

BESHALACH



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA
SEDRA SUMMARY



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Israel Region

Paro pursues, the sea splits, the people sing. The people traveled and complained for water in Mara, for bread and meat in the Desert of Sin and for water in Refidim. Amalek attacked and was defeated.



1st aliya (13:17-14:8) G-d guides the Jews in the direction of the Sea. Moshe takes Yosef's bones.

A cloud guides them by day, fire by night. G-d instructs them to avoid the straight route to the Land of Israel, for fear that return to Egypt will be too easy. Rather camp at the sea so that Paro will notice. I will harden his heart and he will pursue, in order that Egypt will know that I am G-d. Paro led his elite chariots in pursuit.

Our parsha introduces a new chapter in the history of the Jewish people: the



2nd aliya (14:9-14) When Paro's army approaches, the people are afraid. They cry to G-d and say to Moshe: why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the desert? We would have preferred to be slaves in Egypt than die in the desert. Moshe tells them not to fear, for they are about to see G-d's redemption.

The focus of the Torah changes dramatically. There have been 4 main figures in this story: G-d, Moshe, Paro and the Jewish people. But one has been absent from most of the story: the Jewish people. We have heard precious little about the Jewish people in the entire story of the Exodus. Moshe, upon G-d's direction confronted Paro. Moshe received the mitzvot before the plague of the firstborn. All we hear of the Jews is that they did all that G-d commanded concerning the pesach offering. Even the dramatic night of the Exodus, when Paro ordered them to leave, we hear only of their receipt of gold

Condolences to
Feygah Sarah Friedman
and family on the passing of her husband,
Simcha z"l

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and silver and scrambling for provisions, with no time for the dough to rise.

What about joy and celebration? And of fear; concern, fear of the unknown, fear of change, fear of vulnerability, fear of retribution from Paro? What of their emotions, their thoughts?

All of that changes here. Now we hear of their struggles, their worries, their concerns. Because up until here, the narrative has been from G-d's perspective – in order to teach the lesson of G-d's Hand in the world. Now the focus shifts to the Jews. We have learnt His lessons. Now we have to live it. And that brings us to fear, joy, uncertainty, disappointment, and vulnerability – all that makes people human.



3rd aliya (14:15-25) G-d instructs

Moshe to raise his hand so the sea will split. And that He will

harden the heart of Egypt in order that He be glorified through Paro and his entourage. And Egypt will know I am G-d. Moshe did so; the people entered the dry land in the sea with the waters as walls on both sides. The Egyptians followed; at morning they became trapped in the sea.

The splitting of the sea renews the theme of water as a symbol of beginnings. Water featured in Creation; in Moshe's cradle in the river; and now. Beginning of the world, beginning of the Exodus and now, the beginning of Jewish national life. Jewish national life begins with the Jews stepping into the water. It is no longer just His miracles; we participate as partners in His plan. Taking that first step into the water.

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4th aliya (14:26-15:26) The water returned and drowned all the Egyptians. The Jewish people saw the Egyptian dead, saw the Hand of G-d, feared G-d, believing in Him and Moshe. Moshe and the people sang “Az Yashir: I will sing to G-d, my strength, my savior, my G-d. He is the One of War. Your Hand is powerful, Your Hand vanquishes enemies. Nations will fear Him. G-d will reign forever.” Miriam led the women in song. Moshe led the people to the desert to Mara. The people complained for water. G-d instructed Moshe to throw wood and sweeten the water.

In the great song at the sea, we have emotion released. The people sing. Divine redemption demands a human response. In fact, when we quote the exodus from Egypt in our tefila, we add a mention of the Shira – redemption need be accompanied by our song, Shira.

Here we find joy, appreciation, elation and faith. And while the entire people sing with Moshe, the song is curiously in the first person singular: I sing, My strength (the English doesn't note singular but in Hebrew “Azi”, my, singular, strength.) This is personal, individual – mine, not ours. We all sang the song at the sea; yet in the singular. My G-d saved me.

In fact, though I am merely speculating, this could be the source for the phrase in the Haggada “Each person is required to view himself as leaving Egypt”. If we are exact in recounting the story in Egypt, we must note that each person, individually, personally sang the song in the singular:

My G-d saved me, My G-d fought the battle. And so, in telling the story of the nation at the seder, we too must feel individually our place in that story, just as the individual Jew did at that time.



5th aliya (15:27-16:10) They traveled to the desert of Sin. They complained: oh that we would have remained in Egypt with the abundance of bread and meat. The manna was provided in the morning: gather enough for a day, on Friday for 2 days. G-d appeared in a cloud.

The series of complaints begins the sticky business of being a people. However lofty freedom be, human concerns are often more immediate. They complain for water, bread, meat and water again. Moshe is exasperated.

Moshe's frustration is highlighted. In order to emphasize who the real leader is here. The entire Exodus story is the story

OU Israel mourns the loss of **Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari z'l**

who was an economist and author whose work in the field of Jewish Business Ethics was world renowned. He was among the first individuals to teach university courses, write scholarly works, and establish a study center in this field.

For many years Torah Tidbits was honored to share his weekly teachings in these pages. His involvement with Torah Tidbits and OU Israel were a source of great pride in his life.

Condolences to the family on his passing

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of Divine intervention. He freed us; Moshe merely raised his staff. He split the sea; Moshe merely raised his staff. And He cares for us; Moshe merely hit the rock with his staff. It is not the story of Moshe, the charismatic leader, taking his people to freedom. It is the story of G-d, using His trusty servant to take His people to freedom. And to care for them.



6th aliya (16:11-36) Meat will come in the evening. Each person shall gather manna daily

for their needs. Some people saved for the next day; it spoiled. And some went to gather on Shabbat. G-d questioned: how long will you resist doing My commands? G-d has given you Shabbat, hence gives you double on Friday. Aharon, take a portion of manna to preserve forever. The Jewish people ate the manna for 40 years.

Shabbat precedes the giving of the Torah. The Mitzvah of Shabbat is the 4th of the Ten Commandments. Yet, here already, before Mt. Sinai, is the notion of Shabbat. Prepare what you need on Friday. Gather double on Friday. Do not gather on Shabbat. Because none will fall.

There is an irony to give the manna and Shabbat at the same time. 6 days you shall work. The seventh is a day of rest. But, they are being given their food falling from heaven. What work are they doing for six days?

Here, in a non-work environment, there is Shabbat. It is meant not only as a day off from the hard work of the week. It is a holy day, a rendezvous with the Shechina. The lack of work is a means to the end of spiritual focus. An intimate day with the

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Shechina is meaningful – whether after 6 days of work or not.



7th **aliya (17:1-16)** There was no water in Refidim. The people complained, as did Moshe.

Moshe was instructed to hit the rock; water was produced. Amalek attacked in Refidim. Yehoshua defeated Amalek. A remembrance of this war need be recorded.

The juxtaposition of the war of Amalek with all that came before is instructive. The Divine provided us with: redemption from slavery, intervention at the sea, water, food, meat, water again. It would seem that Amalek is attacking that reality. A people with a G-d that protects and provides – that is a people I attack.

The enemies of the Jewish people view us as the people of G-d. A people protected by His Hand. That provokes jealousy, resentment and denial. Of that we need no commentary. ■

HAFTORAH BESHALACH

SHOFTIM 4:4-5:31

This week's *haftorah* describes the decimation of the army of the Canaanites along with its' general Sisera. In response to this awesome event, Devorah offers a song of thanks. This is a parallel to the song sung by Moshe and the Israelites with the drowning of the Egyptian forces in the Red Sea.

Devorah, who was a prophetess, relays a message to Barak son of Avinoam conveying the precise instructions from

Hashem: "Go and gather your men toward Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and Zevulun. 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." Barak requests that Devrorah remain at his side and together head into battle.

Although Sisera was aware of the Israelite's mobilization, Barak's army, with the help of Heaven, the Israelite's utterly destroy Sisera and his troops.

When Sisera saw that his end was near he quickly fled on foot and arrived at the tent of Yael, wife of Hever the Kenite. Yael invited the general in and offered him a place of refuge. When he fell asleep, Yael took a tent-peg and with it killed the powerful general, the dangerous enemy of the Israelite nation.

The soaring song of Devorah describing the miraculous victory is undoubtedly the highlight of this Shabbat's magnificent haftorah! ■



STATS

16th of 54 sedras; 4th of 11 in Sh'mot
Written on 215.33 lines (17th)
14 parshiot; 9 open, 5 closed
116 p'sukim - rank: 23 (6th in Sh'mot) 1
681 words - rank: 19 (4th in Sh'mot)
6423 letters - rank: 18 (4th in Sh'mot)



MITZVOT

BESHALACH contains a single mitzvah of the 613, the prohibition of leaving one's Shabbat boundary - T'CHUM SHABBAT