

## Nature in the Parasha

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

### *Parashat Devarim - The Lyre Shaped Kineret Sea of Galilee*

#### Drinking from Miriam's Well Buried in Kineret

We are opening a new book of Torah and entering a new point of time. דְּבָרִים/*Devarim* means 'harsh words,' yet within the harshness of the destruction of the Temple there is the consolation of Hashem's increased mercy and love. He only allowed this destruction to help us grow. Likewise, Moshe opened the Book of *Devarim* – his repetition of the Torah – with words of rebuke in order to elevate us. Now, before Moshe's demise at the verge of entering the Land of Israel he reminisces the Israelite's 40-year wandering in the desert. In Moshe's description of the land on the other side of the Jordan River, allotted to the tribes of Gad, Reuven and half the tribe of Menashe, he mentions the Kineret Sea of Galilee.

ספר דברים פרק ג (ז) וְהָעֲרָבָה וְהַיַּרְדֵּן וּגְבֹל מִכְנָזַת וְעַד יַם הָעֲרָבָה יָם הַמֶּלַח תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר־תֵּת הַפְּסָגָה מִזְרְחָה:  
 “[We also seized] the Aravah, which borders the Jordan, from Kineret down to the sea of the Aravah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah eastward” (*Devarim* 3:17).

Oh, how I long to once again bask in the sweet waters of the Kineret, talking to Hashem while gazing at the mountain ridges in the horizon and swimming in the clear blue waters enveloping me. Emerging from the lake, I always feel recharged spiritually, internally cleansed and reconnected with my *neshama*. Perhaps, this is because the well of Miriam is buried in the Kineret (*Midrash Kohelet Rabbah* 5:10), and the strength of her nurturing musical spirit attach itself to those who immerse in her waters. Perhaps, this is why the Kineret is so very enchanting, especially at sunup and sundown. Miriam's Well, known as *Be'er Miriam* in Hebrew is like a perforated rock from which water used to trickle, and which “ascended mountains with [the Israelites in the desert] and descended to the valleys with them” (*Tosefta Sotah* 11:1). After it completed its purpose in the wilderness, Hashem moved it for safekeeping into the Land of Israel. The Midrash tells of a person who “suffered from boils and went down to immerse in the waters of Tiberias, it was an opportune time, and he saw Miriam's Well and washed in it and was healed...” (*Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:22). What is the underlying power of Miriam's Well? It is the *Shechina*, from where Kineret receives her dazzling illumination.

#### Kinor & Kineret

The כִּנּוֹר/*Kinor* actually gets its name from the musical instrument כִּנּוֹר/*kinor* with which it is etymologically linked. In Modern Hebrew *kinor* is a violin, in the Torah it refers to a lyre like the one King David would play when shepherding. Why is the Sea of Galilee called Kineret? Because its fruits are sweet like the music of a lyre (*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah* 6a). Kineret gets her name from the Hebrew word **kinor**, because her fruit are sweet like the sound of the lyre which is sweet to those who hear it” (Rabbi Yosef B'Chorr, *Devarim* 33:23). Some say that its very name comes from its similarity to the *kinor* because of either its shape or the musical sound of its waves. “This

beautiful lyre-shaped lake is one of the most beautiful sites of the Land, and one of its most important sources of fresh water and fish. Lying 212 meters below the level of the Mediterranean, this lake is 21 km (13 miles) long and 13 km (eight miles) at its greatest width, with a circumference of 53 km (33 miles).

### In the Land of Naftali or Zevulun?

When you look at a biblical map outlining the land of each tribe, it is clear that Kineret is in Naftali's tribe as it states in the Torah (*Devarim* 33:23), and in the Talmud (*Baba Batra* 122a). Nevertheless, the Zohar writes that Kineret was in Zevulun's lot (*Zohar* 3:150a). Arizal explains that there are two aspects of the Kineret: the masculine aspect is called Kinor while the feminine aspect is called Kineret. It is only the masculine aspect, Kinor that is linked with the tribe of Zevulun, while Kineret is in the land of Naftali who is connected with the feminine. We learn this from the initials of his blessing by Ya'acov: אֵילָה שְׁלֹחַהּ הַנְּתִן / *Naftali Ayala Sh'lucha Hanoten* (*Bereishit* 49:21). These initials spell out the Hebrew word אִשָּׁה / *Isha* – woman (Arizal, *Sefer Halikutim, Parashat Ekev* 8). I like to view the rounded forms of the Kineret like a mother who nurtures her people Israel with her life-giving waters.

### The Song of the Sea of Kineret

The lake of Kineret is also called in גִּינוֹסָר / *Ginosar* from גְּנֵי שָׂרִים / *ganei sharim* – the gardens sing. This is connected to Naftali's blessing "he gives goodly words..." (*Bereishit* 49:21), which refers to song. Devorah singled out Naftali and praised him in her song (*Shoftim* 5:18), (*Midrash Bereishit Rabbah* 98:17). How do the gardens of the seashores of Kineret sing? The kings that had gardens there sang, and everyone who saw the fruits that grew there would bless and praise the Kineret in song. This is the meaning of "he gives goodly words..." (Mizrachi, *Bereishit* 49:21). The fruits the grows from the waters of the Kineret are considered so special that during Temple times you would not be able to taste them in Jerusalem in order to prevent people from making the required pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the wrong reason of eating the fruits of Tiberias in Jerusalem. Likewise, the hot springs of Tiberias are not found in Jerusalem to ensure that people make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the sake of the mitzvah rather than in order to soak in these hot springs (*Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim* 8b).

### Kineret and Malchut

The Kineret is both king of all the seas in the world as well as the spiritual gathering place of all waters. When we don't have enough rain, the Kineret gets dangerously low, yet when we do have a good year of rain, the Kineret rises. The holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* manifests itself through seven different spiritual illuminations corresponding to the seven Divine spheres from *chesed* to *malchut*. Kineret receives her illumination directly from the *Shechina*. According to Rabbi Yossi, "For He has founded it upon seas" (*Tehilim* 24:2) refers to the seven pillars of the *sefirot*, corresponding to the seven seas upon which the earth is supported. The Sea of Kineret, which is *malchut*, rules over them. Rabbi Yehuda explains that rather than 'ruling over them,' *malchut* receives from the *sefirot*; thus, the Sea of Kineret is filled from them (*Zohar* 2:23a). Interestingly, יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּנָסֶת / *Knesset Yisrael*, which means the gathering of Israel and יַם כְּנָרֵת / *Yam Kineret* – The

Sea of Galilee have the same initials. Just as the job of the king is to unite and gather his people, at the Kineret, all of Israel are connected. Just take a ride around the Kineret during a hot summer day and watch all the family gatherings barbecuing at its shore, children of all ages and dominations splash in her waters. Fishing, boating, rafting, waterskiing and swimming is for everyone whether you are secular, modern orthodox or chareidi, a child, teenager, adult or elderly. We all gather at the Kineret. We can understand why Hashem proclaims, "From among the seven seas that I have created I chose specifically the Kineret (*Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 19).

### King David's Alarm-Clock

*Malchut* is a feminine quality as it is the ultimate receiver. This explains why the lake of Kineret receives and gathers all waters within her. The well of Miriam was in the merit of a woman, as the water would be found effortlessly within it. Likewise, King David, a direct descendent of Miriam, (<http://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/37989/how-was-david-a-descendant-of-miriam>) received the heavenly melodies and lyrics of his *Tehillim*. Although David was a man, who fought many wars, he was connected with the feminine quality of *malchut* through his humility, music and repentance. According to the *Zohar* the royal color of the תְּכֵלֶת/*techelet* – sky-blue thread, reflecting the Throne of Glory, is produced from a certain fish in the sea of Kineret. It is after this fish that Kineret gets its name. Like the sea of the Kineret, the sky-blue color also corresponds to *malchut*. Yet, there is another reason for the name קִינֶרֶת/*Kineret*. It is connected to the קִנּוֹר/*kinor* – lyre hanging above David's bed, (in the secret of *malchut*). This lyre would play on its own to the supernal Holy King. (*Zohar* 1:175b). The fact that the lyre would play by itself without anyone's effort imbues it with the quality of *malchut* – the feminine receiver. It would only play on its own in the middle of the night when the north wind would blow. This would wake David up to learn Torah at midnight in order to connect himself with the congregation of Israel (*Zohar* 1:206b). The feminine lake of Kineret teaches us to become a vessel for Hashem's *malchut*. Just as Kineret receives the waters from the rivers of the Jordan River, which flows through it from north to south, and David's lyre allowed the north wind to gently strum its strings, we too can become a channel that receives abundance from Above by letting go letting G-d. A great way to practice letting go is by floating on our back in the waters of the Kineret, allowing the wind to gently rock us to secure shores.