

## B'SHALACH (בְּשַׁלַּח) (When He Sent)

Exodus 13:17-17:16, Judges 4:4-5:31, Revelation 19:1 – 20:6

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“After Pharaoh had sent (b’shalach) the people, God did not guide them to the highway that goes through the land of the Philistines (*P’lishitim*) because it was close by, for God thought that the people, upon seeing war, might change their minds and return to Egypt.” (Exodus 13:17)



Pharaoh's Army Engulfed by the Red Sea (1900 painting by [Frederick Arthur Bridgman](#))

The title of this week’s parashah, B’shalach, contains a Hebrew root, shlach { שלח } meaning ‘send’. The apostles were called ‘*shlichim*’, meaning ‘*sent ones*’. However, this same root can also mean “*to accompany*”; therefore we have a word picture of a broken and humbled Pharaoh ‘escorting’ the people of Israel out of Egypt.

In last week’s study, after the last and most devastating of the Ten Plagues (Death of the Firstborn), Pharaoh finally relented in letting the Israelites go free. This week, however, in Parashat B’shalach, Pharaoh changed his mind and came racing after them to bring the Israelites back into bondage in Egypt.

## Shabbat Shira - Song of Moses

Pharaoh, along with his army, pursued the Israelites into the desert; but God did a miracle and split the Red Sea so that His people passed through on dry land to safety, while the Egyptians were drowned in the sea. In thankfulness to God for this amazing victory, Moses and the Israelites sang a composition which came to be called the Song of Moses.

This Parashah is alternatively called **Shabbat Shira** (Sabbath of Singing) because of the 18 verse Song of Moses which is read at this time. This composition was sung after the Israelites safely passed through the Red Sea.

“Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:  
“I will sing to Adonai, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.”” (Exodus 15:1)

Later, this Shir Moshe (Song of Moses) was called **Shir Miryam** (song of Miriam) since she and the maidens went out with tambourines and danced for joy. Singing and dancing in praise to the Lord is surely an expression of the joy we feel in the victories the Lord brings into our lives. In fact, the tambourine is sometimes called, ‘*Miriam’s Drum*’.

Rabbinic commentators believe that Miriam and the women, being so confident in God’s redemption, took their musical instruments with them when they left Egypt. They knew in advance, by faith, that God would bring the victory.



Miriam & tambourine

Ironically, Miriam’s name in Hebrew { מרים } comes from the Hebrew word ‘*mar*’ { מר } which means ‘*bitter*’. Miriam had known the bitterness of slavery in Egypt, but because she had known the depth of such terrible pain, she was able to lead the other women to the heights of great joy.

Those who feel the anguish of bitterness also have the capacity for great joy. Even when going through difficulties and challenges, we need to keep our musical instruments ready and at hand to sing songs of praise in anticipation of the surely coming victory.

The Song of Moses, also called the Song of the Sea, is written in a unique brick-like pattern in the Torah scroll and traditionally chanted with a specific melody. Some Jewish people practice different customs on this day such as reading the Song of the Sea out loud in the synagogue service or going out to feed the birds, in honor of the beautiful melodies that they sing.

This song is not only a central part of Jewish daily prayers, but is also the one that those who have overcome will be singing with harps in Heaven.

“Those defeating the beast, its image and the number of its name were standing by the sea of glass, holding harps which God had given them. **They were singing the song of Moshe, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:** Great and wonderful are the things you have done, Adonai, God of heaven’s armies! (Revelations 15:2-3)

## Song of Deborah

Both the Torah portion and the haftarah (prophetic portion) of this week’s study contain victory songs by God’s people. Whereas the Israelites sang the ‘Song of Moses’ about how God delivered them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the parashah, they sang the ‘*Song of Deborah*’ when God gave them victory over General Sisera and the Canaanites.

**“Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying: “When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the LORD! “Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I, even I, will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.” (Judges 5:1-3)**



[Gustave Dore's](#) interpretation of the prophetess Deborah.

There are several other connections between the sedra (Torah portion) and this portion from the book of Judges. In both accounts of Israel’s victories, their enemies had assembled against them in chariots; but God threw their enemies into a panic. Also, in both the parashah and haftarah, Israel’s enemies were swept away in water; and the women celebrated by singing and dancing. Amalek is also mentioned in both. <sup>1</sup>

Music is a beautiful, God-given gift to His people. Whereas there are some in the world who misuse this gift to glorify the powers of darkness with vulgarity or the promotion of violence and death, we can use the gift of song to praise Adonai for His goodness and mercy.

Our response to the victories that God brings us in our lives should be one of rejoicing with singing and dancing, just as did Miriam and Deborah:

**“Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam!” (Judges 5:12)**

We may sing several songs this Shabbat arising from Parashat B’shalach including: ‘Be Still and Know that I am God’, ‘The Lord is my Salvation’, ‘The Battle Belongs to the Lord’, and ‘Song of Moses (Shir Moshe)’ : **“I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted; the horse and rider thrown into the sea.”**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beshalach>

## Israel's Escape from Egypt

The coming out of Egypt is the cornerstone of the nation of Israel. The commandments, the promises, the essence of Judaism all begin in the Exodus. God broke the power of Egypt and devastated it. Egypt never re-gained its status as the great nation it had been.

If we look at a parallel to the current situation in the Middle East, we can foresee that God may once again use supernatural means to destroy the power of the ungodly nations that oppress the people of Israel.



Israel's Escape from Egypt (Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The children of Israel were instructed to eat the Passover in haste, with their sandals on and their bags packed (Israeli fast food). This is not how we eat the Passover today at a ceremonial meal called a Seder, which can last several hours (or even all night with some families). We deliberately conduct the Passover Seder at a leisurely pace and recline at one point to demonstrate that we are no longer slaves, fleeing for our lives; but by the grace of God, we are free people. Because of its relevance to the Passover festival, this portion of the Torah is also read in the synagogues on the seventh day of Passover.

When Pharaoh sent the Israelites away, God did not lead them the straightway, but round about the Sea of Reeds (the literal translation of Yam Soof).

Why didn't God take them the quickest route? The rabbis tell a story of a man who purchases a cow and takes her home to produce milk for his family and not for her meat. Although the slaughterhouse is nearer his home, he does not take the cow this way but takes her on a longer, more roundabout route since if she goes past the slaughterhouse and smells the blood, she might try to escape and run away.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, God did not want the Israelites to enter immediately into battle, lest they lose heart and run back to Egypt.



<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beshalach>

When we first made aliyah (immigrated to Israel), the Lord led us, not straight to Jerusalem, but by way of Netanya (an Israeli coastal resort city) then to Ariel (capital of Samaria); and only then did He lead us to the heart of Jerusalem. Perhaps if He had led us straight into this tension-filled city, the battle seat for the spiritual warfare in the Land, we might have lost heart and turned back to Canada! God knows which way we need to take, even if it sometimes seems like the long way around.

Although it had been hundreds of years since Joseph had died in Egypt, Moses kept the promise of his ancestors to carry Joseph's bones out of Egypt. **“And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.”** (Exodus 13:19)

Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem, since it was in this place that his brothers were tending their flocks when Joseph came to them. Since this was where Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery, it was back to Shechem that they returned his bones.

**“And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, they buried in Shechem.”** (Joshua 24:32)

Meanwhile... Pharaoh had recouped from his losses, looked at the structures not yet completed and realized that he still desperately needed the labor force of the Hebrew slaves. God hardened his heart and Pharaoh sent out his army to bring them back into captivity. Even when we are set free from bondage, the enemy of our souls may try to captivate us again into the Kingdom of Darkness. This is when we need to stand still and know the battle is the Lord's.

When the frightened Israelites saw Pharaoh pursuing them, they cried out to God! **“And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD.”** (Exodus 14:10)

Then their fear drove them to complain to Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, only to be annihilated by Pharaoh's soldiers. They considered it better to have been left alone to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.

**“Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?”** (Exodus 14:11)

Sometimes, when moving into a new place of greater freedom, we may encounter fearful challenges and wish we had just stayed where we were – not matter how painful or uncomfortable we were there. However, moving ahead means facing new challenges and seeing God's power demonstrated as we overcome them.

Moses reassured the Israelites that God would fight their battles for them; and they would only need to hold their peace.

**“And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” (Exodus 14:13-14)**

We see Moses demonstrating great faith to his people. We also need to encourage those who are fearful-hearted, reminding them of God’s great power, love and faithfulness.

**“Say to those who are fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.” (Isaiah 35:4)**

As the people of Israel stand today surrounded by a sea of hostile enemies and are bombarded by terrorism, may we reach out to them with words of faith and courage. God will fight our battles for us; and we can hold our peace as we trust in Him.

## Trust Me

This week’s parashah is packed with exciting drama – the Israelites’ daring escape from Egypt, Moses parting the Red Sea, bringing water out of a rock, and God sending manna from Heaven.

The overall theme of B’shalach, however, is that of trusting in the Lord, and being still before Him, confident in seeing the salvation He will bring; rather than succumbing to fear, doubt, and even panic. We need His help to trust Him all the time, not just when the news is good. It is the Lord who will fight our battles for us. We need only be still and trust Him. Holding our peace, refusing to get all upset and singing praise to the Lord rather than complaining is one of the highest forms of spiritual warfare.

There was a time when I kept hearing in my spirit that still small voice saying, “Trust Me.” “OK, I trust You Lord”, I would answer; but at that time things were going pretty well. It’s easy to say “I trust You Lord” when everything is going our way, right? (*nachon*)?

But then...I stepped up to the bank machine and tried to withdraw money. And it wouldn’t give me any. “Amount exceeds limit” it read. “What!!!???” So I lowered the limit – still no money. And so I lowered it again and again to a pathetic amount and still no shekels came out that little slot in the machine. “Oye vey! What will I do now?” I moaned.



I walked away from that machine feeling so dejected. Everyone else in the lineup was coming away with their needed funds but my hands came away empty. Checking online I found that I had miscalculated my figures and that instead of having a few hundred dollars to live on for the month, we were that same amount in the hole. Double oye!

My first reaction was absolute panic. Fears and doubts assailed my mind and emotions. I experienced this terrible heavy sensation in the pit of my gut. How was I going to feed three children and get them to school and back for the next three weeks without any money?

This is how our flesh reacts with fear. But then I remembered that God had asked me if I would trust Him. *“Yes, Lord, I whispered.”* Here is where the ‘rubber meets the road’ – when we’re in the wilderness and there’s no water, there’s no food, the enemy is breathing down our necks – or in modern terms - when the shekels won’t come out of the ATM machine!

This is where our faith is tested; this is when we need to use our faith to keep trusting in God to come through for us in a mighty way. Are we truly people who live by faith or by sight? Do we really believe that God exists and is a rewarder of those who seek Him<sup>3</sup> – or are these just empty words we spout while our hearts are full of fears and doubts?

God is looking for a people who will trust Him fully; who know that in Him we live and move and have our being<sup>4</sup> and that we are safe in the palm of His hands. **“The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knows them that trust in him.”** (Nahum 1:7)

We are equipped and anointed to overcome every obstacle and to walk in victory, trusting in the One who loves us. It is through experiencing adversity that we grow stronger and learn to be overcomers who will inherit the Kingdom.

**“The righteous...will not be afraid of evil tidings, His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord...”** (Psalm 112:7)

## A Steadfast Heart

I remember at this same time of the year, at Tu Bishvat (Festival of Trees) in Israel, writing about a steadfast heart. In Hebrew, the word for **steadfast** is **‘nachon’** which means **‘right’**. Truly if we have a right heart with God then we are fully trusting in Him. But here is the most wonderful thing of all – it is that we don’t even have to dredge up all this faith on our own from some kind of well that has run dry.



Almond trees blossoming at Tu Bishvat

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 11:6

<sup>4</sup> Acts 17:28

Faith is also a gift from God which He will give to those who humbly say, “*Lord I believe, help my unbelief.*”<sup>5</sup> God was so good at encouraging me through this ‘*growing time*’ as the Holy Spirit gave me faith to believe Him for our daily bread. We went to the Messianic congregation one Friday evening (after our ATM trauma) and my youngest son, Avi, went to the kids’ class, coming out with a beautiful picture of praying hands and a bird.



Underneath Avi’s drawing was written a Scripture (a Word in due season) for me. The Scripture was the one from Matthew where Yeshua soothed his disciples fears about their materials needs, saying not to worry about food or drink or clothing, for our Heavenly Father knows our needs, and as He cares for and feeds the birds, so will He feed and clothe us who are His children and worth so much more than the birds of the air.<sup>6</sup>

*Look at the birds of the air....*

Courtney, my daughter, gave me a bird feeder for Chanukah and I love watching the birds outside my window. They remind me not to worry. God is faithful.

Sometimes when our backs are up against the wall, as was the case with Israel standing at the Red Sea – the water before them, Pharaoh and his armies behind them and the mountains all around them – we wonder, “*What should I do? What should I do?*”

The best thing we can do at this point, rather than panicking and getting all upset about it is to just believe and enter into His rest about the situation, waiting upon the Lord for further instructions.

Yeshua’s disciples asked him, “**What should we do in order to perform the works of God?**” Yeshua answered, “**Here’s what the work of God is: to trust in the one he sent!**”<sup>7</sup> As the well known hymn goes, “*Trust and obey for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.*”

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## The Unbelief of Israel

The rest of the parashah deals with the unbelief of Israel. While celebrating the Passover, or reading the account of the Exodus, we are to consider that God delivered each one of us, personally and individually, out of bondage. Therefore, instead of looking at the unbelief of Israel from a distance, we may examine the unbelief in our own hearts.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark 9:24

<sup>6</sup> Paraphrase from Matthew 6:25-34

<sup>7</sup> John 6:28-29

God is faithful to complete the good work He started in us – to root this sin of unbelief out of our hearts. I have already confessed my battle with unbelief in the area of finances; but I think we all have areas of our lives where we may find it difficult to completely and truly trust God.

The people of Israel act as negative examples for us, in order that we may be warned not to follow in their ways. They were afraid; therefore they could only foresee disaster.

They said to Moses, **‘Were there no graves in Egypt that you had to bring us into this wilderness to die? Didn’t we tell you to leave us alone in Egypt? But no……..!! It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians alive than to die as free men in this wilderness!’** (paraphrase Exodus 14:10-12)

## The Price of Freedom

This is the price of freedom - we must face fears and doubts that we didn’t have to deal with while in captivity. The Israelites still didn’t really trust in God’s unlimited power. They praised God at how He had delivered them from Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. You’d think their faith would last, but it didn’t. Their faith only lasted until the next crisis.

We might initially be surprised at the Israelites’ fear and unbelief, since they had personally witnessed the amazing miracles God had performed in Egypt in order to rescue them and set them free! But are we really so different?

Instead of looking at my Israelite ancestors with scorn, I can only see how I sometimes behave the same way. We personally witnessed God do mighty miracles to bring us back to this land of Israel – providing all the finances, providing a place to stay even though we didn’t know where we were going.

My eldest daughter, who now confesses that she only took ten minutes to pack, leaving most of her precious belongings in Canada because she had no intention of staying in Israel, made the decision to stay here with us in the Land. She is now married to a wonderful Israeli Believer and they have three beautiful boys and one little princess<sup>8</sup> - a whole new generation of Messianic Believers growing up in the Land! Praise Adonai!

God made a way for us to return from out of exile; He parted the sea and made a way where there was no way. He has taken care of us in every way. You would think my faith would last. But no……! Sometimes when the problems seem too great, the challenges before us too demanding and the pressure of the land too intense, I can fall into fear and unbelief instead of remaining in His rest that He wants to give us.

“Come to Me, Yeshua said, ...and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

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<sup>8</sup> Courtney & Emanuel Nahum, Aden, Yoah, Peleh, and Shamaiah

## Overcoming a Poverty Spirit

Rabbinical commentary proposes an explanation for the Israelites' fear when they saw the Egyptian army approaching. Such a great multitude of people should have been able to defeat this army; but because of years and years of servitude to the Egyptians, their minds had become depressed, and *they lacked confidence*.

Generations had learned to patiently endure all the oppression and insults the Egyptians inflicted upon them. This lack of confidence is a big part of our problems. We are afraid to move ahead and take a chance on being wrong, making a mistake, or failing yet again.

A famous study examined the phenomenon of learned helplessness and concluded that when whatever we do to improve our situation proves futile over and over again, we learn to give in to defeat. So too, when we spend so many years of our lives in servitude to the kingdom of darkness, we learn to live in fear and expect the worst.

This may be called a '*poverty spirit*'. It does not need to have anything to do with money (although it may), but it is a term describing someone whose soul is so stunted that they cannot pay the price for victory. They are unable or unwilling to endure the suffering on the road to excellence.

A person with a '*poverty spirit*' may be compared to someone in a prisoner of war (POW) camp. They have some kind of indigestible food and insufficient shelter; and so even though they are held captive - even though they are miserable - they stay imprisoned out of the fear of the pain, risk, and exertion required to escape.

Perhaps they would go cold and hungry, or fierce guard dogs may chase after them. They might even be recaptured and killed. The risk is too great. So they remain. How does this possibly relate to us? Some, perhaps many of us, tolerate the low level pain of mediocrity rather than take the risks necessary and endure the pain involved with possessing our birthright.

Maybe we stay in jobs we hate because we fear the loss of income if we take a chance on quitting. We endure abusive relationships because we fear the unknown, or don't want to face the loneliness and the need to provide for our children without the abuser's financial support.

God must cleanse us from this kind of '*poverty mentality*' before we are fit to enter the Promised Land. Sometimes He does this by increasing the level of pain to such a degree that we can no longer tolerate it. The children of Israel were not ready to leave Egypt until God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he increased the Israelite slaves' already heavy burdens. Sometimes we will tolerate a situation and try to ignore it until it becomes so bad that we are forced to deal with it.

At first, we try to co-exist with the enemy in hopes that the situation will not get worse. Ultimately it is a loving Father who will apply discipline to the point that we are no longer content to live with mediocrity or bondage. He wants us to let go of all our excuses, to pursue excellence and freedom – and to fulfill our destiny.

In order to possess our birthright, the primary thing we need to overcome is this poverty spirit (slave consciousness). We are children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, not some kind of beggars or second class citizens. We must become people who are confident enough to step out in faith, trusting God in us to lead and guide and direct our footsteps. It's hard to steer a parked car. So we must make a move – kadima (forward)!

The Lord had an interesting response to the Israelites' dilemma – He told them to move forward (**kadima!**). **“And the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.”** (Exodus 14:15)

So often we are told to ‘*wait upon the Lord*’ and it is true there are times when we must find the patience to simply do nothing but wait until God shows us His direction. However, there are also times when we are no longer to cry out to the Lord in prayer, but to rise up from bended knee in heroic faith and move forward!

God may have wonderful blessings and victories in store for us if we would only take the first steps of faith. Through Yeshua we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37) Let us then go forward with boldness and confidence to possess the Land that is ours.

Why sit we here until we die? – Kadima!

This is what four lepers in the Torah did – cut off from society, diseased, outcasts, facing probable death due to a siege the enemy had lain against Israel – they decided to take the risk of moving ahead. Even though the enemy was camped beyond the gates of the city, and even though the situation seemed nigh impossible, they knew that to stay where they were meant death as well, so they moved forward – kadima!

“Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, “Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, ‘We will enter the city,’ the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die.” And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one *was* there.” (2 Kings 7:3-5)

God so honored their faith that he made their footsteps sound like a mighty army which frightened the enemy into fleeing and even leaving behind all their goods. If we will have the faith to take steps forward, to do what we can do, then God will meet us and do the supernatural.

## Crossing the Red Sea

The crossing of the Red Sea was a turning point in Israel's relationship with God. Up until this point, the miracles were entirely orchestrated by God. What transpired at the Red Sea required the Israelites, for the first time, to become directly involved in their fate. If they didn't make a move, tragedy would be inevitable. It seemed like a no-win situation. If they moved toward the sea, they would surely drown, and if they didn't, they would surely die at the hand of the Egyptians. The only thing they could logically do is to pray.



*The Crossing of the Red Sea, Painting by Nicholas Poussin*

But when Moses called out to God, the Almighty answered, “**Why are you crying out to Me? Speak to the Israelites and tell them to start moving...**” (Exodus 14:15) The time had come for the Israelites to make the first move. There is a time to cry out to the Lord, a time to intercede and pray, but also a time to just move forward in faith.

Of course, we need the wisdom of God to make a move in line with His will and not our own. We need to hear the voice of the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit). Also, we need to pray for those in authority over us, since it is a hard truth that innocent people often suffer for the foolish decisions of their leaders. Sometimes it is the women and children who suffer the most.

Can we imagine the grief of the Egyptian mothers who found their firstborn child dead when God struck them in the last plague? Every family in Egypt lost their firstborn to the angel of death, due to the hardness of Pharaoh's heart and because of his stubborn refusal to submit to God's will.

Determination is good; but stubbornness can be a dangerous sin. Sometimes there is a fine line between the two. People in positions of leadership (including husbands as head of their families) need to keep in mind that their actions and decisions not only affect them, but also their wife and children (and even the generations to come).

Moses lifted up his rod and the waters parted, allowing the children of Israel to walk through on dry land. “**So 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.**” (Exodus 14:22)



The Egyptians Are Destroyed (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

The Egyptians followed the children of Israel into the sea, but God commanded Moses once again to lift up his staff over the waters. This time, the waters swept back over the Egyptians, drowning them all.

**“ Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained.”** (Exodus 14:28)

God drowned the Egyptian army in the sea, just as the Egyptians had drowned the Hebrew baby boys in the Nile River. Whatever the nations do to Israel, God will return on their own heads, for good or for evil. He will bless those who bless us and curse those who curse us. (Genesis 12:3)

God does not delight in the death of the sinner, but desires that he would turn from his wicked ways and live.<sup>9</sup> It is not God’s will that even one should perish.<sup>10</sup> Rabbinical commentary states that when the Egyptians were drowning, the angels were about to burst into jubilant song, but God silenced them, saying, *“My creatures are perishing, and you are ready to sing?!”*

God’s purpose even in this destruction was that at last the Egyptians would know that He is the Lord. When He hindered the Egyptian army by removing their chariot wheels, they began to realize against Whom they were fighting – the one true God. **“And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”** (Exodus 14:25)

The nations who are coming against Israel are fighting against the Lord, and one day they will also realize this. When will all the people of Israel believe in the Lord and fear Him? Just as with the Israelites of ancient times, modern Israel will know Adonai when they see God fighting for them against their enemies. They will realize that God has saved them and they will believe in Him, and in His servant; but this time it will be the shoot out of Jesse, Yeshua, rather than Moses.

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<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 33:11

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 18:14

## The Lord will Fight for Israel

**“Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the People feared the Lord; and they believed in the Lord, and in His servant Moses.”** (Exodus 14:30-31)

Although it will look like a hopeless situation (just as it seemed with the Israelites trapped between the Egyptian armies, the mountains, and the Red Sea) the Lord will supernaturally intervene to save Israel.

**“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for war... Then Adonai will go out and fight against those nations, fighting as on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...”**

**Then Adonai my God will come to you with all the holy ones... Then Adonai will be king over the whole world. On that day Adonai will be the only one, and his name will be the only name.”** (Zechariah 14:2-9)

The time is coming when God will judge all of humanity: “For – look! – Adonai will come in fire, and his chariots will be like the whirlwind, to render his anger furiously, his rebuke with blazing fire. For Adonai will judge all humanity with fire and with the sword, and those slain by Adonai will be many.” (Isaiah 66:15-16)

God is preparing to judge the nations for coming against Israel, just as he judged Egypt - with terrible plagues. **“I will judge him with plague and with blood; I will cause torrential rain to fall on him, his troops and the many peoples with him, along with huge hailstones, fire and sulfur. I will show my greatness and holiness, making myself known in the sight of many nations; then they will know that I am Adonai.”** (Ezekiel 38:22-23)

God’s purposes remain eternal. The Word says that there will be so many dead bodies it will take Israel seven months just to bury them. Of Israel, God says that from that day on, all Israel will know that the Lord is God. We will live in the land securely and no one will make us afraid. He will bring the rest of His Jewish people out of the land of their captivity and not leave any of them behind! <sup>11</sup>

Yeshua will establish His eternal Kingdom of righteousness upon the earth and sit on the throne of His father David. **“And of the increase of His government, there shall be no end.”** (Isaiah 9:6-7) All nations who stubbornly refuse to accept this and serve Israel will unfortunately be destroyed. **“The nations who will not serve her will perish.”** (Isaiah 60:12)

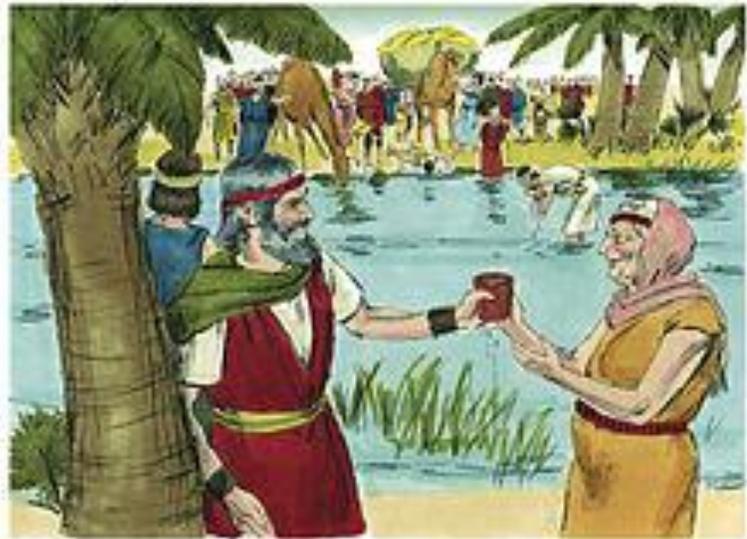
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<sup>11</sup> Ezekiel 39:12, 22,26,28

## At the Waters of Mara

In the wilderness, the people were thirsty but the water they found was bitter (mar). As seemed to be their reflexive reaction, they began to complain bitterly to Moses about the scarcity of drinkable water for themselves and their animals. God showed Moses a tree to throw into the water and the water became sweet and good to drink.

God Made the Water Fit To Drink (1984 illustration by Jim Padgett, courtesy of Distant Shores Media/Sweet Publishing)



These bitter waters are perhaps symbolic of the state of the Israelites' hearts. They had been through terrible circumstances and endured years and years of suffering. It would be natural for them to have become bitter; but God wants to change that which is bitter and unusable into something sweet and fit for use in His Kingdom.

In the book of Ruth, Naomi changed her name from that which means 'pleasant' to 'Mara' (meaning 'bitter') because of her bitterness toward the Lord. In Moab she had lost her husband and both of her sons. She came back to the land broken and bitter.

Like Naomi, we may be bitter against God through loss and disappointments or unexplained tragedies. We may become bitter against people who have hurt us, abandoned us, betrayed or mistreated us; or we may just be bitter against all the injustices of life itself. Instead of drinking from the living waters that Yeshua offers, many people are drinking from the 'waters of Mara' and wondering why they don't find life.

There is only one way to turn the bitter waters sweet and that is by throwing in that tree. It is the tree upon which Yeshua was crucified that will cure our bitterness. When we look up to Yeshua nailed to the tree for our sins and hear him say, '*Abba, forgive them...*' then our bitterness may be healed.

The Word of God warns us about this 'root of bitterness' that can spring up to cause trouble and defile not only ourselves, but many around us as well. **"See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled."** (Hebrews 12:15)

This is exactly the topic we are studying at this time in our Ladies prayer group in Mevasseret Tzion. Just as we have to keep our houses clean, we must also cleanse our hearts of all hidden bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness.

## I am Adonai Your Healer אֲנִי יְהוָה, רֹפֵאֶךָ

It is not a coincidence that it was exactly at these waters of Mara that God revealed Himself as our healer (Rophe רֹפֵאֶ means doctor or physician). Perhaps the primary healing we need is for our hearts to be healed of bitterness.

The people of Israel had seen God's terrible judgments upon Egypt. Perhaps they were afraid that they might suffer a similar fate. God then reassured His people that *if* they would listen to Him and keep His commandments, *then* He would put none of the diseases upon them that he put on the Egyptians:

**“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the LORD who heals you.”** (Exodus 15:26)

This is one of my favorite songs, *“I am the God that healeth thee, I am the Lord thy healer.”* Many people sing this and others and pray many prayers for healing of their diseases, but are they including the first portion of this scripture? **“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes...”**

It seems to me very important to keep in mind that this promise came with a specific condition - obedience. If we desire healing, we must listen to God's voice and keep His commandments. If we are doing all that we can to hear God's voice and obey Him, and yet remain afflicted, we must stand on the Word of God that promises us healing through Yeshua's sacrifice: **“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, He *was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (made whole).”** (Isaiah 53:4-5)

After three days, the people were hungry and thirsty again; and their provisions were depleted. They soon forgot the miracles and complained against the Lord. They refused to trust that God would provide their needs. Belief and trust in God are very important. Unbelief is disobedience and a serious sin in God's eyes.<sup>12</sup>

Unbelief dares to question the truthfulness of God's promise itself.

Unbelief says, “This is a *new* thing and cannot be true.”

Unbelief says, “There is no way to accomplish this thing.”

Unbelief says, “There is only one way God can work.”

Unbelief says, “Even if God does something, it won't be enough.”

As believers, we are to walk by faith and not by our natural sight.<sup>13</sup> We need to focus on God and His power, not on our own problems.

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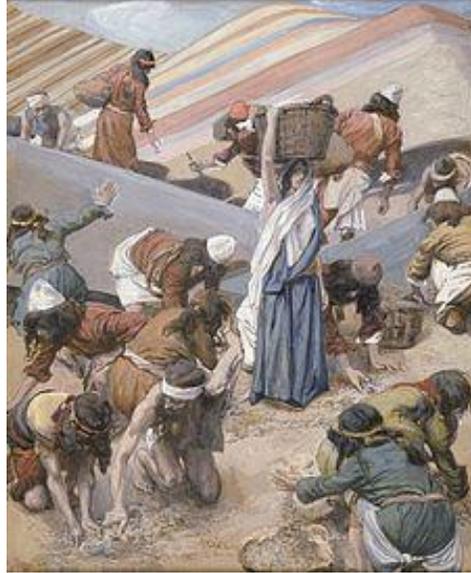
<sup>12</sup> Psalm 106:6-14, Psalm 78:40-end

<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:7

## Daily Manna

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.” (Exodus 16:4)

God provided their needs for food by raining down bread from Heaven. They called this manna from the Hebrew words ‘mah’ (what) ‘na’ (this)? This substance was so unknown to them that they asked, “What is this?” Like a patient father, God was teaching His children that He is the provider of their ‘*daily bread*’; but God also wanted to teach them about keeping Shabbat. On the sixth day, the people were to gather twice as much in order that they would not go out to gather on the Sabbath - the seventh day. God was testing them and some failed the test. In disobedience, they went out to gather on the seventh day but found nothing.



The Gathering of the Manna (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

So many sincere followers of Yeshua believe that God’s laws are not for them since they are ‘not under the law’. They therefore flagrantly disobey God’s commandments, especially that of keeping the Sabbath day a holy day of rest; and instead continue to work on the day God has forbidden us to work.

To this, God asks (as He did of the Israelites), “**How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and My Torah (law)?**” (Exodus 16:28) Yes, indeed, how long...? This reminds us of God’s question to Pharaoh, “How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?” Obedience is a conscious choice.

We cannot expect to continually disregard God’s laws and then claim this promise of healing. It is not only working on the Sabbath that is an issue, it is a general matter of obedience. God has promised that if we obey Him, then He will bless us and if we disobey Him, then we need not wonder why we don’t see His blessing on our life.

If we disobey God in the matter of tithing, then we cannot expect God’s financial blessing and protection over our material goods. We can pray and rebuke demons all we want, but the first thing to look at is whether or not we are walking in obedience towards God.

God has given all of His commandments for our good. He has written, “You shall have no other gods before me.” If we work on the Sabbath, then we are essentially making work our God. If we keep the tithe for ourselves, then we are making money our God; but obedience declares that God comes first in every area of our lives.

**“Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments, His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches will be in his house...”** (Psalm 112:1-3)

## Water out of a Rock

**“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it that the people may drink.”** (Exodus 17:6)

When the Israelites were thirsty, God commanded Moses to strike a rock and water flowed freely. Although God faithfully met the needs of the Israelites in the desert, they continually complained and argued.

With every new challenge, they doubted in their hearts, *“Is God really with us or not?”* (Exodus 17:7). We must strengthen our faith to believe that God is with us – in the good times and in challenges as well. He is not a ‘fair-weather friend’ who leaves us when the going gets tough. He is with us – in sickness and health, in riches and poverty – and even beyond death itself. He will never leave us or forsake us.<sup>14</sup> That is His promise!

## Victory over the Amalekites

**“Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.”** (Exodus 17:8)

Israel soon did come to experience war at the hands of the Amalekites. As long as Moses held up his hands (with a little help from his friends, Aaron and Hur), Israel won the victory; but when he lowered his hands, Israel suffered defeat. So too, if we fix our gaze upward to the heavens, to Yeshua who sits at the right hand of God, we have faith to step out of the boat and walk on water (like Peter, Yeshua’s disciple). But when we begin to look down at ourselves, our inadequacies, and our problems, then we begin to sink and drown. Sometimes we can grow weary in the battles of life; and this is where others can help to ‘hold up our arms’ in prayers of faith.



Victory O Lord (1871 painting by [John Everett Millais](#))

Israel stands as both an example and a warning to us. Even though God brought them out of Egypt, all except two of that generation perished in the wilderness due to this sin of unbelief. **“They always go astray in their hearts...they shall not enter my rest.”** (Hebrews 3:12)

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<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 31:6

We must desperately hold fast to the confidence we have in Him in order that we may enter into a state of rest through faith and trust. Beware of the evil heart of unbelief!  
**“So we see that they were unable to enter because of lack of trust.”** (Hebrews 3:19)

We need to encourage ourselves and others not to fear or doubt, but to stand still and see the salvation God will bring. For the Lord, our God, will come and save us. We need to firmly place our trust in our God and in Yeshua, His Son, no matter what the situation looks like. God is faithful. He is worthy of our trust. Be strong and of good courage. Keep a steadfast (right) heart in the trials and challenges of life.

God’s mercy endures forever; let us give thanks.

**“To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His mercy *endures* forever;  
And made Israel pass through the midst of it, for His mercy *endures* forever;  
But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,  
for His mercy *endures* forever;”** (Psalm 136:13-15)

### B’Shalach Study Questions

1. What is the alternative name for this week’s parashah? Why is it called by this name?
2. Do you express your joy to the Lord through music – singing, playing musical instruments and dancing? Why or why not?
3. Why did God not take the Israelites by the most direct route? Have there been times when God took you the ‘long way around’?
4. Have you ever moved forward into a new thing or new place and then encountered such challenges that you wished you could go back? Did you or didn’t you? What were the results of your choice?
5. When have you seen God fight your battles for you? Were you able to hold your peace?
6. Describe a time when your faith was sorely tested but God saw you through.
7. What is the Hebrew meaning of a ‘steadfast’ heart?
8. Is there an area in your life where you struggle with fear and unbelief?
9. Has there been a time (or is it now) that you feel God is calling you to just boldly move forward in faith and confidence?
10. Do you see a parallel between God fighting against the Egyptians in this parashah and a future time when God will fight for Israel against her enemies? What is your response?
11. Do you recognize any evidence of bitterness or resentment in your heart? Is there anyone you need to forgive? (even yourself or God)? Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it.
12. Have you ever seen God supernaturally provide - even from a strange source like with the manna?
13. Do you keep Shabbat a holy day of rest? Why or why not?
14. Do you have people around you who can ‘hold up your arms in prayer’ when you grow weary?

About the Author:

Hannah Neshher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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