

## Jewish Sources on Oceans

### **Psalm 18: 16-19**

The ocean bed was exposed; the foundations of the world were laid bare by Your mighty roaring, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. He reached down from on high, He took me; He drew me out of the mighty waters; He saved me from my fierce enemy, from foes too strong for me. They confronted me on the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support.

### **Psalm 93: 3-5**

The ocean sounds, O LORD, the ocean sounds its thunder, the ocean sounds its pounding. Above the thunder of the mighty waters, more majestic than the breakers of the sea is the LORD, majestic on high. Your decrees are indeed enduring; holiness befits Your house, O LORD, for all times.

### **Psalms 107:23-26**

They that go down to the sea in ships, That do business in great water. These saw the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep; For He commanded, and raised the stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves thereof; They mounted up to the heaven, they went down to the deeps; Their soul melted away because of trouble.

### **Psalm 148:7-8**

Praise the LORD, O you who are on earth, all sea monsters and ocean depths; fire and hail, snow and smoke, storm wind that executes His command.

### **Mishnah Taanit 3:7**

For the following calamities an alarm is to be sounded even on the Sabbath:—For a city surrounded by enemies; for a flood threatening to inundate the country; for a ship in imminent danger of being wrecked at sea [in a storm].

### **BT Taanit 9b**

It is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Eliezer says: The entire world drinks from the waters of the ocean [*okeyanos*], i.e., evaporated ocean water is the source of rain. As it is stated: “And there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground” (Genesis 2:6). Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: But the waters of the ocean are salty, whereas rainwater is sweet. Rabbi Eliezer said to Rabbi Yehoshua: The waters are sweetened in the clouds, before they fall to the earth....

**And between each and every drop there is only a hairbreadth**, and yet each drop emerges individually. This serves **to teach you that the day of rains is as great as the day on which Heaven and Earth were created**, i.e., rainfall is as miraculous as creation....

**Rabbi Ḥanina said**, concerning the verse: **“He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; he lays up the deep in storerooms” (Psalms 33:7): What caused the storerooms to be filled with produce?** It was **the deep**, which is the source of the water that nourishes the produce.

### **BT Sukkah 51b**

**One who did not see the Temple in its constructed state, never saw a magnificent structure.** The Gemara asks: **What is** the Temple building to which the Sages refer? **Abaye said, and some say** that it was **Rav Ḥisda** who said: **This** is referring to the magnificent **building of Herod**, who renovated the Second Temple.

The Gemara asks: **With what materials did he construct it?** **Rava said:** It was **with stones of green-gray marble and white marble [marmara]. Some say:** It was **with stones of blue marble and white marble.** The rows of stones were set with **one row slightly protruded and one row slightly indented, so that the plaster would take better. He thought to plate the Temple with gold, but the Sages said to him: Leave it as is, and do not plate it, as it is better this way, as with the different colors and the staggered arrangement of the rows of stones, it has the appearance of waves of the sea.**

### **Rashbam on Numbers 15:39**

Our sages explained the reason for the blue color in the tallit fringe as designed to remind the viewer of the blueness of the ocean, which in turn resembles the blueness of the sky reminding man of the throne of God's glory situated in the celestial spheres.

### **Bachya on Deuteronomy 30:11**

The ocean that Moses speaks about here is the great ocean, which is dark and beyond man's ability to navigate (see Ibn Ezra). Moses does not refer to seas which man is able to navigate. The words compare such an ocean to “heaven,” neither of which is accessible to man.

### **Nineteen letters of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch 3:2**

The Torah summons us to view heaven and earth and speaks "from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven, everything which thou seest existing, when it came into existence, **ברא אלהים ברא שיתברא** in its beginning God was active as its creator. Seest thou the heaven in its eternally silent, unchanging course, bearer of light and heat and all

the motive forces of our earth, supporter of the earth-world, seest thou it with its millions of starry worlds, or resplendent with the refulgence of the magnificently radiant sun-ball, or the earth, the swift runner, with its eternal circles of originating and passing away, of blooming and withering, of life and death, eternally struggling from ceasing, fading, and death, to ever new existence, bloom, and life; dost thou see it with its millions of productions, stones, plants, animals, all of which it produces, nourishes, and again takes back into its bosom; dost thou see the light, the messenger of heaven to earth, which coaxes all to life and leads from life, through which thou seest everything which is, and everything arrays itself for thee in resplendent colors; dost thou see the firmament spread out around the earth, which receives the ray of light, and alters it to suit the necessity of the earth, in which the clouds move and water the parched earth, the thirsty grasses, and beasts, and men? Seest thou the universal ocean, with all-encompassing arm of flood embracing the earth, or the springs which burst forth from the fissures of the rocks and flow on as rivulets, brooks, and mighty rivers? Dost thou rejoice in the firm surface of the earth upon which thou walkest safe and secure together with thy dear ones; hast thou pleasure in its meadowy expanse or its leafy trees, or in all the living beings which stir so animatedly in the waters and in the air, or dwell with thee on earth? Dost thou see sun, moon, and stars, which from their celestial positions above thee regulate the times of day and month and the seasons of the year, and determine the recurring periods of waking and sleep, of rise and fall, of bloom and decay on earth?

**Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Shir Na'im (from the introduction to Likutei Mohoran)**

Rivers, streams, channels of many waters and great and small seas,  
Wondrous and various in their colors and in their taste and in their nature,  
Each one [containing] small and great creatures, numberless species--  
All of them praise and extol Hashem, be He blessed, with all of their limbs.  
They bring words forth constantly and do not disobey their [angelic] guides.  
Precious stones and pearls in [the waters'] depths sparkle.  
Numinous lights hidden in their vessels.