

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 13 Shevat 5786, corresponding to January 32, 2026.

# TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 265 Hz) (p. 407 S) (p. 262 Hi) (p. 366 AS)

BESHALACH בשלח

Exodus 13:17

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis]

1. When the Torah states that Pharaoh sent the Jews out of Egypt (13:17), it can be interpreted in different ways. The Targum Onkelos interprets the clause as: Pharaoh got rid of them. The Mechilta interprets the verse as: Pharaoh escorted them out into the desert with honor. Obviously, there is a big difference between these two commentaries. From Pharaoh's perspective, there were now way too many Jews in Egypt. The Jews left Egypt in terrible shape. Besides the damage afflicted via the Plagues, the departure of the huge labor force left the country in a terrible economic condition. Pharaoh could have opted to rebuild his country, but he was obsessed with the multi-layered problems, "caused" by Jews, and Hashem was in control. Pharaoh was merely a pawn in the narrative.

2. While the people were accumulating the Egyptian gold and silver, Moshe was busy gathering the remains of Yosef to travel with his nation to be re-interred in Eretz Yisrael. Primarily, this was a fulfillment of Yosef's request before he died. But there is an important message here. The remains of Yosef were a physical reminder to the Jewish nation that they were descendants of royalty. They were no longer slaves. They should be able to shed the slave mentality that plagued them now. Did it work? Sadly, it did not. The years of slavery had permanently scarred them, and they could not never shake it. The Ibn Ezra and centuries later, the Malbim, both expressed that the people were possessed with a severe case of a slave mentality and an inferiority complex.

3. Travel in the desert was crafted by Hashem so that the people were constantly aware of His presence among them. A Pillar of Light was there for night travel, and a Pillar of Cloud was there for daytime travel. But more importantly, these Pillars were signs of Hashem's presence. Whether they were traveling or resting, Hashem was with them. Yet, as we see in the narrative, this was not enough. Lapses in the people's religious conduct showed their inability to be constant servants of the Almighty. Forty days after receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, they worshipped a Golden Calf. These reminders that Hashem was with them could not protect them from primitive desires for non-religious practices that they acquired and absorbed during their long period of slavery.

4. There is no logical reason for Pharaoh to pursue Bnei Yisrael after suffering for about a year with ten Plagues. Clearly, it was due to Hashem hardening his heart once again (14:8). Pharaoh was thoroughly wiped. Yet Hashem is orchestrating the entire scene. Question: When was the true miracle of the Exodus from Egypt? Was it at the end of the Ten Plagues? Or at the Splitting of the Sea? It seems that it should be at the Splitting of the Sea, but we celebrate it at the end of the Plagues when the nation of Israel marched out of Egypt on the fifteenth of Nissan. But the fight wasn't over at that time. When Pharaoh amassed his chariots for the last time to attack Bnei Yisrael it showed that the fight wasn't finished. The final scene was the Splitting of the Sea.

5. The obligation to say the Grace after Meals is only after a meal with bread. (There are times after other grain products, but we generally answer bread.) Definitely not after eating fruit and vegetables. Rav Soloveitchik explained the making of bread necessitated man working and developing the finished product after harvesting it in the field. When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, they didn't sing Shira, a Song. But they did sing after the Splitting of the Sea. The Rav noted that the Exodus was completely arranged by Hashem, with no participation on man's part. But they did sing after the Splitting of the Sea because that event did require action on man's part. So we see two levels of the miracle. One that is all Hashem's doing and then one that is including man's participation. Each event is recognized during the Pesach holiday.

6. "This is my God and I will build Him a sanctuary; the God of my father and I will exalt Him." (15:2). There are two aspects of the holiness that a Jew can acquire. One is Jewish holiness that I possess by being born to a Jewish mother. The second is the sanctity that I gain when I observe Torah and the commandments. In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 44a), our Sages state: A Jew, even though he sinned, is still a Jew. Even though he cannot be a sacred person by virtue of one definition, he still has his sanctity from birth. There is another Talmudic passage that states that a Jewish heretic is considered as a non-Jew indicates a loss of Jewish holiness. These two aspects of our holiness is apparent from the phrase in every Amidah when we say "our God and God of our fathers." And we see their concept in the above quote from the Song of Moshe in our Parshah. (Rav Soloveitchik)

7. In the description of the war with Amalek, the Torah stated that Yehoshua weakened Amalek and its people... (17:13). If Amalek is the name of the nation, why does it state Amalek AND ITS PEOPLE? The Oznaim LaTorah suggests that possibly the person Amalek, the son of Elifaz, was still alive and led his followers in the battle. Highly unlikely. He also suggests that the nation

Amalek attracted other people who were also anti-Semitic and they fought together. This is quite possible because throughout our history, we have anti-Semitic foes, even today. Unlike the fight for our freedom in Egypt, where Hashem fought and punished our enemy, now and later in our history, the Jewish people are called upon to fight our enemies.

8. Midrash. In the war against Amalek, the Torah states that when Moshe raised his hand, the Jews prevailed. (17:11). The Mishnah states (Rosh HaShanah 3:8) that this teaches us: that as long as Israel looked heavenward and subjected their heart to their Father in Heaven, they would prevail. But when they did not, they would fall.

#### QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT BESHALACH 5786

##### I. From the Text

1. Why didn't Hashem lead Bnei Yisrael up the coast, via the closest route to the Promised Land? (13:17)
2. What did Moshe take with him out of Egypt? (13:19)
3. Where did Pharaoh die? (14:28)
4. What musical instruments did Miriam and the women have with them when they sang their song about the Splitting of the Red Sea? (15:20)
5. What did Hashem arrange for Bnei Yisrael to eat every day during their travel in the desert? (16:4)

##### II. From Rashi

6. Rashi stated that only 20% of the Jews left Egypt. What happened to the 80% of Bnei Yisrael? (13:18)
7. How did Pharaoh find out that the Jews had no intention to return to Egypt? (14:5)
8. The Torah describes the Egyptians drowning in the Sea in three ways. As stone (15:5), as straw (v. 7), as lead (v. 10). What did these objects represent?
9. Why was Hashem upset with Moshe regarding the Mannah on Friday? (16:22)
10. Why did Hashem command Moshe to take his staff with him to hit the rock for water?

##### III. From the Rabbis

11. The last verse of the last Parshah states that Hashem took us out of Egypt. Now the first verse of this Parshah states that Pharaoh sent "the nation" out of Egypt. According to the Baal HaTurim, whom did Pharaoh send out?
12. What lesson is learned from Hashem providing a double portion of Mannah on Friday? (Hirsch)
13. Ramban: when Hashem told Moshe to "write this (the victory over Amalek) as a remembrance in the Book..." (17:14); what book?

##### IV. Midrash.

14. Who was the first person to enter the waters of the Red Sea?

##### V. Haftarah

15. Who was Devorah's partner who led the war over Sisera? What tribe was he from?

##### VI. Relationships

16.
  - a) Elisheva - Nadav
  - b) Livni - Shimi
  - c) Guni - Naphtali
  - d) Kehat - Peretz
  - e) Shem - Asshur

#### ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT BESHALACH 5786

1. Lest Bnei Yisrael would be confronted by the Philistines and want to return to Egypt.
2. The bones of Yosef.
3. In the Red Sea.
4. Drums
5. The Mannah ("bread from Heaven")
6. Hashem killed them during the Plague of Darkness.
7. Pharaoh sent spies to go with the Jews, and they reported this fact to Pharaoh.
8. The evil Egyptians died in the water like straw, being thrust about in the water. The best of them died quickly, sinking immediately like lead. Those in between were sinking like stones.
9. Moshe failed to tell Bnei Yisrael that there would be a double portion of Mannah on Friday.
10. To show the people that the staff can produce good things, and not just Plagues.
11. The Eirev Rav (the multitude of mixed non-Jews who accompanied the Jews leaving Egypt.)
12. Shabbat would never be an impediment to a livelihood.
13. The Torah
14. Nachshon, the son of Aminadav, prince of Yehudah.
15. Barak, the son of Avinoam from Naphtali.

##### 16.

- a) Mother Elisheva
- b) Brothers (sons of Gershon ben Levi)
- c) Father Naphtali
- d) First Cousins
- e) Father Shem.