

CHAG SAMEI'ACH. Today are the last days of Pesach, the 21st and 22nd days of Nissan 5786, corresponding to the 8th and 9th days of April, 2026. And the 7th and 8th days of the Omer.

1. The opening Torah reading for the 7th day of Pesach is the beginning of Beshalach, culminating with the Song of Moshe after the Splitting of the Red Sea. The beginning is "And it was as Pharaoh sent the nation...." The last clause of the previous verse, at the end of Parshat Bo was "Hashem took us out of Egypt." What is this opening verse really telling us? The Baal HaTurim (Rabbi Yaakov ben Asher, the son of the Rosh, 1269-1343) tells us, based on a Gematria (number value), that Pharaoh sent the Eirev Rav, the multitude of non-Jews, along with the departing Jews, to cause them grief. And on the other side of this issue, there is a Midrash that interprets this verse that Pharaoh escorted the departing Jews with much fanfare and well wishes. That leaves us with a real problem: is this line a positive or a negative statement? You may choose whatever you wish.

2. While Bnei Yisrael were out collecting gold and silver from their former oppressors, Moshe was retrieving Yosef's remains to take with them and bury him in Eretz Yisrael. When you think about it, both were doing a Mitzvah. The people were following Hashem's wishes so that He can fulfill His promise to Avraham. Moshe was fulfilling Yosef's wishes to be buried in the Promised Land. Yet the spirit behind each act was very different. The people were enriching themselves. Moshe was performing an act of true Chessed. He received nothing in return. And really did not get credit for the act because he was not able to finish the job. We would appreciate and value Moshe's act because he performed an act that was totally for someone else and nothing for himself.

3. The appearance of Yosef's remains gave strength to the entire nation. It meant that they were not going to return to Egypt. There is no future for Bnei Yisrael in Egypt. They belong to be with Yosef and return to the Promised Land of their heritage. The personal story of Yosef showed them that a Jew who once was a slave can be redeemed and become a savior and a leader of an entire country. Yosef's story also showed that it is possible to overcome temptation and be true to the values of your patriarchal past. We are members of a

chosen and divinely protected people. Being reminded of Yosef's history was extremely inspiring to a people who had just endured generations of oppressive slavery. It was a privilege to follow his coffin for the entire trip through the desert.

4. Rav Nachman in the Midrash is of the opinion that Pharaoh did not drown in the Sea. He survived, escaped, and lived the rest of his life in Nineveh. This opinion has no basis in our text. In fact, the Torah states emphatically that "there remained not a one of them." (14:28). How could Rav Nachman have such an opinion. Then I found a similar statement in the Book of Judges. My wife and I learn a chapter of the Prophets each evening, following the Nach Yomi, organized by the OU. When Devorah and Barak led the military victory over the nation of Ammon, the text reads that "not one remained" of the enemy. (Shoftim 4:16). Yet in the very next verse, the text reads that the Sisera, the general of the enemy forces "fled on foot." (4:17). So it must mean that the expression "not one remained" is merely to state that the victory was immense and thorough.

5. It is interesting to note that Bnei Yisrael did not sing Hallel upon exiting Egypt. Even though Hashem had DESTROYED Egypt, the freedom was gained but was not felt as complete. Pharaoh thought that the people had left Egypt just for a Shabbaton, to worship their Deity in the desert. But they were returning. It wasn't until a week went by and when the Jewish people saw the remaining Egyptian forces drown in the Red Sea did their freedom become real and profound. Only then did Moshe lead them in Song and truly express gratitude to Hashem. When Miriam led the women in song and dance, the Midrash records that the women sang the whole song, the same one as the men sang before them. But they knew that they were not returning. The women brought drums with them when they left Egypt. The women knew all along that they were not returning. They prepared for the Song of Gratitude.

6. In ancient literature, there were poems written heralding victorious battles. In each, glory was given to great military leaders who led the battle. Here we see clear basic homage and gratitude to Hashem. No human helped Him. The people were quiet. (14:14). As the Egyptians were pursuing the Jews, different Jewish groups approached Moshe

with a possible response to their predicament. Hashem's response to Moshe was simple: Hashem will wage war for you; you will be silent. Silence does not come naturally for Jewish people. Fear gripped the people. They were armed, but they were not trained to fight. They highly outnumbered the enemy, but they felt their military inexperience will doom them. The Ibn Ezra wrote that the people suffered from having a slave mentality. The Malbim wrote that the people suffered from having an inferiority complex. Both are correct, even though they wrote many years before Freud. The nations only salvation was from Hashem.

7. Goshen was located on the very northern part of Egypt. Before the creation of the Suez Canal, the Red Sea did not extend to the Mediterranean. So there was a way to travel by land from Egypt up the coast directly to Israel. All along, Hashem's plan was to lead His people south in Egypt and to cross water into the desert. Historians today favor the idea that the crossing of the Red Sea was really the crossing of the Great Bitter Lake, which was a body of water north of the Red Sea. The area between these two bodies of water was not far, mostly marsh land. The point being made here was that there was a dry land route to reach Eretz Yisrael. The Song was a defining moment, a virtual Hallel type of moment to glorify the Almighty. Once they crossed the water and entered the desert, life would change drastically. Their food, water, and shelter would be provided for them. But all that is post-Pesach.

8. On the 8th day of Pesach comes the reading of the Torah from the end of Parshat Re'eh, dealing again with laws of the three Pilgrimage Festivals. This portion forms what I call the Gallut Torah reading because they are for the added Festival day added for the Jewish communities outside of Eretz Yisrael. The special Haftorah for the 8th day is the Messianic vision found in Isaiah. We read the expression that in the times of Mashiach, the wolf and the sheep will lie together. (As Woody Allen would say: the wolf and sheep will lie together, but only the wolf had a good night's sleep.) It is all quite surreal.

## QUESTIONS FOR THE LAST DAYS OF PESACH 5786

1. What was Moshe doing when Bnei Yisrael were acquiring gold and silver from the Egyptians?
2. What happened historically on the 7th day of Pesach?
3. When was Haman hung in the Megillat Esther story?
4. How many days of Chol HaMoed are there in America? And in Eretz Yisrael?
5. What is unique about the Kiddush for the last days of Pesach?
6. Is an Ashkenazi allowed to eat in a Sephardi home on Pesach?
7. Who was the first person to jump into the waters of the Red Sea when Moshe raised his staff?
8. While we are on the subject, on what calendar day were Haman's sons hung?
9. Why do we say half Hallel on the seventh day of Pesach, and not the full Hallel (it is a Yom Tov!)?
10. Why do we say half Hallel on Chol HaMoed?

### Relationships

- a) Aharon - Miriam
- b) Nachshon - Elisheva
- c) Datan - Aviram

## ANSWERS FOR THE LAST DAYS OF PESACH 5786

1. Moshe was getting the bones of Yosef to be buried in Eretz Yisrael.
2. The Splitting of the Sea.
3. On the 17th day of Nissan, the third day of Pesach.
4. In America: four days. In Israel: 5 days.
5. No Shehechyanu
6. Yes, but he may not eat Kitniyot..
7. Nachshon ben Aminadav, Aharon's brother-in-law.
8. On the 13th of Adar, almost 11 months after their father was hung.
9. Because Egyptians died, and they were also Hashem's creations.
10. Because it was the same sacrifice each day.

### Relationships

- a), b), and c) : Siblings