

The Song of the Fish

The fish say:

**The voice of Hashem
was upon the
waters, the God of
glory rumbled -
Hashem- upon many
waters.**



דְּגִים אֹמְרִים:

**קוֹל ה' עַל הַמַּיִם
אֵל הַכְּבוֹד הַרְעִים
ה' עַל מַיִם רַבִּים.**

(תהילים כט: ג)

The seamless surface of the sea belies the enchanting world of beauty that fills its expanse. There are an estimated three and a half trillion fish in the world, consisting of more than 30,000 different species¹. With a complexity no less than that of terrestrial life, sea creatures have varied natures, shapes, and sizes, and form a kaleidoscope of colors. The water itself is transparent so that they can be seen in all of their beauty.

At the dawn of history, Hashem bade the fish to be fruitful and multiply, and to fill the seas. Since then, they sing of Hashem's voice upon the great waters. It is He who controls the mighty oceans and illuminates their depths with His glory.

In a deeper sense, the Sages teach that the Torah is referred to as "water" since it is lifegiving and purifies the soul. On the day of the giving of the Torah, it descended from heaven accompanied by clouds, rains, and thunder.² Torah scholars, who immerse themselves in the waters of the Torah, are comparable to fish which can only live in water³. Rabbi Akiva used this analogy to explain why he stubbornly continued to teach Torah in public despite the Roman ban against it.⁴

Fish swim in schools. Likewise, Torah is ideally studied in a group. Fish constantly open and close their mouths, similar to the way that Torah sages constantly engage their mouths in Torah study. As long as it lives, a fish will continue to grow. So too Torah scholars continue to develop wisdom even in old age. Torah scholars live in a world of Torah no less vast than the oceans, yet are unperceivable and unappreciated by others, like fish that thrive within the concealed ocean.⁵

¹ Nelson 2006, Pg. 3 [Wikipedia].

² מכילתא דרשב"י יט, טז.

³ מדרש שה"ש א ד"ה ג ד"א כי. ב"ק יז., ברכות יח: זוהר רעיא מהימנא, דברים, כי תצא, דף רע"ה:

⁴ ברכות סא.

⁵ See R' Hirsch's Chumash on "וידגו לרוב".

At the time of the giving of the Torah, Hashem's holy Voice thundered mightily throughout the world, on its way to Mount Sinai.⁶ The first and foremost revelation⁷ of that Voice was upon the world's oceans, as it is written "Kol Hashem al hamayim", symbolizing the oceanlike greatness of the Torah itself.

To this day, the world's ever increasing multitudes of fish continue to sing this very description of the Voice upon the waters which introduced the Torah. Through their inhabitation of the seas, they constantly express the glory of the Creator, His Torah, and the tranquility of those who live within its lifegiving waters.⁸

Living with Song

If you think you have already taken in Hashem's greatness as revealed on Earth, turn towards the endless expanses of the ocean. Hashem's glory and kindness fill the whole world, earth, air, and sea, and paint it all in brilliant color. All beings are individually fed by the Creator, in order to benefit us and to reveal His glory.

Let this music inspire you to live with an awareness of Hashem's greatness, majesty and kindness. Realize the insignificance of petty events and trivial losses in mundane life. Focus on what is important. Thank for what you understand and have faith for what you do not. One day you will. As for now, live with faith and song, and swim onwards with the tide.

Focus your energies on your lifelong spiritual pursuits. Let the waters of the Torah purify you, renew you, and make you great. Once you know how to swim within it, you will not want to leave. Nourish every day with Torah. Sate your soul with its wisdom and increase your spiritual wealth throughout your life.

The more Torah you know, the more you can appreciate the beauty of the Creator's Voice singing upon the waters.

⁶ מדרש תנאים לדברים לג, ב. ספרי דברים פסקא שמ"ג ד"ה דבר אחר. רד"ק על תהלים כט.

⁷ It subsequently expressed itself in six other ways, as detailed in תהלים כט.

⁸ Much of this commentary has been based on "מבריותיו אחכם" and "נשמת שיר". C.f. R' Daniel Worenklein's Perek Shira by Feldheim Publishers, with permission. He also writes there that each of the names of Hashem mentioned in this chapter of Tehilim represents another Bracha of the Shemoneh Esrei. The "אל" of this Pasuk represents the Bracha against heretics. These wish to draw out of the live-giving waters of our Torah.