

Beshalach Exodus 13:17-17:16

Ceaser

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Overview

- Soon after allowing the Children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the sea. G-d tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians. Moses and the Children of Israel sing a song of praise and gratitude to G-d.
- In the desert, the people suffer thirst and hunger and repeatedly complain to Moses and Aaron. G-d miraculously sweetens the bitter waters of Marah, and later has Moses bring forth water from a rock by striking it with his staff; He causes manna to rain down from the heavens before dawn each morning, and quails to appear in the Israelite camp each evening.
- The Children of Israel are instructed to gather a double portion of manna on Friday, as none will descend on Shabbat, the divinely decreed day of rest. Some disobey and go to gather manna on the seventh day, but find nothing. Aaron preserves a small quantity of manna in a jar, as a testimony for future generations.
- In Rephidim, the people are attacked by the Amalekites, who are defeated by Moses' prayers and an army raised by Joshua.

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The Jews are out of Egypt, but their redemption is not yet complete. Pharaoh and his armies still pose a tangible threat to their freedom; more subtle is the slave mentality that still gnaws at their souls. In Beshalach, the process of their liberation from Egypt continues, as the children of Israel battle external and internal threats to their freedom and advance toward the *raison d'etre* of the Exodus -- to receive the Torah at Mount Sinai.

It came to pass when Pharaoh had let the people go, that G-d led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, because it was near; for G-d said: Lest the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

Instead, G-d leads them along a more roundabout route, which takes them through "the desert by the Sea of Reeds" (Red Sea).

Moses takes along Joseph's bones for burial in the Holy Land, in fulfillment of the oath made by the Children of Israel at the beginning of their Egyptian exile.

And G-d went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light...

Soon, however, their newly-gained freedom is under attack.

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It was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled. The heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said: "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" ...

G-d hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel... all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army; and they overtook them encamping by the sea...

Even more devastating is the Israelites' reaction:

Pharaoh drew near. The children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, Egypt marched after them. They were very much afraid; and the children of Israel cried out to G-d.

They said to Moses: "Are there no graves in Egypt, that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you done this to us, to carry us out of Egypt?"

"Is not this the word that we did tell you in Egypt, saying: Let us alone, that we may serve Egypt? For it would have been better for us to serve Egypt, than to die in the wilderness."

Moses says to the people:

"Fear not; stand by and see the salvation of G-d, which He will show you today. For as you have seen Egypt this day, you shall not see them again any more forever.

"G-d shall fight for you, and you shall be silent."

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- *G-d led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines (13:17)*
- *The tribe of Ephraim had erred and departed from Egypt 30 years before the destined time, with the result that three hundred thousand of them were slain by the Philistines... and their bones lay in heaps on the road... G-d therefore said: If Israel behold the bones of the sons of Ephraim strewn in the road, they will return to Egypt...*
- *Thus the verse says, v'lo nacham Elokim ("G-d did not lead them," which can also be translated as "G-d was not comforted"). This is comparable to a king whose sons were carried off as captives, and some of them died in captivity. The king afterwards came and saved those that were left. While he rejoiced over those that survived, he was never comforted for those that had died.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
- *G-d led the people about, by way of the desert (13:18)*
- *This is comparable to a king who had a son to whom he wished to bequeath an inheritance, but he argued: "If I give it to him now that he is small, he will not know how to take care of it. I will therefore wait until my son studies the writings and comprehends the value [of the property], then I will bequeath it unto him." This is what G-d said: I shall first give them the Torah, and then bring them into the Land.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

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- *G-d said: If I bring Israel into the land now, each will immediately take possession of his field or vineyard, and they will neglect the Torah. Rather, I shall take them round the desert for forty years, so that they should eat manna and drink the water of [Miriam's miracle] well, and the Torah will be absorbed in their bodies. Thus Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai would say: The Torah was given to be expounded only to the eaters of manna.*
- *(Mechilta)*
- *And the children of Israel went out chamushim from the land of Egypt (13:18)*
- *Chamushim means "armed"... Another interpretation: one in five (chamesh) among the children of Israel came out of Egypt; four-fifths died during the three days of darkness [because they did not want to leave Egypt].*
- *(Rashi)*
- *Rabbi Joshua interpreted it thus: fivefold they came out of Egypt, for five times their number in converts were gathered into the people of Israel upon their departure from Egypt.*
- *(Midrash Tanchuma)*
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- *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him. For he had laid an oath on the children of Israel, saying, "G-d will surely remember you; and you shall carry up my bones away from here with you." (13:19)*
- *How did Moses know the place where Joseph was buried? Serach the daughter of Asher remained of that generation. Moses went to her and asked: "Do you know where Joseph was buried?" She answered him: "The Egyptians made an iron coffin for him, which they sunk in the Nile so that its waters should be blessed."*
- *Moses went and stood on the bank of the Nile and called out: "Joseph! Joseph! The time has arrived regarding which G-d swore, 'I will deliver you,' and the oath which you imposed upon the Israelites has reached the time of fulfillment. If you show yourself, well and good; otherwise, behold, we are absolved of your oath." Immediately Joseph's coffin floated on the surface of the water...*
- *Rabbi Nathan says: He was buried in the sepulchre of the kings. Moses went and stood by the sepulchre of the kings and exclaimed, "Joseph! The time has arrived regarding which G-d swore, 'I will deliver you,' and the oath which you imposed upon the Israelites has reached the time of fulfillment. If you show yourself, well and good; otherwise, behold, we are absolved of your oath." At that moment, Joseph's coffin trembled, and Moses took it and carried it with him.*
- *(Talmud, Sotah 13a)*

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The Sea Splits

G-d said to Moses: "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward.

"And you, lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea."

As the children of Israel march forward, the divine cloud which had been leading them moves to their rear, interposing between them and the Egyptians. "There was the cloud and darkness, and it illuminated the night; and these did not come near these all night."

All night, "a mighty east wind" blows over the sea; at dawn, its waters split in two. The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground; and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

The Egyptians give chase, following the Israelites into the divided sea. G-d commands Moses to again raise his hand over the sea,

And the sea returned to its strength... The waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

Upon beholding the great miracle, "The people feared G-d, and they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant."

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- *G-d said to Moses: "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward" (14:15)*
- *As they stood at the shore of the sea, the people of Israel split into four factions.*
- *One faction said: "Let us cast ourselves into the sea." A second faction said, "Let us return to Egypt." A third said, "Let us wage war against the Egyptians." A fourth said, "Let us cry out to G-d."*
- *Thus Moses said to the people: "Fear not; stand by and see the salvation of G-d, which He will show you today. For as you have seen Egypt this day, you shall not see them again any more for ever. G-d shall fight for you, and you shall be silent" (14:13-14).*
- *To those who said, "Let us cast ourselves into the sea," he said: "Fear not; stand by and see the salvation of G-d." To those who said, "Let us return to Egypt," he said: "As you have seen Egypt this day, you shall not see them again any more forever." To those who said, "Let us wage war against them," he said: "G-d shall fight for you." And to those who said, "Let us cry out to G-d," he said: "And you shall be silent."*
- *(Mechilta)*

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- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*
- *These "four factions" represent four possible reactions to a situation in which one's divinely ordained mission in life is challenged by the prevalent reality.*
- *One possible reaction is: "Let us cast ourselves into the sea." Let us submerge ourselves within the living waters of Torah; let us plunge into the "sea of the Talmud," the sea of piety, the sea of religious life. Let us create our own insular communities, protecting us and ours from the G-dless world out there.*
- *At the other extreme is the reaction, "Let us return to Egypt." Let us accept "reality," recognizing that it is the Pharaohs who wield the power in the real world. We'll do whatever we can under the circumstances to do what G-d expects from us, but it is futile to imagine that we can resist, much less change, the way things are.*
- *A third reaction is to "wage war against them" -- to assume a confrontational stance against the hostile reality, battling the "unG-dly" world despite all odds.*
- *A fourth reaction is to say: It's wrong to abandon the world, it's wrong to succumb to it, and it's wrong to fight it. The answer lies in dealing with it on a wholly spiritual level. A single prayer can achieve more than the most secure fortress, the most flattering diplomat, or the most powerful army.*

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- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*
- *..... G-d rejected all four approaches. While each of them has their time and place (it's important to create inviolable sancta of holiness in a mundane world; it's also necessary to appreciate the nature of the prevalent reality and deal with it on its own terms; it's also necessary to wage an all-out war against evil; and it's always important to recognize that one cannot do it on one's own and appeal to G-d for help) -- none of them is the vision to guide our lives and define our relationship with the world we inhabit.*
- *Rather, when the Jew is headed toward Sinai and is confronted with a hostile or indifferent world, his most basic response must be to go forward.*
- *Not to escape reality, not to submit to it, not to wage war on it, not to deal with it only on a spiritual level, but to go forward. Do another mitzvah, ignite another soul, take one more step toward your goal.*
- *And when you move forward, you will see that insurmountable barrier yield and that ominous threat fade away. You will see that the prevalent "reality" is not so real after all, and that you have it within your power to reach your goal. Even if you have to split some seas to get there.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

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- *"Why do you cry to Me?" (14:15)*
- *"When Pharaoh drew near... the children of Israel cried out to G-d" (14:10). Upon which Moses also began to pray to G-d. Said G-d to Moses: "Why do you cry to Me?" My children have already prayed and I have heard their prayer.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
- *G-d said to Moses: "Moses! My children are in dire straits, the sea is closing in on them and the enemy pursues, and you stand and pray at length? Why do you cry to Me? There are times that call for lengthy prayers, and times when one must pray briefly..."*
- *(Mechilta; Rashi)*
- *And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel (14:20)*
- *A shepherd was leading his sheep across a river when a wolf came to attack the sheep. What did the shepherd do? He took a large ram and threw it to the wolf, saying to himself, "Let him struggle with this till we cross the river, and then I will return to bring it back."*
- *So, too, when Israel departed from Egypt, the Angel Samael (Satan) arose to accuse them, arguing before G-d: "Master of the Universe! Till now they have been worshipping idols, and now You divide the sea for them?" What did G-d do? He delivered into his hands Job, one of the counselors of Pharaoh, of whom it is written (Job 1:1), "That man was wholehearted and upright," and said: "Behold, he is in your hands" (ibid., 2:6). Said G-d: While he is busily occupied with Job, Israel will go through the sea; afterwards, I will deliver Job...*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*
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- *There was the cloud and darkness, and it illuminated the night (14:20)*
- *The column, which traveled before the Israelite camp as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, moved to interpose between the two camps and protect the Israelites from the Egyptians. It now was a "cloud and darkness" for the Egyptians while "illuminating the night" for the Israelites.*
- *(Rashi)*
- *According to the natural order of the world, can a person who lights a candle say, "So-and-so, who is my friend, may use the light, while so-and-so, who is my enemy, may not"? But G-d is not so confined... His cloud produced light for Israel and darkness for Egypt.*
- *(Midrash Tehillim)*
- *Moses stretched his hand over the sea (14:21)*
- *Moses went to divide the sea as G-d had commanded, but the sea refused to comply, exclaiming: "What, before you shall I divide? Am I not greater than you? For I was created in the third day and you on the sixth." When Moses heard this, he went and reported to G-d, "The sea refuses to be divided." What did G-d do? He placed His right hand upon the right hand of Moses.*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

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- *And the waters were divided (14:21)*
- *All the water in the world divided, even the waters in cisterns and ditches, in jars, cups, casks, and bowls, as it is written, "And the waters were divided" -- it doesn't say "and the water was divided," but "and the waters were divided." The supernal waters divided, as well as the terrestrial...*
- *(Mechilta; Rashi)*
- *The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground (14:22)*
- *Each tribe was unwilling to be the first to enter the sea. Then sprang forward Nachshon the son of Aminadav and descended first into the sea [and they all followed him]...*
- *Why does it say, "The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground"? If they went into the sea, then why does it say "on the dry ground"; and if they went on the dry ground, then why does it say that they went "into the midst of the sea"? This is to teach that the sea was divided only after Israel had stepped into it and the waters had reached their noses -- only then did it become dry land.*
- *The daughters of Israel passed through the sea holding their children with their hands; and when these cried, they would stretch out their hands and pluck an apple or a pomegranate from the sea and give it to them.*
- *(Talmud, Sotah 37a; Midrash Rabbah)*

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- *And the sea returned to its strength (14:27)*
- *On the third day of creation, when G-d made the dry land emerge from the waters and caused the waters to be gathered together into one place, forming from them the sea, He stipulated with the sea that it should split to allow the Israelites to pass through it on dry land and then overwhelm the Egyptians. Thus it is written, "and the sea returned to its strength (l'eitano) when the morning appeared." The word l'eitano ("to its strength"), by a transposition of letters, can be read litna'o ("to its stipulation").*
- *(Zohar; Mechilta)*

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- *The waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them (14:28)*
- *The Egyptians are likened to foxes, because they were cunning... What did they say? "Come, let us deal wisely with them" (Exodus 1:10): let us deal cunningly with Israel, and plan such a persecution for them that their G-d will not be able to punish us in the same coin. For if we persecute them with the sword, He can visit us with the sword; and if with fire, He can bring fire upon us. But we know that He swore that He would no longer bring a flood on the world (Genesis 9:11); let us, therefore, persecute them with water, which He cannot bring upon us. G-d then said to them: "Wretches! True I have sworn that I will not bring a flood into the world, but I will do this to you: I will drag each one of you to his own flood." This is what David said (Psalm 63:11): "They shall be dragged to the seabed; they shall be a portion for foxes."*
- *(Midrash Rabbah)*

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- *In that hour, the ministering angels wished to sing songs of praise before G-d, but He rebuked them, saying: "My handiwork is drowning in the sea, and you wish to sing before me?!"*
- *(Talmud, Sanhedrin 39b)*

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The Song at the Sea

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song to G-d, and spoke, saying:

I will sing to G-d, for He has triumphed gloriously
The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea
G-d is my strength and song, He is become my salvation
This is my G-d, and I will praise him
My father's G-d, and I will exalt him
G-d is the Master of war; G-d is his name...

With the blast of Your nostrils the waters were piled up
The floods stood upright like a heap
The depths were congealed in the heart of the sea...

Who is like You among the mighty, O G-d
Who is like You, glorious in holiness
Awesome in praises, doing wonders ...

Nations heard and shuddered
Terror seized the inhabitants of Philistia
Then panicked the chiefs of Edom
The mighty men of Moab, trembling took hold of them
All the inhabitants of Canaan melted away
Fear and dread shall fall upon them
By the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone
Till your people pass over, O G-d
Till they pass over, this people whom You have acquired

Bring them, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance
In the seat of Your dwelling, O G-d, which You have made
In the sanctuary, O G-d, which Your hands have established

G-d shall reign for ever and ever!

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Also the women sang:

Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

And Miriam called to them: "Sing to G-d, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea."

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- *In that hour, the ministering angels wished to sing songs of praise before G-d, but He rebuked them, saying: "My handiwork is drowning in the sea, and you wish to sing before me?!"*
- *(Talmud, Sanhedrin 39b)*

- *They believed in G-d and in Moses His servant (14:31)*
- *One who believes in Moses, believes in G-d.*
- *(Mechilta)*
- *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song to G-d, and they spoke, saying... (15:1)*
- *How did they render the song? Rabbi Akiva says: Moses said, "I will sing to G-d," and they responded, "I will sing to G-d"; Moses said, "For He has triumphed gloriously" and they responded, "I will sing to G-d" (and so on with each verse -- Moses would sing the verse, and they would respond with the refrain, "I will sing to G-d").*
- *Rabbi Eliezer says: Moses said, "I will sing to G-d," and they responded, "I will sing to G-d"; Moses said, "For He has triumphed gloriously," and they responded, "For He has triumphed gloriously" (and so on -- they repeated each verse after Moses).*
- *Rabbi Nechemiah says: Moses sang the opening words of the song, after which they each sang it on their own.*
- *(Talmud and Rashi, Sotah 30b)*

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- *These three opinions represent three levels of leadership.*
- *Rabbi Akiva describes an ideal in which a people completely abnegate their individuality to the collective identity embodied by the leader. Moses alone sang the nation's gratitude to G-d, their experience of redemption, and their vision of their future as G-d's people. The people had nothing further to say as individuals, other than to affirm their unanimous assent to what Moses was expressing.*
- *At first glance, this seems the ultimate in unity: hundreds of thousands of hearts and minds yielding to a single program and vision. Rabbi Eliezer, however, argues that this is but a superficial unity -- an externally imposed unity of the moment, rather than an inner, enduring unity. When people set aside their own thoughts and feelings to accept what is dictated to them by a higher authority, they are united only in word and deed; their inner selves remain different and distinct. Such a unity is inevitably short-lived: sooner or later their intrinsic differences and counter-aims will assert themselves, and fissures will begin to appear also in their unanimous exterior. So Rabbi Eliezer interprets the Torah's description of Israel's song to say that they did not merely affirm Moses' song with a refrain, but repeated his words themselves. Each individual Jew internalized Moses' words, so that they became the expression of his own understanding and feelings. The very same words assumed hundreds of thousands of nuances of meaning, as they were absorbed by each of the minds, and articulated by each of the mouths, of the people of Israel.*
- *Rabbi Nechemiah, however, is still not satisfied. If Israel repeated these verses after Moses, this would imply that their song did not stem from the very deepest part of themselves. For if the people were truly one with Moses and his articulation of the quintessence of Israel, why would they need to hear their song from his lips before they could sing it themselves? It was enough, says Rabbi Nechemiah, that Moses started them off with the first words of the song, so as to stimulate their deepest experience of the miracle, with the result that each of them sang the entire song on their own.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

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- *This is my G-d (15:2)*
- *At the time the Israelites ascended from the Red Sea... the babe sat upon his mother's knee and the suckling sucked at his mother's breast; when they beheld the Divine Presence, the babe raised his neck and the suckling released the nipple from his mouth, and they exclaimed: "This is my G-d and I will praise Him" ... Even the embryos in their mothers' wombs uttered a song...*
- *(Talmud, Sotah 30b)*
- *A servant girl saw at the sea what Isaiah, Ezekiel, and all other prophets did not behold.*
- *(Mechilta)*
- *In the seat of Your dwelling, O G-d, which You have made; in the sanctuary, O G-d, which Your hands have established (15:17)*
- *The work of the righteous is greater than the work of heaven and earth. For in regard to the creation of heaven and earth it is written (Isaiah 48:13): "My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has spread out the heavens" ("My hand," in the singular). But in regard to the work of the hands of the righteous it is written, "In the sanctuary, O G-d, which Your hands have established" ("Your hands," in the plural).*
- *(Talmud, Ketubot 5a)*
- *Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances (15:20)*
- *How did the Israelites have tambourines in the desert? But the righteous women of that generation were certain that G-d would perform miracles for them, and they prepared tambourines and dances while still in Egypt.*
- *(Mechilta; Rashi)*

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In Marah

Moses takes the Children of Israel from the shores of the Red Sea to the Wilderness of Shur, where they travel for three days without finding water. They then arrive in Marah, but "they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter."

"What shall we drink?" complain the people. G-d shows Moses a certain tree to throw into the water, and the water becomes sweet.

In Marah, the Children of Israel are given "statutes and laws." They also receive the divine promise: "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of G-d... all the diseases which I have brought upon Egypt, I shall not bring upon you, for I am G-d your healer."

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- *There He made for them a statute and a law (15:25)*
- *The Israelites were given ten precepts at Marah: the seven which had already been accepted by the children of Noah, to which were added at Marah social laws, the Sabbath, and honoring one's parents.*
- *(Talmud, Sanhedrin 56b)*

- **JONATHAN BEN UZZIEL**
- *And he prayed before the Lord, and the Lord showed him the bitter tree of Ardiphne; and he wrote upon it the great and glorious Name, and cast it into the midst of the waters, and the waters were rendered sweet. And there did the Word of the Lord appoint to him the ordinance of the Sabbath, and the statute of honouring father and mother, the judgments concerning wounds and bruises., and the punishments wherewith offenders are punished; and there he tried (them) with the tenth trial, and said, If you will truly hearken to the Word of the Lord your God, and do that which is right before Him, and will listen to His precepts and keep all His statutes, all those evil things that I laid upon the Mizraee I will not lay upon thee: but if thou wilt transgress against the word of the law, upon thee shall they be sent. If thou convert, I will remove them from thee; for I am the Lord thy Healer.*
- **R JONATHAN BEN UZZIEL**

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- *All the diseases which I have brought upon Egypt, I shall not bring upon you, for I am G-d your healer (15:26)*
- *I shall never afflict you with the intent to merely punish, as I did the Egyptians. Rather, "I am G-d your healer" -- if I do cause you suffering, it is only to a positive end, like a doctor who may, at times, cause pain to his patient in order to heal him.*
- *(Malbim)*

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Bread from Heaven

At Eilim, they find "twelve springs of water and seventy date palms"; but in the Sin Desert they lack for food. Again, the people complain, crying to Moses and Aaron:

"Would we had died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole community with hunger."

G-d says to Moses:

"I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying: At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be sated with bread; and you shall know that I am G-d."

Each morning, "I shall rain down bread from the heavens... each day's allotment on its day." Meat will be provided in the form of quails which will come up about the Israelite camp each evening.

In the morning the dew lay round about the camp. And when the layer of dew was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a fine flaky substance, as fine as the hoar frost on the ground.

When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, "Man hu?" ("What is it?"); for they knew not what it was. And Moses said to them: "This is the bread which G-d has given you to eat."

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Bread from Heaven

G-d explains that the manna will be supplied each morning to provide food for that day; it is forbidden to save one day's manna for the next. Indeed, no matter how much manna the people gather, they each end up with exactly one day's ration of an *omer* for each member of their household.

There are those who nevertheless try to set aside some of the heavenly food for the next day; the left-over manna "bred worms and spoiled."

But on the sixth day, each ends up with a double portion. Moses says to the people:

"This is what G-d has spoken: Tomorrow is the resting of the holy Sabbath to G-d. Bake that which you will bake today, and what you will cook, cook today; that which remains over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning... [On the seventh day] you will not find it in the field."

Again, some Jews disobey and go looking for manna on the seventh day. They find nothing. "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my instructions?" says G-d to Moses. "G-d has given you the Sabbath... remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

G-d instructs Moses to take a jar and "fill an *omer* of [manna] to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out from the land of Egypt."

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- *They shall gather each day's allotment on its day (16:5)*
- *Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his disciples: Why did not the manna come down for Israel once a year?*
- *He replied: I shall give a parable. This may be compared to a king of flesh and blood who had an only son, whom he provided with maintenance once a year, so that he would visit his father once a year only. Thereupon he provided for his maintenance every day, so that he called on him every day. The same with Israel. One who had four or five children would worry, saying: Perhaps no manna will come down tomorrow, and all will die of hunger? Thus they would turn their attention to their Father in Heaven.*
- *(Talmud, Yoma 76a)*

Beshalach Exodus 13:17-17:16

- *Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness (16:32)*
- *For forty years the Children of Israel were sustained by "bread from heaven," instilling in them the recognition that sustenance comes entirely from G-d; that no matter how much one toils to earn his livelihood, he receives no more, and no less, than what has been allotted him from Above.*
- *The challenge is to retain this recognition also after entering the land and making the transition to "bread from the earth." Even when we are nourished by bread which we earn by "the sweat of our brow," we must remember that, in truth, our sustenance comes from G-d, and that we never receive an iota more or an iota less than what is allotted us from Above.*
- *Hence the connection between the manna and the mitzvah of Shabbat. Shabbat, too, carries this lesson, serving as a weekly reminder that our sustenance comes from G-d. On the face of it, it might seem that ceasing work one day a week would lessen one's income; but the Jew knows that his earthly labor is only the channel through which G-d chooses to supply him what is essentially "bread from heaven," and that the best and most efficient conduit is one that conforms to the will of Him who supplies sustenance to all His creatures.*
- *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

Beshalach Exodus 13:17-17:16

Doubt

The Children of Israel travel on to Rephidim, where there's no water. "The people strove with Moses, and said: 'Give us water to drink.'"

"What shall I do with this people!" cries Moses to G-d. "Just a while longer, and they will stone me!"

"Pass before the people," says G-d to Moses, "and take with you of the elders of Israel; and your rod, with which you smote the river [Nile], take in your hand, and go.

"Behold, I will stand before you there upon the rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink."

Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

He called the name of the place Massah U'Merivah ("Test and Strife"), because of the strife of the children of Israel, and because they tested G-d, saying: "Is G-d among us, or not?"

Beshalach Exodus 13:17-17:16

- *...Because they tested G-d, saying: "Is G-d among us, or not?" Then came Amalek, and waged war with Israel in Rephidim (17:7-8)*
- *After all that they had seen G-d do on their behalf -- the Ten Plagues brought upon Egypt to free them, the splitting of the sea, the "bread from heaven" that descended each morning to nourish them -- how could the people of Israel possibly question, "Is G-d amongst us or not"?*
- *But such is the nature of doubt. There is doubt that is based on a rational query. There is doubt that rises from the doubter's subjective motives and desires. But then there is doubt pure and simple: doubt that neutralizes the most compelling evidence and the most inspiring experience with nothing more than a cynical shrug.*
- *Amalek is the essence of doubt, of irrational challenge to truth. (Thus the Hebrew word Amalek has a numerical value of 240 -- the same as the word safek, "doubt"). Because the people of Israel had succumbed to the Amalek within their own souls, they became vulnerable to attack by Amalek the nation.*
- *(The Chassidic Masters)*

Beshalach Exodus 13:17-17:16

- *What is the incident (of Amalek) comparable to? To a boiling tub of water which no creature was able to enter. Along came one evil-doer and jumped into it. Although he was burned, he cooled it for the others.*
- *So, too, when Israel came out of Egypt, and G-d split the sea before them and drowned the Egyptians within it, the fear of Israel fell upon all the nations. But when Amalek came and challenged them, although he received his due from them, he cooled the awe of the nations of the world for them.*
- *(Midrash Tanchuma)*
- *It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed (17:11)*
- *Did then the hands of Moses wage war or break war? Not so; but so long as Israel looked upwards and subjected their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed; and when they did not, they fell.*
- *(Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 29a)*

Haftorah Overview

Judges 4:4-5:31.

This week's *haftorah* describes the fall of the Canaanite general Sisera and his armies, who were swept away by the Kishon River, and Deborah's ensuing song of thanks. This parallels this week's Torah portion which discusses the drowning of the Egyptian forces in the Red Sea and the subsequent songs led by Moses and Miriam.

Deborah the Prophetess was the leader and judge of the Israelites at a difficult time; the Israelites were being persecuted by King Jabin of Canaan and his general Sisera. Deborah summoned Barak son of Abinoam and transmitted to him G-d's instruction: "Go and gather your men toward Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and Zebulun. And I shall draw to you, to the brook Kishon, Sisera, the chieftain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will give him into your hand." At Barak's request, Deborah accompanied him, and together they led the offensive.

Sisera was informed of the Israelites' mobilization and he gathered his forces and proceeded towards the Kishon River. Barak's army below and the heavens above waged battle against the Canaanites and utterly destroyed them. The river washed them all away; not one of the enemy survived.

The defeated general fled on foot and arrived at the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite. She invited him in and offered to hide him. When he fell asleep, Jael took a tent-peg and knocked it through Sisera's temple.

The next chapter of the *haftorah* is the Song of Deborah, which describes the miraculous victory and thanks the One Above for His assistance.

- **Tu B'Shevat, the 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar -- celebrated this year on Shabbat, January 30, 2010 -- is the day that marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees." This is the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle.**
- **Legally, the "New Year for Trees" relates to the various tithes that are separated from produce grown in the Holy Land. These tithes differ from year to year in the seven-year Shemittah cycle; the point at which a budding fruit is considered to belong to the next year of the cycle is the 15th of Shevat.**
- **We mark the day of Tu B'Shevat by eating fruit, particularly from the kinds that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. On this day we remember that "Man is a tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) and reflect on the lessons we can derive from our botanical analogue.**

Final Thoughts

**All of what we are, we see, we did and will do,
is the Work of HaShem.**

**“May it be Your Will, HaShem,
that the Holy Temple be rebuilt speedily in
our days and grant us our share in Your
Torah....”**

Shabbat Shalom