



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

פרשת בשלח

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER?

אָשׁר רְאִיתֶם אֶת הַצְּרִיִּים הַיּוֹם לֹא תִּסְיְפוּ לִרְאֹתָם עוֹד
...עד עולם...

"...As you see Mitzrayim today, you shall never see them ever again..." (Shemos 14:13)

R

av Boruch Halevi Epstein, author of *Torah Temimah*, relates the following story in his *sefer Tosefes Brachah*.

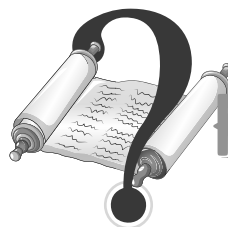
Many years ago, when I was a young, I spent *Shabbos Parshas Beshalach* in the company of my uncle, the great Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, known as the Netziv. My uncle was the *rosh yeshivah* of the Volozhiner Yeshivah, and I always loved going there for Shabbos—sitting with the *talmidim* around my uncle's table and drinking in the words of Torah that were always present.

On Motza'ei Shabbos, a large group of *talmidim* came to my uncle's house to fulfill the *minhag* of having a hot drink after Shabbos (one of the mitzvos of *melaveh malkah*). I joined as well. As the group were sitting together, talking in learning, an urgent pounding was heard at the front door. A *talmid* went to open it, and he returned with an anxious-looking man.

"Rebbi, I have a very pressing *she'eilah*," the man cried. "It is a strange question, but in a matter of moments it will be too late.

"I had a partner with whom I did business for many years. We enjoyed a positive, healthy relationship, until one day, 12 years ago, we had an argument. We were both very upset and felt the other was cheating and stealing. We argued for a long time but did not reach a resolution.

"We split up the business. I was so angry that I swore, making a real *neder*, that I would never look at his face again. And I



PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 **When does the Torah describe a group of people who are unified "like one man..."**
 - a) to do a mitzvah?
 - b) to do an *aveirah*?
 - c) to avenge an *aveirah*?
 - d) to chase after another group?
 - e) to be killed?
- 2 **What are four meanings of the word נָחָם? Where do we find them? Where do we find two different meanings in one *pasuk*?**
- 3 **Which musical instruments are mentioned in Chumash? Where?**
- 4 **Who in Chumash danced? Which word is used in Chumash for dancing, and which words in Navi mean dancing?**
- 5 **Where is the only place the Torah talks about "דֶּרוֹךְ אֶרֶץ"?**



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 6

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: The *poritz* discovers that Reb Aharon, his wife, and newborn child are alive in the bottom of the pit.

The *poritz* eyed Efraim, the beautiful newborn child living with his parents in the bottom of the pit.

“That is a beautiful baby you have there,” the *poritz* said to Reb Aharon. “You know, my wife and I always wanted a child of our own, but we were never able to have one.”

“I understand,” Reb Aharon commiserated. “We, too, waited a very long time for this bundle of joy.”

“You know,” the *poritz* said thoughtfully, “I have a proposal, a deal to offer you. How would you like to be out of this pit, alive and well, and free of all the rent you owe me?”

“That would be wonderful,” Reb Aharon said warily, unsure where this was going.

“I’m willing to set you free and cancel all the rent. I’ll move you to a town far, far away from here, and you will never have to see me again.”

“What’s the catch?”

“This I offer you, in exchange for your beautiful child, Efraim. He becomes mine. I will raise him as my own. He will have a wonderful, rich life. You and your wife will never see him again, and he will never know you. You will live in a distant town, and I will be his only father.”

“That’s crazy! You’re nuts!” Reb Aharon said, in disgust and derision.

“Think about it,” the *poritz* said. “You have nothing to lose. I don’t know how you survived this long, but I am sure you will not survive much longer. Winter is beginning, and it will soon be cold enough to kill an elephant out here. Your child will not survive anyway. If you reject my offer, I will personally stand here and make sure you do not last the week! Take my offer and you all live. Reject it, and...!”

Reb Aharon lowered his eyes in dismay.

“Don’t you want the best for your child?” the *poritz* urged. “He can have a life of comfort and riches. I will hire the best teachers and experts. He will grow to be wise and good. But if you refuse...”

Reb Aharon turned to his wife. “What does Hashem want from us now?” he asked. “We don’t know His plan. Is this His way of saving us? Can we give up Efraim?”

“How will he know any Torah, or do any mitzvot? He will be raised as a *goy*! Maybe even an anti-Semite like the *poritz*!”

“If this is Hashem’s way of saving the three of us, we can be sure He has a plan for that, too,” Reb Aharon said.

Reb Aharon called up to the *poritz*. “You leave me no choice, with your cruel offers!” he said. “We will accept your deal. Take good care of our son, and don’t be surprised if he finds his way back to the Jewish People!”

The guards quickly lowered a ladder into the pit, and Reb Aharon and his wife climbed up and out. The *poritz* went home with Efraim, and the brokenhearted parents were put on a wagon for a long trip, far from Lunchitz, out of Poland, and to a very distant town. The *poritz* gave them enough money to start a new life, and they never returned to Lunchitz again.

TO BE CONTINUED...

DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. These can be split between the three *seudos*.

וַיָּשֶׁב הַיָּם לְאִתְּנוֹ

“And the sea returned to its strength (לְאִתְּנוֹ)” (*Shemos* 14:27)

**תְּנַאִין הַתְּנָה הַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
עַם הַיָּם שְׂיָהָא נִקְרַע לְפָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**

“Hashem made conditions (תְּנַאִין) with the sea, that it must split before Yisrael” (*Midrash Rabbah, Bereishis* 5:5)

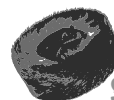
What is the nature of this “condition”?

Why does the Torah mention the condition when the sea returned to normal and not when it split?



DVAR AVRAHAM:

Everything only exists on the condition that Hashem constantly wills it so and continuously infuses it with power and its nature. The Torah says this as the sea was becoming liquid again to emphasize that it was just as miraculous that the nature of the sea was changed from solid to liquid (after Klal Yisrael passed) as it was to change its nature from liquid to solid.



SHEM MISHMUEL:

The condition was that if the sea wouldn’t agree to split, it would never had been created; it would always be dry. (Rav Itzele Volozhiner finds this in the words, “The waters should be gathered into one place, and the land should be seen.” The redundant phrase “the land should be seen” refers to the time of *Krias Yam Suf*.) Keeping the condition is what allowed the sea return to the flowing state—had it refused, it would have always been dry.



OHR HACHAIM:

The sea complained that it was made before man. Hashem’s condition was that it, like all creation, is subservient to Torah, which predates the universe altogether, and it only exists for its sake. Moshe was given the power of the future Torah that Klal Yisrael would accept.

PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Parshah summary

Parshas Beshalach describes the greatest demonstration of *nes nigleh*, supernatural control, in all of Chumash and history. Not surprisingly, heretics throughout the generations have tried to find natural, improbable explanations for the splitting of the sea. The Torah invites heretics to convince themselves that it was natural by involving an east wind and splitting all the waters in the world at the same time.

The *mann* falling from the sky, instead of arriving naturally, also demonstrates that there is no difference between natural and supernatural as far as Hashem's control is concerned. In fact, there is no difference at all—other than the fact that Hashem chooses to run the world with patterns with which we are familiar, that we call nature.

The battle with Amalek, won by Moshe's upraised arms, carries this idea even further.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. Pay special attention to the parts of *davening*, in *Pesukei D'zimrah* and *birchos Krias Shema*, that describe the natural wonders of the world or *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Try to feel the comfort of Hashem's complete control.
2. During this fourth week of *Shovavim*, risk making a “supernatural” breaking of a *middah*. Don't put yourself in a place of spiritual danger but try expressing a level of *middos*-control that feels superhuman! (Don't get convinced that it is a long-term state.)

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. a) Klal Yisrael camped at Har Sinai, אחד אחד בלב אחד.
b) The *dor haflagah* were unified to “battle” Hashem.
c) In *Sefer Shoftim*, the *navi* says Klal Yisrael joined together אחד אחד to avenge the בגבעה.
d) The Egyptians chased the Jews to the Yam Suf, אחד אחד כאיש אחד.
e) The city of Shechem was killed “as one person” (כי באפם הרגו איש) (*Bereishis* 49:6). Also, after the sin of the *Meraglim*, Moshe *davened* to Hashem not to kill all of Klal Yisrael אחד אחד כאיש אחד.
2. נחם can mean:
1. “Changed mind”: וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם (*Bereishis* 6:6). Also, פן ינחם העם בראתם מלחמה ושבנו מצרימה (*Shemos* 13:17).
2. “Consoled”: וינחם יצחק אחרי אמו (*Bereishis* 24:67).
3. “Ambushing”: הנה עשו אחיד מתנחם לך להרגך (*Bereishis* 27:42, according to Onkelos).
4. “Led them”: ולא נחם אלקים דרךך ארץ פלשתים (*Shemos* 13:17).
Two in one *pasuk*:
ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם ולא נחם אלקים דרךך ארץ פלשתים כי קרוב הוא כי אמר אלקים פן ינחם העם בראתם מלחמה ושבנו מצרימה (*Shemos* 13:17).
3. Musical Instruments:
1. Tambourine: ותצאן כל הנשים אחריה בתפים (*Shemos* 15:20).
2. Harp and flute: כל תפש כנור ועוגב (*Bereishis* 4:21).
3. Trumpets: ותקעתם בחצצרת על עלתיכם (*Bamidbar* 10:10).
4. Drum and harp: ואשליחך בשמחה ובשרים בתוף ובכנור (*Bereishis* 31:27).
4. The women danced at the Yam Suf; the men danced at the *Eigel*. In Chumash, dancing is called מחולות; in Navi it is called מרקד or מנרנר.
5. The first *pasuk* in this week's *parshah*!

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

BACKGROUND TO THE HAFTORAH

Less than 200 years after the Jews settle Canaan, the land is in an uproar. The Canaanite king Yavin and his chief general, Sisera, are terrorizing the northern parts of the country. Sisera's ruthlessness makes people cower in fear; he has never lost a war, has advanced technology (iron), and is brutal in his tactics. His soldiers roam freely, and Jews are afraid to leave their homes.

Devorah, a righteous woman married to Lapidus (who is Barak, according to some) is the judge and leader of the people.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Hashem tells Devorah that the time has come to depose Sisera and end the reign of terror. Devorah advises Barak to gather an army. Barak is afraid to challenge Sisera, as are the rest of the Jews. They are willing to try only with Devorah's accompaniment.

At Devorah's advice, Barak and his 10,000 men begin on Har Tavor. They take the high ground and lure Sisera's 900 chariots and 40,000 platoons out, then charge down the mountain and cut them to ribbons. All flee, and large numbers of them drown in Nachal Kishon (and are swept out to sea, in payment of a promise Hashem made to the sea for releasing the chariots of the Egyptians to the beach). Sisera flees on foot; Barak, knowing he is the key to future peace, gives chase.

Yael is an unknown woman, wife of Chever the Keni (it is unclear if she is Jewish, but her husband is a pal of Yavin). She invites Sisera to hide in her tent, tires him out, and puts him to bed. While he sleeps, she hammers a tent peg into his skull and then goes out to flag down Barak and show him the remains of Sisera.

Devorah leads the people in *shirah*, praiseful song, and the land is peaceful under Devorah for 40 years.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

There are not many instances of *shirah* in the Torah; the *parshah* and haftorah contain two of them, and two led by women. Both relate the drowning of the enemy in water, discuss the leadership of great Jewish women, feature Klal Yisrael luring an enemy into a place of weakness and attacking; and in both, the king alone survives. In her *shirah*, Devorah refers to the war against Amalek that took place in our *parshah*. Of course, the lesson of both is that Hashem controls the world, manipulating nature and the fortunes of war as He sees fit.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

A wealthy, developed, and technologically advanced nation can fall into the trap of overconfidence—reliance on its own military and economic might without serious concern for enemies, foreign and domestic. But if Hashem wills it, the greatest of nations can fall into destruction, and the trigger can be the least expected of sources—an underdeveloped nation, a tiny virus, a political rally at the Capitol, or a friendly woman in her tent.

kept my *neder*! For 12 years, I made sure we were never in the same room. I never saw him since then, let alone spoke with him. My anger never lessened, all these years!

"A short while ago, the news came to me that my former business partner had died and will soon be buried. All of a sudden, I didn't feel angry anymore! Of what importance is a few zlotys when this life, and the company we keep, is so much more important? I am so sorry for my *neder*, for all the years I fought with him and didn't look at him. I want to go apologize, to ask *mechilah* before he is buried. I want to look at him and say how sorry I am. But *rebbe*, am I allowed to go? Does my *neder* still apply after he has passed away?!"

An uproar broke out in the room as soon as the man finished speaking. The *talmidim* all began vigorously arguing about the *she'eilah*. Some said he could go ask *mechilah*; some said he could not. The discussion carried on, back and forth in small groups for a while, until the Netziv called the room to order.

"We'll go around the table, and everyone will share their opinion," my uncle decided. He indicated to the first *talmid* to speak. The young scholar explained why he thought the man's *neder* was canceled and could be nullified. The second said otherwise, and then the third, and fourth. All discussed reasons the *neder* could or could not be canceled.

At last, all the *talmidim* had said their piece. The Netziv turned to me. "And you, Boruch? What do you say?"

I was shy to speak in front of all the *talmidim*, but I had a unique thought. "If I may, I think we *leined* the answer to this question just a few hours ago, in the *parshah*," I said.

My uncle motioned for me to continue.

"At the shores of the Yam Suf, Moshe tells Klal Yisrael that they will never see the Egyptians again. But a few *pesukim* later, the Torah tells us that the *Yidden* saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore, washed up by the waves. Why doesn't that violate Hashem's promise that they would never see them again? Obviously, seeing someone after they died is not really 'seeing them'! This man should be allowed to go to his business partner, even without canceling his oath, because seeing him after death does not violate his *neder* at all, even if it is not canceled!"

There was a sharp intake of breath in the room. Everyone was chewing over my idea. One of the *talmidim* objected. "How do you know that Klal Yisrael really saw them closely?" he asked. "Maybe they just saw a few lumps on the sand?"

"Impossible!" I responded. "The midrash clearly says that each Yid recognized his own master!"

The Netziv turned to the man who asked the question. "I believe my nephew is right," he said. "You may go ask your business partner for *mechilah*."

And let this be a lesson to all of us, to make up with our enemies before it is too late.





UP FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

"LOST AND FOUND"

The *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah* is to be done without reimbursement for one's efforts. There is even a debate whether it is prohibited to accept payment for fulfilling the *mitzvah* (Rosh Bava Metzia 2:24 and Rashi, Bechoros 29a). However, in this case all opinions would permit taking money. The reason is that the owner of the coat was essentially hiring someone to search and find his coat. Although there is a *mitzvah* to return lost objects, there is no obligation to search for them. Therefore, it is permitted to take the money (Teshuvos V'Hanhagos 3:463).



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וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה מַה תִּצְעַק אֵלַי דְּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ

“And Hashem said to Moshe, ‘What (מה) do you scream to me? Tell Bnei Yisrael to travel!’” (Shemos 14:15).

Sometimes a long *tefillah* is appropriate, sometimes a short one is better, and sometimes none at all. Hashem told Moshe about these three instances:

יְהִי כְּמִנְחָה לְפָנָיו = “You will *daven* נח--forty (ח) and five (ה)”

- 40 = ח = the 40 days Moshe will *daven* on Har Sinai after the sin of the *Eigel*
- 5 = ה = the 5 words he will say to heal Miriam from *tzara'as*: א-ל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ
- But now is not a time to *daven*: וַיִּסְעוּ דְּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּסְעוּ!



THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



The Jews of Saragossa, the capital of medieval Spain's Aragon region, would honor the king by bringing the *sifrei Torah* out to greet him whenever he passed through the Jewish quarter. At some point, the community leaders decided that it was unnecessary to disgrace the *sifrei Torah* by bringing them out to greet the king, although it is permitted to do so.

In Sephardic communities like Saragossa, the Torah is kept in a hard, round, elaborately embroidered case. The leaders decided that they would remove the scrolls and carry only the empty Torah cases to such parades.

The plan worked well for a while, until a wicked adviser to the king, named Marcus, found out about it. He plotted to do away with the Jewish community by telling the secret of the empty cases to king and convincing him that this was a great insult. He advised the king to check the Torah cases when he visited a Jewish community, to see that they were empty.

The king was angered at the idea of empty cases and vowed to expel the Jews if the accusation was found to be true. He planned a procession through the Jewish area for the 17th of Shevat, 5161 (1402).

The night before the king's arrival, every *shamash* (caretaker) of a shul in Saragossa had a dream in which an old man told him to leave the Torah scrolls in the cases.

Sure enough, when the king ordered the Torah cases opened, he saw the beautiful Torah scrolls, right where they belonged! He ordered Marcus, the plotter and evil adviser, to be executed.

For generations, Spanish Jewry celebrated Purim Saragossa on the 17th of Shevat. They continued to mark the day even after the Spanish Inquisition destroyed most of the community.

HALACHAH



Shabbos Challos

וְיִהְיֶה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי לֶחֶם הַשָּׁבֹת
(Shemos 16:22)

Why are the challos covered at Kiddush?

There are three reasons given for the covering challos at Kiddush: 1) It is a recreation of the *mann*, which accumulated between a sandwich of dew. 2) The *brachah* on bread should really be said before wine, but the order is changed here because of the primacy of Kiddush on wine and to show that this is no ordinary meal (we therefore cover the challos so they will not be “embarrassed”). 3) It is a special *kavod* for the Kiddush to have nothing else on the table.

What are the practical differences between the reasons?

There are many. Recreating the *mann* means the bottom must be covered as well (we use a challah board), the covering can be clear, it should be covered until the time to cut it, and more. But if the issue is the order of *brachos*, a bottom covering is not required, the cover cannot be clear, and it can be uncovered as soon as Kiddush is done. If it is a special *kavod*, the entire table should really be covered or bare of food. Halachically, we try to be *machmir* for all opinions.

What is the purpose of *lechem mishneh*?

On Friday, a double portion of *mann* fell, to provide for Shabbos as well. We have two challos to restore that moment. Kabbalah indicates that there should be 12 challos; therefore, many people make each challah comprised of a six-braid, for a total of 12 braids. Some make a “*vav*” challah—crowned by a single stripe—because the letter *vav* equals six. The mitzvah is to have two challos during the *brachah*; the *Acharonim* dispute whether one needs to partake of both, and the general custom is that we do not. The second challah can even be frozen or in a bag.

What kind of challah qualifies?

The *lechem mishneh* must be whole, and at least a *kezayis* in size. A challah that is cracked is considered whole as long as one can lift it by the smaller part. Loaves that became attached during baking may be separated. Burned challos are considered whole. If a piece less than 1/48 of the total challah is missing, some consider it whole.

Why do people scratch the challah before the *brachah*?

In times past, it was difficult to find a place to cut the challah without causing it to fall apart. It was customary to identify and mark a good spot in order to avoid delays between the *brachah* and the eating. Today, some *poskim* note that the opposite is true—there is no delay if there is no mark, and the mark may cause a delay as people hunt for their mark before cutting. Therefore, some forego the scratch altogether. There may be *inyanim* and Kabbalistic reasons that still apply.

How is the *brachah* said?

The challos are stacked. On *leil Shabbos*, the bottom challah will be cut, and it should therefore be held closer to the *mevarech* (or close to his knife hand). All 10 fingers should be touching bread at the time of the *brachah*. The challos are lifted slightly at the word *המוציא*; *al pi kabbalah* they are lifted at the name of Hashem. Others at the table must partake of the challah to be *yotzei* the mitzvah of *lechem mishneh*.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“COULD’VE, SHOULD’VE, WOULD’VE—
ARE ALL *APIKORSUS* (HERESY)!”

—Rav Leib’ke Gloiberman, explaining why he was not upset when doctors admitted that if they would’ve worked harder, as they should’ve, they could’ve saved his leg. (Quoted by Reb Meilech Biderman)

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