

# עדת אש קודש – מנצסטר

בנשיאת מוה"ר י. ראובן רובין שליט"א

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בס"ד

## Highlights from the haftara, parashas Beshalach

By Rabbi Yitzchak Reuven Rubin

There are certain truths that seem so apparent that we don't even speak of them. This is a mistake because if they are not articulated they become lost or dormant in our minds, and this can be very dangerous indeed. The Torah has a way of bringing up what may seem apparent at different levels, so that such forgetfulness can never be blamed on the source of all truth.

This week's haftara, coupled with the Torah reading, reminds us of just one such truth. It speaks of the extraordinary power of women's spirituality, and does so in a variety of scenarios. First in the Torah reading we have Miriam leading the Jewish women in song and dance after the splitting of the sea. Her words are short, yet the rhythm of her drums beat on down the generations. To her there was no doubt of our salvation, she had sought to save her infant brother Moshe at the Nile, and consistently supported his work. To her, the song sung by the women would not need stanzas of explanation – it was clear and concise. For to the soul of a woman the facts were always there.

We should do more than mere lip service to this ability of the *Yiddishe* mothers. Throughout the Torah we find this theme, wherein the women are hugely spiritual and understanding of things that men often have to struggle with before acknowledging. In the haftara this comes forth even clearer. Here we meet a rarity, a woman prophetess and judge, a military leader, and a mother in Israel. Her name is Devora, a name we have seen before in our Torah, one that explains a lot about how this woman could do what she was called upon to do. She was very likely named after the Torah's first Devora, a woman no less a heroine given her times and responsibilities.

That earlier Devora is almost invisible, yet she has enormous input into who we are today. In *parashas Chayei Sara* the Torah tells us how our mother Rivka left home to marry Yitzchak: "And they sent Rivka their sister and her nurse." Interesting, Rivka goes to her wedding accompanied by her nanny. Why did the soon to be married Rivka need her nursemaid? Seems a bit strange, but so it was, and the Torah found it so vital that it mentions this small fact for all time.

Decades later in the parasha of *Vayishlach* it says, "And Devora, Rivka's nurse, died, and she was buried at the foot of Beis El under an oak tree; and he [Yaakov] called its name Alon Bachus, The Tree of Weeping." Devora was the nanny of Rivka. When Rivka married Yitzchak, Devora for some reason came along with her. Many years later, we find her not in the house of Yitzchak (who was still alive) but instead she is travelling with Yaakov, the son of Yitzchak and Rivka.

Rav Yisrael Miller in his *sefer*, "What's Wrong With Being Human," explains this difficulty with a

sweet insight. He brings a Ramban that explains that Devora had come with Rivka from her home in Iraq to Eretz Yisrael, but she later returned to Iraq to the house of Lavan. Why? The Torah does not say. Now when Yaakov is returning to Eretz Yisrael, the old nurse, Devora, is with him when she dies on the way. We understand that the household was saddened. But the Torah tells us that Yaakov called her burial place "The Tree of Weeping," which indicates that everyone wept for her, an honor not mentioned over the deaths of Avraham, Sara, Yitzchak or Rivka.

Rav Miller explains that Avraham wanted his son to marry a girl who was idealistic and worthy of carrying on the holy task that Avraham and Sara started. Rivka was only a young girl, but from whence did she learn such dedication? Her father was a non-believer, and her brother Lavan was a world's class "no good-nick." The answer is, Devora, the nanny. It was from her that the future mother of the Jewish nation learned about Hashem and His truth. This is why the Torah mentions her accompanying Rivka. And when years pass, and Yitzchak and Rivka sent their son Yaakov to seek a wife from the house of none other than Lavan, who is it that is there to help raise the next generation of Yidden? Devora, the Rebbe who goes under the simple guise of a nanny. Rivka had known that the custom of the family was to take a wife from this family, so she sent her Devora, to make certain that Rachel and Laya would be raised in the proper fashion. When her mission was accomplished, with Devora accompanying Rachel, Laya and Yaakov with their children back home to Eretz Yisrael, she past away, and all wept for this Rebbe of our Matriarchs.

This is the Devora who inspired the naming of the Prophetess, Devora, and it is this uniqueness of spirit that made everything that followed possible. The Devora of our haftara leads an army, sees to the vanquishing of our harshest of enemies, yet when her song comes to be sung she says, "I arose as a mother in Israel." This powerful leader of men, this valiant fighter, tells us, "I am a *Yiddishe Mamma!*" Miriam was a midwife; the first Devora was a nanny. *Gevald*, such simplicity, such enormous spirit.

Today we live in sophisticated times, parents are busy and children are sent off to school with the hope that the teachers, the *melamdin*, will do the right thing. However, here we see the secret of our future success; it all lies in the hands of the mothers of Israel. One cannot be but astounded by the dedication of those mothers and the high spirituality that they live by. Every child is her jewel, and her prayers rip open gates that may otherwise be closed. In our world today every *Yiddishe* mother must be a Devora, inculcated with the caring love of Miriam and all other holy mothers throughout the ages.

This world around us is a dark place, families are falling apart and the secular enlightenment has corrupted the entire atmosphere. The one true hope we have is in the light that our mothers carry within their every act. Some may be called upon to be nannies to their young, others perhaps midwives to the minds of their children, helping them to give birth to the Torah's truth. There may even be a call for a general, who knows, but no matter, each Jewish mother has it within herself to be today's Devora. And so perhaps this haftara really is in their honor.