



Four Wonderful Segulot for Shabbat Shira

The Shabbat after Tu BiShvat is called *Shabbat Shira*, named after *Shirat HaYam*, which we read in *Parashat BeShalach*. It is an episode full of potential and capacity for your own personal splitting of the sea – whether in health, in *parnassah*, or in relationships. *Am Yisrael* stand at the edge of the Red Sea, surrounded by desert. Behind them – Pharaoh, his army and his horsemen. The Jews cry out and pray. G-d says to Moshe Rabbeinu, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward!”

“When Israel is in distress, it’s not the time for lengthy prayers,” explains Rashi, “it’s the time to do something!”

When you feel stuck in a particular situation, take a step forward. Move! This specific Shabbat, you have the power to change your destiny.

Here’s your “homework” for the week of *Parashat BeShalach* and for *Shabbat Shira*:

1. Feeding the birds

A *segula* for faith and for an abundant livelihood. My favorite explanation for this is from Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz, the Imrei Pinchas: in all of Creation, only man and birds sing. Birds rule the air. A tune is created by air passing from the lungs through the larynx, and many instruments generate sounds using the power of air as well. So too, *Shirat HaYam* is written in columns – words with ‘air’ in between them. Therefore, on *Shabbat Shira*, we feed the birds, because they can sing, like man. And in the week of the *parasha* of *manna* too, we throw food to the birds and look to them who have no worries. The bird

knows G-d will provide her food and she sings even before she receives her bread.

Give the birds breadcrumbs or grain before Shabbat. Show them that belief and faith pay off. And if you don’t give them? They’ll be fine. The birds get by. But this *segula* comes to awaken your faith, that you too have your daily portion of bread saved for you.

2. Challot

An additional *segula* for blessed livelihood. In *Parashat BeShalach, HaKadosh Baruch Hu* speaks for the first time about Shabbat, and we hear about *lechem mishneh*, which can also be interpreted as *lechem meshuneh*, different in its shape and taste. So, place six small *challahs* on each side of the table, i.e. 12 in all. Place three in the shape of a the Hebrew vowel, *segol* (••) and three more on top of them in the same way. This is a *minhag* of the Arizal, who promises livelihood for the coming 12 months, because this bread draws so much blessing to you.

3. Say Shirat HaYam

When you read *Shirat HaYam*, think of the troubles and disturbances in your life. When the Egyptians drown, think, “soon everything will pass. Hashem is organizing my redemption.” At וַיִּשְׂעֵה ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, be filled with true joy. What happens when we read *Shirat HaYam*? The Zohar says that at that very moment, every year, Moshe, Aharon and Miriam, and the whole generation of the Exodus, come down from Gan Eden and sing *Shirat HaYam* with the Jewish people on *Shabbat Shira*, and

draw blessings down upon the Jews from above.

Rabbi Kalonymos Kalman Shapira, the Rebbe of Piacezna, says: know, that *Shirat HaYam* is a “decree” (גְּזִירָה), also meaning to split). A righteous person decrees and G-d fulfils. When you say *Shirat HaYam* you are essentially doing as the Jews did at *Yam Suf*. They sang of the future, of the *Beit HaMikdash*: “Bring them and plant them...” The *Beit HaMikdash* would only be built in another few years, but they were already singing about it, and by doing so, building the reality. Have *kavanah*: “I’m now decreeing that such should happen – to me! ‘Who split apart *Yam Suf* – His lovingkindness is eternal” (Tehillim 136:13). I believe that He Who decreed (*gazar*) then, can do so forever, always, and for me, as well.”

4. Sing!

On *Shabbat Shira*, sing. Every Shabbat is a song: “A song for the Shabbat day” (Tehillim 92:1). But *Shabbat Shira* sings with you! The Chidushei HaRim says: “Sometimes, a person feels devotion, as if he became a new being; this is what song is. And this is what makes Shabbat, because the Shabbat itself sings.” Sit around the table and sing *Shabbat zemirot*, and prune (in Hebrew, תְּזַמְרוּ, sharing the same letters as the word “to sing”) all of the bitterness from your life.

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