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The JEWISH Spin on Current Events

“SHARK WASHES UP ON ROCKAWAY BEACH”

How can your next visit to the Beach be more spiritual?

∞ OVERVIEW ∞

1. WHAT ARE TORAH’S WATER-SAFETY REQUIREMENTS?
2. WHAT IS THE KABBALISTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF FISH, WATER & DRY LAND?
3. ARE THERE ANY REQUIREMENTS WHEN VISITING THE OCEAN?
4. WHEN IS ONE REQUIRED TO GO TO THE OCEAN?
5. BIBLICAL AND TALMUDIC STORIES OF FISH ENCOUNTERS.

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September 5, 2007

(Next class will be held on October 17)



A Project of the
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☞ SOURCES ☞

1. What are Torah’s water-safety requirements?

☞ 1A ☞

DEUTERONOMY 4:15

And you should take very good care of yourselves.

☞ 1B ☞

TALMUD, KIDDUSHIN 29A

A father is obligated with respect to his son, to circumcise him, to redeem him [if he is a firstborn], to teach him Torah, to help him find a wife, and to teach him a craft. Some say: Also to teach him to swim in water.

2. What is the Kabbalistic significance of Fish, Water & Dry land?

☞ 2A ☞

JOB, 11:7-9

Can you achieve an understanding of G-d? Can you fathom the extent of the Almighty? It is like the heights of heaven; what can you do [to understand]? It is deeper than the Pit; what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth and wider than the sea.

☞ 2B ☞

TALMUD, TAANIS 7A

R’ Chanina bar Idi said: Why are the words of Torah compared to water, as it is written: “Ho! Everyone that is thirsty, go to the water?” (Isaiah 55:1) To teach you that just as water leaves a higher level and goes to a lower level, so too, the words of Torah are retained only by one who is humble.

☞ 2C ☞

TALMUD, BERACHOS 61B

The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: Once the wicked regime [i.e., the Roman government], decreed that the Jewish people should not engage in the study of Torah. Pappus ben Yehudah came and found R’ Akiva as he was convening public assemblies and engaging in the study of Torah. Pappus said to him, “Akiva, are you not afraid of the regime?” R’ Akiva replied to him, “I will give you a parable [that will explain my actions]: To what is this situation comparable? To a fox who was walking alongside a river, and saw fish that were gathering [and fleeing] from place to place. The fox said to them, ‘From what are you running away?’ They told him, ‘From the nets that people are brining with which to catch us’. The fox said to them, ‘Is it your wish that you come up to dry land and we shall

“... dwell I and you, just as my ancestors dwelt with your ancestors?” The fish said to him, ‘Are you the one they describe as the cleverest of the animals? You are not a clever one but a fool! If in the climate that sustains our life we are afraid, in the climate that will induce our death, [should we not be afraid] all the more so?’ So too [is the situation facing] us: If now, as we sit and engage in the study of the Torah, about which it is written, “For it is your life and the length of your days” (Deuteronomy 30:20), [we are nevertheless threatened by] such danger, if we would proceed to absent ourselves from the Torah, [we would be endangered] all the more so!”

☞ 2D ☞

RAMBAN, DEUTERONOMY 33:23

Rabbi Amora said: What is the meaning of the verse, “and filled with Hashem’s blessing; go possess the sea and its south shore” (Deuteronomy 33:23)? This is what Moses was saying, if you would go in G-d’s statues you will inherit the World to Come, which is compared to the sea, as it is written, “Its measure is longer than the earth” (Job 11:9), and you will inherit the present world, which is compared to the south, as it is written, “For you have given me a south land”, which the Targum interprets to mean, “A south land”.

3. Are there any requirements when visiting the ocean?

☞ 3A ☞

SHULCHAN ORUCH, ORACH CHAIM, 228:1

On the Great Sea... one says “Blessed are you G-d... who made the Great Sea”.

4. When is one required to go to the ocean?

☞ 4A ☞

SHULCHAN ORUCH, ORACH CHAYIM, 583:2

[On Rosh Hashana] We go to the river and say the verse, “You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micha 7:19).

5. Biblical and Talmudic stories of fish encounters.

☞ 5A ☞

Story of Yona

ס 5B ס

TALMUD, BAVA BASRA 73B

And Rabbah bar bar Chanah said further: Once we were going in a ship and we saw a certain fish. A small creeping thing settled in its nostril and the fish dies. The water expelled [the dead fish] and threw it onto the shore. Sixty cities were destroyed by it. Sixty cities ate from [its flesh]. Sixty cities salted [its flesh, to preserve it]. They filled three hundred barrels with oil from one eyeball. And when we returned after twelve months of the year we saw that they were sawing [beams] from its bones to make huts and they settled down to rebuild those cities.

ס 5C ס

TALMUD, BAVA BASRA 73B

And Rabbah bar bar Chanah said further: Once we were going in a ship and we saw a certain fish. Sand settled on its back and a meadow sprouted on it. We thought that it was [an island] of dry land and we went up and we baked and cooked on it. When its back became hot it turned over, and if not for the ship that was nearby we would have drowned.

ס 5D ס

TALMUD, BAVA BASRA 74B

“And G-d created the great sea-monsters” (Genesis 1:21)... R’ Yochanan said: These are the Leviathan, the straight snake, and the Leviathan, the curved snake... Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: Every creature that the Holy One, Blessed is He, created in His world, He created them male and female. Also the Leviathan, the straight snake, and the Leviathan, the curved snake, [G-d] created male and female. If they would mate together they would destroy the whole world. What did the Holy One, Blessed is He, do? He castrated the male and He killed the female and salted it for the righteous in the time to come.