroel came within the sea on dry land**. Since they were immersed in Egypt in the forty-nine levels of tumah--impurity and desecration—they had to first come “within the sea on dry land,” in order to appreciate the miracles that HKB”H performs supernaturally.

Nevertheless, after the sea had already split for all of Yisroel, and they recognized the supernatural feats that HKB”H performs, the Torah proceeds to teach us that after the water returned to engulf the Egyptians: **”וישב המים על מצרים על רכבו ועל פרשיו, ויט משה את ידו על הים, וישב הים --לפנות בקר לאיתנו”** **and the water will go back upon Egypt, upon its chariots and upon its horsemen. Moshe stretched out his hand over the sea, and toward morning the water went back to its power**. This time, the text mentions the “yabosho,” the dry land, before the “yam,” the sea. This comes to teach us the lesson of the Noam Elimelech—that even when treading upon dry land, they were now able to recognize Hashem’s miracles, just like when they were previously walking through the middle of the sea.

Recalling the Exodus from Egypt In Order to Recognize Natural Miracles

Based on what we have discussed, we can begin to comprehend the deeper objective lying behind the mitzvah of recalling the exodus from Egypt every day and every night. It is clear that HKB”H performs miracles and supernatural feats every moment of the day, which are disguised within the boundaries of nature. After all, this is the modus operandi of the yetzer horah; he makes every effort to blind us to the fact that Hashem performs favors and deeds on our behalf within the confines of nature.

For this reason, in His infinite mercy and kindness, Hashem gave us the mitzvah to recall the exodus from Egypt every day: **”למען תזכור את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך”**-- **so that you will recall the day you left the land of Egypt all the days of your life**. By mentioning the exodus from Egypt--which was entirely above and beyond the realm of nature--this serves as a wonderful aid to assist us in opening our eyes to recognize even those miracles that HKB”H performs within the realm of nature on a daily basis on our behalf. To quote the Ramban, once again: **”ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים”**--the more obvious miracles teach us to appreciate the less obvious miracles.

Thus, we have shed light on the teachings of the Sefer HaChareidim and the Chida cited in the beginning of this article. Both stress the importance of reciting the “Shirah” daily, out loud, with joy

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meaning of the statement: **“לעולם הבא כולו הטוב והמטיב”**-- **But, in the World to Come, all of the blessings will be: Blessed are You. . . Who is good and does good.** In other words, even concerning negative events over which we recited, in exile, **“ברוך דיין האמת”**—**Blessed. . . is the true Judge**—in the future, we will recite **“הטוב והמטיב”**—**Blessed. . . Who is good and does good.** For, it will then be clear to us how everything that transpired was in our best interest.

With this understanding, we stand enlightened with regard to the matter of why Yisroel will sing the “Shiroh” in the Future Days. Currently, we recite the “Shiroh” daily, while in exile, recalling the supernatural events that occurred at Yam Suf, in order to stimulate our belief in the miracles that HKB”H performs on our behalf daily—but which are concealed within the guise of the laws of nature. In the anticipated future, however, when HKB”H actually reveals the truth to us, we will sing the “Shiroh” to proclaim our thanks and praise for all of the concealed miracles that were performed on our behalf.

Now, we can rejoice and shed light upon the essence of the common thread binding the three temporal dimensions of the “Shiroh” together: (1) the singing of the “Shiroh” by Moshe and Bnei Yisroel at the splitting of the sea, (2) the recitation of the daily “Shiroh” in every generation and (3) the “Shiroh” that we will have the privilege to sing in the Days to Come. The purpose of the “Shiroh” at the time of the splitting of the sea, was to praise Hashem for the visible miracles, so that we would come to recognize the concealed miracles that HKB”H performs on our behalf daily—a realization of the state of: **“ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים”**-- **and Bnei Yisroel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea.**

This is why we recite the “Shiroh” every day, even while in exile—to develop a firm belief in the miracles that we may be unaware of. In the merit of this daily recitation, we will merit to recite the “Shiroh” in the Future Days—when the truth will actually be revealed to us regarding all of the concealed miracles that HKB”H performed on our behalf throughout all the various exiles.

In the Merit of the “Shiroh” HKB”H Sits on His Throne of Glory

It is now appropriate to return to the words of the Midrash. It stated that prior to Yisroel singing the “Shiroh”, HKB”H stood; once Yisroel sang the “Shiroh”, He sat down on His Throne of Glory. This fact is expressed by the verse: **“נכון כסאך מאז”**—HKB”H’s Throne of Glory has been fit to sit upon ever since Yisroel proclaimed the words: **“אז ישיר משה”**.

The purpose of creation is that we choose HKB”H to be our king and to sit on His royal Throne in this world. In other words, we must believe absolutely that HKB”H manages and oversees every detail of creation in this world. This is in stark contrast to the goyim’s belief that it is beneath HKB”H’s honor to dwell in this world and to involve Himself in its day to day affairs.

So, according to the goyim’s point-of-view, HKB”H stands apart and above all matters pertaining to this world; hence, He does not occupy His royal Throne in this world. This is the meaning of the Midrash. Before Yisroel sang the “Shiroh” at the sea, HKB”H resembled a spectator, standing outside of this world and merely observing. The point is not that He was actually standing, but that in relation to mankind—who failed to comprehend that He was actively involved in overseeing the

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affairs of this world—it was if He was standing; for, His sovereignty in this world was not yet established or accepted.

Nonetheless, from the moment Yisroel sang the “Shiroh” at the sea in gratitude for the supernatural miracles performed on their behalf—whose purpose was to instill an awareness with regards to the daily miracles HKB”H performs on our behalf within the realm of nature—HKB”H has occupied, as it were, His Throne of Glory in this world. He sits on His royal Throne as a king would, amongst his loyal subjects. [The sacred sefer Bris Kehunas Olam points out that the numerical value of the word **הכס"א**, meaning the chair or throne, is equivalent to the numerical value of the word **הטב"ע**, meaning nature; both equal eighty-six. This implies that it is due to our belief--that HKB”H manages even this lowly world that is run by the laws of nature--that He occupies His majestic Throne.]

In summary, we have learned that the purpose of reciting the “Shiroh” every day, and in particular on Shabbos “Shiroh”, is to stimulate a firm belief within us concerning the concealed miracles that HKB”H performs daily on our behalf—be it as a community or as an individual. As a community, the congregation of Yisroel resemble a single lamb surrounded by seventy hungry wolves wishing to devour her. As individuals, HKB”H performs miracles and wondrous deeds on our behalf on a regular basis—every moment of every day. In the merit of reciting the “Shiroh” in this world, we will merit singing the shira in the World to Come—when HKB”H will reveal to us all of the hidden miracles that He performed on our behalf throughout all of the periods of exile. May we merit to sing that “Shiroh” speedily, and in our days, Amen.