



DERECH B'YAM HATALMUD



WHO JUMPED INTO THE SEA FIRST?

**A GUIDED APPROACH TO
UNDERSTANDING KRIS YAM SUF**

**FROM THE GEMARA (SOTAH 36B-37A)
AND MIDRASH**

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SECTION ONE



Binyomin Takes the Initiative

OVERVIEW

Krias Yam Suf is one of the most dramatic events in history, which clearly shows the power of Hashem's hand and the faith of the Jewish people.

Numerous questions need to be answered to understand the event, including:

- *Who jumped into the sea first?*
- *Why did they do so and how were they rewarded?*
- *Since Hashem Himself caused the Yam to split, why did He wait to split the sea until the Jews jumped in?*

מראה מקומות

- גמרא סוטה מ-לו: "יהודה מאי היא... " עד לז. "ובין כתפיו שכן"
- תוס' (לז. ד"ה והיו שרי יהודה)
- בניהו (לז. ד"ה קפץ)
- בן יהודע (לז. ד"ה לפיכך)

Summary of the Gemara

The Gemara in Mesechtas Sotah addresses the events of Krias Yam Suf, within a larger discussion of the spelling of the names of יוסף and יהודה.

Background Information: The Jews left Mitzrayim on the morning of the 15th of Nisan. One week later on the afternoon of the 20th, when the Jews were encamped on the banks of the sea, the Egyptian army approached from behind. The Jews were trapped with no seeming hope for escape.

The Jews cried out to Hashem. They also made plans to respond physically, but were divided of how to proceed. One portion of the Jews thought that they should jump into the sea. A second group said that they should try to find a way to return to Mitzrayim. A third group wished to fight the Egyptians. The fourth group thought it would be best to surrender.

Though not recorded in the verses, we know that Moshe prayed at length that Hashem should save the Jewish people. Hashem's response to him is recorded. "דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו" – "why are you crying out to Me?" "מה תצעק אלי" – "Speak to the Bnei Yisrael and tell them to go!"

Hashem continued and told Moshe, "ואתה הרם את מטך ונטה את ידך על הים" – "And you, raise your staff and lift up your hand over the sea and cause it to split," "ויבאו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה" – "and the Jews should enter within the sea on the dry land."

The Malach and the pillar of cloud moved behind the Jews, between them and the Egyptians. They provided light for the Jews and protected them from attack. The verse records, "ויט משה את ידו על הים" – Moshe then stretched his hand over the sea and commanded its waters to part. Though the Yam initially refused to split, it did so when Hashem brought a strong east wind throughout the night to part the waters and dry the seabed.

The Jews first entered the sea in the evening of the 21st and crossed throughout the night. Early the next morning as the sun's rays first shone on the horizon, the Egyptian army entered the split waters. As the last of the Jews exited from one side of the sea, the rear of Pharaoh's army entered the water from the other side. Once the Egyptians were all within the split sea and the Jews had all emerged, Hashem told Moshe to raise his hand over the sea again to cause the waters to crash down on the Egyptians.

That morning, on the 21st of Nisan, on the last day of Pesach, the Jews sang Shiras HaYam in recognition of the tremendous miracle which had occurred to them, and to express their faith in Hashem and the leadership of Moshe.¹

Note: The Midrash mentions numerous reasons why the Yam Suf split, including the merit of Yosef running away from the advances of Potiphar's wife (Bereishis Rabbah 87:8, Midrash Tehillim 114:9), the merits of the Avos and Shevatim (Mechilta – Beshalach 3:2,4, Shemos Rabbah 21:8), the merit of the Jews' Bris Milah (Mechilta – Beshalach 3:3), the future building of the Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalyim (Mechilta – Beshalach 3:4), and because the sea "saw" Hashem "holding the hand of Moshe" (Shemos Rabbah 21:6).

¹ Based on Shemos 14:10-29, Shemos Rabbah 21:6, Mechilta (Beshalach - Vayehi 5:6), Seder Olam, Rashi to Sotah 12b, Anaf Yosef to Bereishis Rabbah 5:1

Here, we focus specifically on the actions of the Jews at the Yam which precipitated the splitting.

The Gemara in Sotah notes that the name of the tribe יוסף has a single letter from Hashem's primary name (the letter "י"), while the name יהודה has all four letters from it (the letters "י-ה-ו-ה"). It discusses the merit of each tribe which caused it to receive these letters.

In the middle of daf 36b it teaches: יהודה שקידש שם שמים בפרהסייה – since the tribe of Yehuda sanctified the name of heaven in public – נקרא כולו על ה' – its name includes the entire name of ה'.

*...יהודה מאי היא – The Gemara beginning on the bottom of the page says that this refers to Krias Yam Suf. (The Gemara will say at the end that Yehuda merited to be the tribe of **Malchus** – kingship – because of their conduct at this time.)*

*דתניא – The Gemara brings a Baraisa with a dispute how to understand the events which occurred at the water's edge, how the tribes acted and whose actions precipitated the splitting of the sea. The commentators say that the Baraisa is based on the **Mechilta** (Beshalach – Vayehi 5:1)².*

The Baraisa brings two approaches to understand the events of Krias Yam Suf.

Approach One

כשעמדו – היה רבי מאיר אומר – when the Jewish people stood at the edge of the water – הם – היו שבטים מנצחים זה עם זה – the tribes were competing with each other.

"אני יורד תחילה לים" – זה אומר – This one said, "I will descend first into the sea," "אני יורד תחילה לים" – וזה אומר – and this one said, "I will descend first into the sea."

As the tribes were fighting, קפץ שבטו של בנימין וירד לים תחילה, – the tribe of Binyomin leapt forward and descended first into the sea.

The Gemara brings support from Tehillim 68:28 which reads, "שם בנימין" – "צעיר רדם" – "there, Binyomin, the youngest, rules them." The Gemara says that the last word should be read as "רד ים" – Binyomin descended into the sea.

² A Midrash on Sefer Shemos.

-The **Maharsha** (ד"ה קפ"ז שבטו של בנימין) says that the members of Binyomin jumped into the sea before it split, since they trusted the command which Hashem gave to Moshe of "ויסעו" – go (into the water before it splits). In contrast, the other tribes waited for the waters to part before they entered.

והיו שרי יהודה רוגמים אותם – In response, the leaders of Yehuda stoned the members of Binyomin. It quotes the end of the verse in Tehillim which says this explicitly, "שרי יהודה רוגמתם" – the princes of Yehuda stoned them.

-Rashi on the verse Tehillim says that they did so out of jealousy that Binyomin had entered first.

... לפיכך – The Gemara says that due to this event, the tribe of Binyomin became אושפיזון לגבורה – the host of the Divine Presence. It quotes the verse, "ובין כתפה שכן" – "Hashem dwells between his shoulders" (Devarim 32:12).³

-Rashi (ד"ה אושפיזון לגבורה) says that this refers to the location of the Kodsh HaKedoshim of the Beis HaMikdash in the territory of Binyomin.

Several questions need to be resolved to understand this explanation of Krias Yam Suf, including:

QUESTION ONE: Why did Binyomin take the initiative and jump into the sea first? Since Yehuda is the tribe of the kings, it would seem more appropriate for Yehuda to enter first.

QUESTION TWO: The Gemara brings this Baraisa to explain how the tribe of Yehuda sanctified Hashem's name in public. How can this be seen in the episode? (If anything, Binyomin should be the focus of the praise, since they jumped in first.)

QUESTION THREE: Why did the tribe of Yehuda act in such a zealous fashion against Binyomin?

Tosefos (ד"ה והיו שרי יהודה) explains the opinion of Rebbi Meir, based on a story brought in the **Mechilta** (Beshalach – Vayehi 5:1).

The Mechilta records that a king once commanded each of his two sons to awaken him on the following morning. However, he gave each of them different instructions. He

³ Note: The Mechilta mentions that the leaders of the tribes of Naftali and Zevulun also jumped into the water, and it records the reward which their tribes received. However, this is not mentioned in the Baraisa quoted here.

asked the younger son, "העמידני עם נץ החמה" – “wake me at sunrise.” He asked the older son, "העמידני בג' שעות" – “wake me three hours after sunrise.”

The following morning, the younger son approached his father’s chambers to awaken him at sunrise. His older brother refused to allow him to do so. They began to quarrel loudly over the exact command to wake up their father, and מתוך שהיו עומדים צהובין ננער אביהן – the father awoke due to their fighting. He told them, "שניכם לא כיוונתם אלא לכבודי" – “since you both acted only in my honor,” "עף אני לא אקפח את שכרכם" – “I will not withhold reward from both of you.”

מה שכר נטלו – In his second half, Tosefos explains the reward which the Baraisa says that each tribe received for their actions in this episode:

He says because the members of Binyomin jumped into the sea first, they deserved to have the Shechinah rest in their portion of Eretz Yisrael.

Yehuda was worthy of receiving Malchus because they stoned Binyomin for going first.

Tosefos cites a verse as support for the reward of Yehuda, which says that Belshatzar, the king of Babylonia, promoted his Jewish advisor Doniel to a position of leadership in the kingdom, "והלבישו לדניאל ארגוונא" – “and dressed Doniel in a royal cloak.”

-(Several commentators on the Midrash explain that the verse regarding Doniel is brought as an example of the worthiness of Yehuda, because Doniel came from the tribe of Yehuda and so was worthy of leading the Jewish people. They note that the word brought in the verse regarding his clothing, ארגוונא, indicates that it was made of ארגמן – expensive purple-dyed cloth. The word ארגמן is based on the root "רגם", meaning to stone. This is a hint to the actions of Doniel’s ancestors at the sea.)

QUESTION: The words of the Mechilta brought by Tosefos need elucidation. What is the meaning of the story regarding the king and his sons, and how does it explain the actions of the tribes of Yehuda and Binyomin?

Understanding the actions of Binyomin and Yehuda

The **Ben Ish Chai** in (לז. ד"ה קפ"ז) בניהו says that the tribe of Binyomin chose to jump into the water first to fulfill the words which the Jews would say subsequently in the Shiras HaYam, "הי ימלוך לעולם ועד" – “Hashem will reign forever.” The first king of the Jewish nation, Shaul, was a member of Binyomin. Since one of the primary responsibilities of the king is to lead the people to sanctify the Name of Hashem, the tribe of Binyomin claimed that they were the most worthy of entering first.

Yehuda took offense at this, since the kingship belongs to them forever (as it would belong to them following the passing of Shaul and his sons). They claimed that as the tribe of the kings, they should enter first because it would cause the greatest sanctification of Hashem's Name.

Understanding the story of the king

The **Meromei Sadeh** suggests an explanation of the actions of the two sons in the story. The younger son represents the younger tribe Binyomin, who understood that the proper action was to wake his father early as a precise fulfillment of his command. Binyomin did the same, thinking that the most proper way to sanctify Hashem's Name was to jump into the water first.

The older son protested that their father should not be woken early, and that he should be allowed to awaken on his own later (by the third hour). This is akin to Yehuda who thought that there would be a great sanctification of Hashem's name if Hashem Himself would cause the water to split. Therefore the tribe of Yehuda did not jump into the water, and protested when Binyomin did so.

QUESTION: Since all of the tribes were fighting who would enter first, why does the Mechilta say that Binyomin and Yehuda alone were rewarded for their actions?

The commentator **Zeh Yinachmeini** on the Mechilta asks why only Binyomin and Yehuda were rewarded.

He answers that in the story of the king and his sons, the older son (compared to Yehuda) protested when the younger son (Binyomin) wanted to wake their father. The older son was not willing to watch passively as his brother woke their father, but took action to prevent this. This showed his focus on precisely guarding his father's command. His eagerness to do so was the cause of his disagreement with his brother, which caused their father to awaken, and for him to subsequently reward both of them.

At the sea, all of the tribes were fighting who would enter first, but no one took the initiative to actually do so. Therefore when Binyomin jumped in, and Yehuda protested, they each received their just reward.

Understanding the reward given to Binyomin and Yehuda

The Baraisa says, according to the explanation of Tosefos, that the two tribes of Binyomin and Yehuda received their reward specifically because of their actions at the sea. Since Binyomin jumped into the water first and sanctified Hashem's Name in doing

so, they became the eternal hosts of the Beis HaMikdash. Since Yehuda had desired to go first, and opposed the tribe of Binyomin doing so, they were rewarded with receiving the Malchus.

QUESTION: How can the Gemara say that Binyomin deserved that the Beis HaMikdash be built in its territory because of the tribe's actions at the Yam, and that Yehuda deserved to be the kings because of their actions there? Both rewards had been promised to them years earlier. For example, the Gemara earlier in Sotah (10b) says that because Yehuda admitted to his relationship with Tamar (prior to Krias Yam Suf), he deserved that his tribe would become the kings of the Jewish people.

The **Ben Ish Chai** in (לז. ד"ה לפיכך) **בן יהוידע** says that the events of Krias Yam Suf were not the cause of Binyomin and Yosef receiving the reward of the Beis HaMikdash and the kingship. They had already received each of these. Rather, the actions of each tribe at the Yam gave them the additional merit to ensure that these would belong to them forever.

He explains that even though the tribe of Binyomin was already promised to have the site of the Beis HaMikdash in their territory, this might have been temporary, just as the Mishkan would move to multiple locations. Through their actions at the sea, they were rewarded that all three of the Batei HaMikdash would be in their land.

Yehuda also might have been concerned that the Malchus would not belong to them forever, just as it would be taken away from Binyomin. Therefore, Hashem said that because they sanctified Hashem's name at the sea, they deserved to be the eternal possessors of the kingship.

The **Iyun Yaacov** on the (לו: ד"ה יהודה מה היא) **עין יעקב** says similarly, that even though the original Yehuda admitted to his actions with Tamar, this was not sufficient for his tribe to be the kings forever. To guarantee this reward required an even greater action, a tremendous public sanctification of Hashem's Name.

SECTION TWO



The Bravery of Nachshon ben Aminadav

OVERVIEW

On 37a, the Baraisa brings a second explanation of the events at the sea, that Nachshon ben Aminadav from Yehuda jumped first into the sea. It is necessary to understand his decision to do so, and why he alone did this.

מראה מקומות

- גמרא סוטה לז. מ- "אמר לו רבי יהודה" עד "מצולה וגו'"
- מהרש"א (ד"ה לפיכך)
- עץ יוסף (עין יעקב - לז. ד"ה א"ל רבי יהודה)

Summary of the Gemara

Approach Two

*אמר לו רבי יהודה – The Baraisa on 37a quotes **Rebbi Yehuda** who brings a second explanation of the events of the sea. He said, "לא כך היה מעשה" – "the event did not occur in the way you described it," אין – "אלא זה אומר" – rather, each tribe said, "I will **not** be the first to descend into the sea."*

קפץ – As the tribes were fighting and trying to delay entering the water, נחשון בן עמינדב וירד לים תחילה – Nachshon ben Aminadav (the future leader of the tribe of Yehuda) leapt first into the sea.

– שנאמר "סכבוני בכחש אפרים ובמרמה בית ישראל..." – It quotes the verse, "Efraim has surrounded Me with falsehood, and the house of Yisrael with deceit", which indicates that the other tribes were uncertain whether to

enter the water, "ויהודה עד רד עם קל" – "but Yehuda still ruled with G-d" (Hoshea 12:1-2).

-**Rashi** (ד"ה בכחש אפרים) ו-(ד"ה רד עם קל) says that the other tribes' reluctance to enter the water showed their lack of **אמונה** (faith in Hashem) and a fear of relying on Hashem. In contrast, the tribe of Yehuda jumped into the sea because they trusted in Him.

...ועליו מפרש בקבלה – *The Baraisa says that this event is described in Tehillim 69. The Baraisa quotes several verses, including the second which records the words which Nachshon ben Aminadav said (when he entered the water before it split, and was at risk of drowning): "הושיעני" "אלקים כי באו מים עד נפש" – "Save me Hashem because the waters have reached until the soul."*

-The **Berurei HaMidos** on the Mechilta notes that the phrase **באו** "אלקים כי באו מים עד נפש" is Roshei Teivos for **נחשון בן עמינדב מוטבע** – Nachshon ben Aminadav is drowning.

The Baraisa continues and says that Hashem told Moshe at this moment, "ידידי טובעים בים" – My beloved people (referring to the tribe of Yehuda) are drowning in the sea. Due to this event (of jumping into the water), Yehuda received the eternal kingship.

The **Maharsha** (ד"ה לפיכך) explains that the verse "**הים ראה וינס**" – "the sea saw and fled" (Tehillim 114:3), indicates that the sea saw that Nachshon ben Aminadav had risked his life by jumping into the sea first without knowing it would split. In so doing, he sanctified the name of Heaven. He was saved from drowning, as the verse teaches, **צדיק מושל ביראת**, **אלקים** – the righteous man rules through his fear of G-d (Shmuel II 23:3).

QUESTION: Since the Baraisa and Midrash say that only Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water, why did his entire tribe receive the right of the kingship?

The **Vilna Gaon** in **א על מכילתא הגהות הגר"א** says that the correct text of the Mechilta should read, "Nachshon ben Aminadav leapt first into the sea and his *entire tribe* jumped in after him into the waves of the sea."

The **Eitz Yosef** says that it is necessary to make this change because the Mechilta says, "ידידי טובעים בים" – My beloved people are drowning.

The **Berurei HaMidos** says that the tribe of Yehuda deserved to become the kings because they all jumped into the sea.

The **Ben Ish Chai** says that the word ים (sea) is Roshei Teivos for ירידה וממשלה – entering and ruling, describing the actions of the tribe of Yehuda and the reward they received.

QUESTION: Why were the tribes afraid to enter the sea? After the Makkos in Egypt and other miracles which saved them, they should have trusted that Hashem would save them again in a miraculous way.

The **Eitz Yosef** on the (לה. ד"ה א"ל רבי יהודה) asks that the explanation of Rabbi Yehuda (that the tribes were fighting over who would not enter first) is difficult to understand. Why would they not want to fulfill the command of Hashem to enter the water?

He answers that Hashem commanded Moshe, "וְאַתָּה הֲרֵם אֶת מִטְּךָ וְנִטְּהָ אֶת יָדְךָ עַל הַיָּם" – "And you, raise your staff and lift up your hand over the sea and split it" (Shemos 14:16). The tribes understood from this that the sea would not split on its own, or due to their actions, but only because of Moshe. The tribes refused to enter out of fear of violating the command of Hashem (based on their mistaken understanding of it). They understood that He meant that they should enter the water only after it split, and not before.

However, Nachshon ben Aminadav understood the command differently, based on the words at the end of the verse. It records that Hashem continued and said, "וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁה" – "and the Jews should enter within the sea on the dry land."

Nachshon understood that Hashem was commanding the Jews to enter into the water (בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם), and only then it would split to become dry land (בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁה).

The **Yad Yosef** on the (ד"ה ומה דכתיב) says similarly, that the other tribes entered the sea after it had turned to dry land. He cites the verse, "וַיָּבֵאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם בַּיַּבֶּשֶׁה" – "The Jews entered the into the sea on the dry seabed, and the water was a wall to their right and their left" (Shemos 14: 22). He notes that the word חוֹמָה – wall – is sometimes read as חֲמָה – anger – because Hashem was upset that the other tribes waited to enter the sea.

QUESTION: How can the dispute of the events of Krias Yam Suf be understood? Is there a way to resolve the two opinions?

Pirke D'Rebbi Eliezer (Perek 42) presents an additional way to understand the events of Krias Yam Suf, from **Rabbi Akiva**.⁴

Rabbi Akiva says that when the Jews were standing at the water's edge, they were afraid to enter. The tribe of Binyomin wished to enter (and began to do so), as the verse from Tehillim says, "שם בנימין צעיר רדם."

The leaders of the tribe of Yehuda began to stone them, as the verse continues "שרי יהודה רגמתם".

While this was occurring, Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped into the water first, thereby sanctifying Hashem's Name in everyone's eyes.

The tribe of Yehuda followed their leader, and then all the Jews entered the sea after them.

⁴ The Machlokes Tannaim brought in both the Mechilta and Gemara is between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehuda. Both were students of Rabbi Akiva.

SECTION THREE



Tefilah Versus Action

OVERVIEW

The תורה records that when the Jews were standing at the water's edge, Moshe prayed to Hashem to save them. Hashem responded, מַה תַּצַּעַק "מה תצעק" – "why are you crying out to Me?"

How can the response of Hashem be understood? What why was it incorrect for Moshe to pray at that moment?

מראה מקומות

- גמרא סוטה לז. מ- "באותה שעה" עד "משום דהים ראה וינוס"
- רש"י – שמות (יד:טו)
- מהרש"א – סוטה לז. (ד"ה וא"ל הקב"ה ידידי טובעים בים)
- מהרש"א (ד"ה ואמר שא"ל הקב"ה דבר)

Summary of the Gemara

The Gemara in the middle of Sotah 37a continues its discussion of the events of Krias Yam Suf, and who jumped first into the water. It analyzes the conversation between Hashem and Moshe which was occurring at this time. (Note that the conversation occurred independent of the debate of who first entered the sea.)

The Baraisa says: at that time, Moshe was praying at length. Hashem said to him, "my beloved ones are drowning in the sea," ואתה מאריך בתפילה לפני – "and you are prolonging your prayers before Me?"

Moshe replied, "Master of the Universe, but what is in my power to do?"

"ואתה הרם" ואתה הרם – Hashem responded (as the verse records), "speak to the children of Israel and have them go," "ואתה הרם" ואתה הרם – "and you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand (to cause the sea to split)" (Shemos 14:15-16).

-The **Maharsha** (ד"ה ואמר שא"ל הקב"ה דבר) cites Rashi from Shemos who says that Hashem gave two distinct commands to Moshe. When Hashem told him to command the Jews "ויסעו" – "go (into the water)," this was specifically for those who had already entered the sea. The subsequent command of "ונטה את ידך" – "lift up your staff," was to split the water so that the other tribes could follow.

לפיכך זכה יהודה לעשות ממשלה בישראל – The Gemara continues and says that because the tribe of Yehuda sanctified the name of Heaven through their actions at the sea, they merited to establish the kingship of the Jewish nation.⁵

שנאמר "היתה יהודה לקדשו וישראל ממשלותיו" – This is as the verse says, "Yehuda became His (Hashem's) sanctified one (to rule over) His dominions" (Tehillim 114:2).

משום ד-"הים ראה וינס" – The Gemara concludes that Yehuda received this privilege because, "the sea saw and ran away (when Nachshon entered)" (Tehillim 114:3).

Elucidating the conversation between Hashem and Moshe

QUESTION: Why did Hashem tell Moshe to cease praying for the Jews to be saved at the Yam? Prayer is one of the most important ways to respond to danger, and Hashem is מתאוה – He desires our tefilos.

The verse records that Hashem said to Moshe, "מה תצעק אלי" – "why are you crying out to Me?" (Shemos 14:15).

Three approaches from the Midrash to explain Hashem's command to Moshe:

Approach One

The **Mechilta** (Beshalach 3:1) brings two explanations of Hashem's words. It first quotes **Rebbi Yehoshua** who explains that Hashem was telling Moshe that this was not the

⁵ The Gemara at this point appears to return to the opinion of Rebbi Yehuda alone.

correct time for prayer. Rather, he should tell the Jews to walk into the water. Hashem would save them in the merit of them starting to enter the sea, not because of Moshe's cries (explained by **Shevus Yehuda** on the Mechilta).

The Mechilta says further that there was already a precedent in history for Hashem causing the seas to part to save man. In the beginning of Creation, the entire world was covered by water. Hashem gathered the water into particular areas to cause the land to appear, so that Adam could live. When Moshe was praying at the sea, Hashem replied, if I turned the sea into dry land for Adam, would I not do the same for the entire exalted Jewish nation?

The Shevus Yehuda explains that the Midrash means that since Hashem caused the water to split for Adam even without his praying, He would do the same for the Jews even without Moshe's tefilos.

Hashem was telling Moshe that instead of praying, he should command the Jews to enter the water, and it will split in their merit.

Rabbi Yaacov Kamenetsky (in **Emes L'Yaacov** on Shemos 14:19) on the words, "the Malach that had been going in front of the camp of Yisrael moved and went behind them," suggests that Hashem wanted the Jews to decide on their own to fulfill His command for them to enter the sea. He took away the angel who was always in front of them and placed it behind them, to enable them to descend into the Yam.

Approach Two

Second, the Mechilta quotes **Rebbi Eliezer** who explains that Hashem was saying, My sons are trapped on all sides; why are you continuing to cry out to Me? There are times to shorten one's prayers and times to lengthen them. Now is the time to shorten your prayers. I already accepted your request (**Shevus Yehuda**).

The **Maharsha** (סוטה ד"ה וא"ל הקב"ה ידידי טובעים בימים) and the **Eitz Yosef** (Mechilta 3:1) explain Hashem's words in this vein, based on the Mishna (Brachos 28b). It teaches that a person should recite only a short prayer in a place of danger.

Thus, even though it was appropriate for Moshe to pray then for the Jews to be saved, he should have said a shorter tefilah and then encouraged the Jews to jump into the water.

Approach Three

The **Midrash Tehillim** (76:1) explains that Hashem had an additional intent when he told Moshe to cease davening and to command the Jews to enter.

According to the approach of Rabbi Yehuda in the Gemara and Mechilta, Nachshon ben Aminadav jumped in the water and entered the waves until it reached his nostrils. He was floundering in the water as the waves threatened to drown him (**Mahari Kohen** on the Midrash).

Hashem said to Moshe, "ידידי טובעים בים" – My beloved people are drowning in the sea and you are praying? Tell the Jews to enter. (In the merit of them descending into the sea, the water will split and Nachshon will be saved from drowning.)

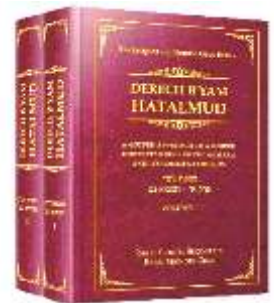
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