

**Wembley Synagogue**

בְּשַׁלַּח

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Beshalach 5768**What's the Sidra about?**

1st Aliya: Bnei Yisrael had left Egypt. The closest route to Eretz Yisrael was along the Mediterranean coast up into Israel. However; this territory was occupied by the Philistines. Bnei Yisrael were not ready for a battle, so Hashem led them toward the Sea of Reeds. Pharaoh was informed that Bnei Yisrael appeared to be lost, and he strengthened his resolve and that of his people and pursued the Jews into the Desert.

2nd Aliya: The Egyptians caught up to the Jews as they were camped by the edge of the sea. Moshe reassured them that they only had to trust Hashem and stand silently as His awesome majesty wiped out the might of Mitzrayim.

3rd Aliya: Moshe was told to stretch out his staff over the sea. Hashem separated the Jews from the Egyptians with a cloud cover and caused an Easterly wind to blow the entire night. As the waters parted, Bnei Yisrael entered between the towering walls of water and crossed to the other side. The Egyptians chased after them into the parted waters of the sea.

4th Aliya: Moshe stretched his arm back over the sea and the waters returned to their natural state, drowning the might and glory of Egypt's best. Bnei Yisrael witnessed G-d's awesome display of justice and they believed in the reality of Hashem and in the appointment of Moshe as His most trusted servant. Moshe, and then Miriam, led Bnei Yisrael in a spontaneous song of exaltation and thanksgiving. The incident with the bitter waters at Marah is detailed.

5th Aliya: Bnei Yisrael struggled with the realities of their experience, attempting to balance faith with practical concerns for survival. The concerns for food and water were overwhelming and Moshe promised them quail and Manna. These "miracles" were introduced to the Jews as evidence of Hashem's love, caring, honour and glory.

6th Aliya: Bnei Yisrael were given strict instructions regarding the gathering and eating of the Manna. They were introduced to Shabbat, and an urn of Manna was saved for posterity.

7th Aliya: Bnei Yisrael travelled to Rephidim, and confronted Moshe over the issue of water. Moshe saw this as an unnecessary challenge to Hashem's caring and love. Hashem instructed Moshe to hit the rock and bring forth water. The final episode in the Parsha was Amalek's unprovoked attack on the newly independent nation. Yehoshua led the attack against Amalek while Moshe, Aharon, and Chur (Miriam's son) stood at the top of the hill overlooking the battle field with Moshe's arms stretched heavenward. Hashem commanded us to eradicate and never forget Amalek's evil. (Source: R' Aaron Tendler)

וַיְהִי בְּשַׁלַּח פָּרְעֹה אֶת־הָעָם - It happened when Pharaoh sent out the [Jewish] people . . .," The midrash comments that "sending out" always means, "with accompaniment." (See, for example, Bereishit 18:16.) The midrash says: "The same lips that uttered (Shmot 5:2), 'I will not send out Israel,' later said (Shmot 10:10), 'I will send you out with your children.' What was Pharaoh's reward for these words? Hashem commanded us (Devarim 23:8), 'You shall not reject an Egyptian . . . Children who are born to them, in the third generation they may enter the congregation of Hashem'." The Midrash continues: "The same lips that uttered (Shmot 5:2), 'I do not know Hashem,' later said (Shmot 14:25), 'I shall flee before Israel, for Hashem is waging war for them against Egypt.' What was Pharaoh's reward for this? We read (Isaiah 19:19), 'On that day there will be an altar [dedicated] to Hashem in the midst of the land of Egypt'." R' Eliyahu Lopian z"l observes that this midrash is incredible. Pharaoh was an evil man who oppressed an entire nation, murdered babies, ridiculed Moshe and Aharon, and ignored G-d's obvious rebuke. Is it any wonder that he sent Bnei Yisrael away accompanied? Why did Hashem reward him for this act? Additionally, the Midrash implies that if not for Pharaoh's saying, "I will send you out," Egyptians would be prohibited to marry into the Jewish nation just like Moabites. What about Pharaoh's words made him worthy of having his descendants welcomed into Klal Yisrael? Our Sages teach that no good deed goes unrewarded. Hashem does not deprive any person of his just reward, even when his good deed is incidental to a long series of bad deeds. Pharaoh was humiliated by the plagues and he had to free Bnei Yisrael, but he did not have to admit that "Hashem is waging war." He could have kept quiet. He did not have to humiliate himself further by sending Egyptians to accompany Bnei Yisrael on their way. He could have dispatched a messenger to Moshe to tell him to leave with Bnei Yisrael as quickly as possible. For having the courage and the moral strength to admit he was wrong, Pharaoh deserved a significant reward. (Source: Lev Eliyahu)

וַיִּמָּשְׁכוּ עֲלֵיהֶם בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצְרַיִם מְאֹד - And armed they ascended the Children of Israel, from the Land of Egypt (13:18) Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim fully armed in case they were attacked

by enemies. In contrast, we find (Exodus 12:39) that they took along no food for their trek across the desert. They relied entirely upon Hashem to provide them with food. Why did they prepare weapons for the journey while leaving the issue of their sustenance totally up to Hashem? Hashem wants people to make an effort to provide for themselves even though ultimately it is He who provides all of their needs. It is not permitted to depend solely on supernatural miracles; each person must expend effort to achieve his/her aims according to his/her individual level of faith. Hashem therefore requires effort from each individual. However, at times one is put into a situation where it is obvious that any amount of trying will be futile. The only recourse in such circumstances is to have complete faith in Hashem and pray for His salvation. When Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim, there was no point in attempting to provide themselves with food; It would be impossible to carry enough food for the whole trip anyway. It was clear that Hashem wanted the Jews to trust in Him, rather than try to follow the Laws of Nature. Consequently, they took very little food with them. On the other hand, it was proper for them to take along weapons. By doing so, they were sufficiently prepared to defend themselves in the ordinary fashion. (Source: Darash Moshe)

וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-עֲצָמוֹת יוֹסֵף יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ - Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him. (13:19) Chazal note that only Moshe took the responsibility for Yosef's remains. The rest were occupied in "fulfilling" the injunction to relieve the Egyptians of their valuables. In doing so, Moshe exemplified King Solomon's dictum, חָכֵם-לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת, "The wise of heart takes mitzvot." (Proverbs 10:8) In other words, a wise person devotes himself to the performance of mitzvot. Although requesting the Egyptian valuables was also a mitzvah, a wise man is able to distinguish between mitzvot. To paraphrase Harav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, "A wise person knows which mitzvah to take." While engaging in transporting Yosef's remains may not have manifest the same material advantage as collecting the Egyptian valuables, its spiritual benefit certainly was greater.

וַיִּבְקְעוּ הַמַּיִם - The waters split (14:21) All the waters of the world split. There were ten wonders performed by the sea; first, the sea split; second, the waters were like a cave, sheltering all of Israel with water overhead and on both sides; third, the land beneath them was dry and hard, so that they would not dirty their feet in the mud; fourth, when the Egyptians advanced the earth became muddy and they sank within it; fifth, the water was solidified; sixth, the water did not solidify like a single rock, but rather hardened in many places, like pebbles; seventh, the water split twelve ways so that each tribe had its own path; eighth, the water was clear as glass so that each tribe could see the other tribes walking nearby; ninth, the water of the sea became sugar-sweet, so that the Jews could drink it. When they wished to drink, the water liquefied for them and when they had finished, it immediately hardened again, so their feet would not get wet. Finally, Chizkuni says that the tenth wonder was that only one third of the water on the bottom became hard. If the entire sea, until the bottom, had dried up, there would have been a great pit and it would have been difficult for them to climb down and climb back up. (Source: Tz'edah Ur'edah)

וַיִּלְקְמוּ דְבַר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ - And pick each day's portion on its day (16:4) The Midrash relates that R' Shimon bar Yochai was asked by his students why the Jewish people were only given one day's worth of manna at a time instead of giving them the manna once a year for the entire year. R' Shimon answered with a parable. To what can this be compared? To the son of a king, whose father provided him with an entire year's worth of sustenance and necessities at one time. How often did the king get to see his son? No more than once a year. The king said, "I Love my son so much yet I only get to see him once a year." He therefore called for his son and told him, "Until today, you have received your yearly sustenance all at once; from now on it will be given to you on a daily basis." The same is true, said R' Shimon, regarding the Jewish people. Anybody who had children would say to himself, it is true that today there was a sufficient amount of manna for my entire family - but what will be tomorrow? Perhaps tomorrow manna will not fall from heaven? I must pray to Hashem that He send us manna every day. Thus the Jewish people turned to Hashem each and every day. (Source: A Shabbos Vort)

שבת שלום!
Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 4.10pm



Shabbat ends: 5.19pm

The **Sedra Insights 5768** sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

Online at: http://www.wembleysynagogue.org/html/sedra_notes.html

לע"נ אבני מורי ר' מרדכי צבי ב"ד חיאל משה וולפסון ז"ל
Dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Mordechai Tzvi ben David Chaiel Moshe Wolfson z"l