



## Parsha B'shalach / When He Let Go

Shemot / Exodus 13:17- 17:16

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The opening phrase of this week's *parsha*, from the beginning of **Shemot / Exodus 13:17**, is ***"And it came to be, when Pharaoh had let the people go"*** or in Hebrew, ***"Va' hee b'shalach Pharaoh et ha'am"***. ***B'shalach*** or to ***"let go"*** really has the connotation of ***"sending away"*** or ***"expelling"***. After the death of Mitzrayim's first-born, this is what Pharaoh actually did. He ***"sent them out"***.

Now, ***"b'shalach"*** is spelled ***"beit-shin-lamed-chet"***. The numeric value of the letters in ***"b'shalach"*** is 340, which equals the word ***"natzar"*** which, as we've already discussed, means to ***"keep the Covenant"*** or ***"observe the Covenant"***. So, in essence, HaShem caused Pharaoh to send B'nei Yisra'el out from Mitzrayim so that they could ***"observe"*** or ***"keep the Covenant"***. Remember what Moshe kept telling Pharaoh; as he did back in **Shemot / Exodus 7:16**; ***"And you shall say to him, 'YHVH the Elohim of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, "Let My people go, so that they serve Me in the wilderness," but see, until now you have not listened!"'*** And, 340 is also the numeric value of the word ***"netzar"*** which means the ***"branch"*** or ***"offspring"***. *Branch* is used many times allegorically for Mashiach ben David in Scripture. But, this also speaks of the ***"offspring"*** of B'nei Yisra'el, as well as the sojourners with them (*the mixed multitude*), who were counted as present with our forefathers at Sinai for the giving of the Torah, as Moshe reminded the people in **Debarim / Deuteronomy 29:10-15**; ***"All of you are standing today before YHVH your Elohim: your leaders, your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Yisra'el, your little ones, your wives, and your sojourner who is in the midst of your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water, so that you should enter into covenant with YHVH your Elohim, and into His oath, which YHVH your Elohim makes with you today, in order to establish you today as a people for Himself, and He Himself be your Elohim, as He has spoken to you, and as He has sworn to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzaq, and to Ya'aqob. And not with you alone I am making this covenant and this oath, but with him who stands here with us today before YHVH our Elohim, as well as with him who is not here with us today."***

We need to understand from the start here just how connected we are to all of this. Some of us know that we are Hebrews; but, others aren't at all sure. But, even the sojourner with Yisra'el was at Sinai, as well as having passed through the Yam Suf, the Reed (or Red) Sea. These sojourners chose to leave Mitzrayim, even as B'nei Yisra'el was driven out of Egypt by Pharaoh. Yes, in their being ***"let go"***, they were in fact ***"driven out"***. In fact, the Hebrew ***"b'shalach"*** could be construed to say that it may even have been against their will, or in spite of their will. This indicates that it was Pharaoh's will that finally motivated the Children of Yisra'el to leave Egypt. Remember what we read a couple of

weeks ago, at the close of *Parsha Shemot*, in **Shemot / Exodus 6:1**; ***And YHVH said to Moshe, “Now see what I do to Pharaoh, for with a strong hand he is going to let them go, and with a strong hand he is going to drive them out of his land.”*** Why would this be necessary? Rabbi Eli Touger writes that the intent of creation is that this material world be transformed into the Dwelling Place of Elohim. This even includes those elements that, at first, oppose the Spirit of Holiness. But ultimately, every aspect of creation will serve this positive purpose. In some cases, as with Pharaoh, a transformation is necessary, in order to bring this about. And, their destruction becomes their purification, so that they can serve their positive purpose in Elohim’s plan. Only when they are broken, can they be used. This concept is highlighted by the prophecies about the Redemption, of which **VaYiqra / Leviticus 26:6** is but one; ***“And I shall give peace in the land, and you shall lie down and no one make you afraid. And I shall clear the land of evil beasts, and not let the sword go through your land.”*** The rabbis interpret this to mean that the animals will be transformed, so that they will no longer cause harm, as it is written in **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 11:6-8**; ***And a wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and a leopard lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child leads them. And cow and bear shall feed, their young ones lie down together, and a lion eat straw like an ox. And the nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the adder’s den.*** In the era of ultimate good, the Messianic era, predators will continue to exist, but *“they will neither prey, nor destroy”*. Their negative tendencies will be transformed into positive service. Rabbi Touger writes in his teaching for this week in **[“The Garden of Torah”](#)**, *“As a foretaste of this ultimate state, the name of our Torah reading focuses on the transformation of Pharaoh. The other miracles mentioned also involve the negation of undesirable influences and/or the expression of wondrous spiritual forces, but by directing our attention to Pharaoh’s role in sending forth the Jews (**Hebrews**), the name **B’shalach** underscores the message that even the most perverse elements of existence can generate positive service”*.

And, why is it so important that we see and understand all of this? It all plays out again in these *“last days”*. Almost every day, we read of increasing anti-Semitism in Europe and even here, in the US. The day is soon coming in which the other 10 Tribes, at least those who sojourn with Judah, will have to make a choice. We all will either have to be silent to the hate and persecution of Judah, or we’ll have to stand up and be counted among them. When this happens, and Yah’s judgments begin to come, and Judah is forced to leave the countries in which they now live, including America; we will be forced to leave also. The Pharaohs of this world will drive us out with a strong hand. On that day, Baruch HaShem, we will all understand **Debarim / Deuteronomy 29:15**; ***And not with you alone I am making this covenant and this oath, but with him who stands here with us today before YHVH our Elohim, as well as with him who is not here with us today.*** Folks, this is one more reason why I say that it is B’nei Ephraim, the 10 Tribes, who will have to come along side Judah and not the other way around.

Next, we are told in the second part of **Shemot / Exodus 13:17** that ***“Elohim did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines though that was nearer, for Elohim said, “Lest the people regret when they see fighting, and return to Mitsrayim.”*** The phrase used here for the ***“way of the land of the Philistines”*** is ***“derech erez Philist’im”***. ***“Derech”*** (*dalet-reish-kaf*) is literally the ***“path”*** or ***“way”***. While it can mean a ***“path”*** as in a ***“roadway”***, its principal meaning is like a life’s ***“path”*** or ***“journey”***. While ***“halach”*** or ***“halacha”*** is your ***“walk”***, ***“derech”*** is the ***“path”*** in which you walk your life’s journey. It represents your spiritual ***“path”***, as in ***“derech emet”*** or ***“path of truth”*** or ***“the way of truth”***. Now, ***“erez”*** (*aleph-reish-tzadee*) means ***“land”*** and also can refer to the ***“earth”*** or ***“world”***. Then ***“Philist’im”*** (*Fey-lamed-shin-tav-yud-mem*) means literally ***“sojourners”***, ***“immigrants”*** or ***“wanderers”***. It’s interesting to note that the ***“Philistines”*** were ancient Egyptians that were ***“sojourners”*** and ***“immigrants”*** into Kena’an. So, while Elohim could have brought them ***“by the way of the world, the immigrants, the nations”***, He didn’t, even though it was closer. The way of the

world is usually the shortcut. But, HaShem said that the people would **“regret when they see fighting, and return to Mitsrayim.”** Regret, when they see fighting? Regret is a very interesting word choice here. In the Hebrew, it’s **“nach’am”** (*nun-chet-mem*) which is **“to regret”** or **“to be sorry”**. This is nearly the opposite of the word **“nachum”** (*spelled exactly the same*), which is the Hebrew word for **“comfort”**. And, the Hebrew word translated here as **“fighting”** is in fact **“milchamah”**. The literal translation of this word is **“war”**. So, why would HaShem not take them by the shortest way? Why would *war* be the concern? By the end of this *parsha*, they would be at war with Amaleq. On this verse, the Zohar (Shemoth 2:45b) reminds us that had B’nei Yisrael gone by the land of the Philistines, **“they would have been in danger of breaking the oath administered to Avraham by Avimelek, king of Gerar in the land of the Philistines, that he should deal with his people ‘according to the kindness that I have shown to you’ (Genesis 21:23-24).”**

Of course, to this we would add what **Verse 18** tells us; **So Elohim led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Sea of Reeds.** This sets the stage for the miraculous deliverance of HaShem’s people. Now, in Hebrew this verse reads, **“derech ha midbar Yam Suf”**. Again we have **“derech”** or **“the path”**. The word **“ha”** is **“the”** and **“midbar”**, while it means **“wilderness”** or **“deserted place”**, it also means the **“mouth”** or **“instrument of speech”**. It shares the same root as **“debar”** or **“the word”**. It’s fitting that in **Debarim (The Words), Chapter 8, verse 3**, Moshe reminds the people of what happened in this week’s *parsha*; **“And He humbled you, and let you suffer hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, to make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of YHVH.”**

Now, **“Yam Suf”** or **“Sea of Reeds”** or **“Rushes”** in Hebraic thought is a metaphor for the **“lush and fruitful”** in a **“sea”** or **“ocean of peoples”**. These **“lush, fruitful plants”** represent what sustains and has value. What’s interesting is that you have this **“sea”** or **“ocean”** or **“vast numbers of peoples”**. Then you have the **“reeds”** or **“rushes”** or **“those that provide nourishment and sustenance”** to the people. And it was out of these **“fruitful reeds and rushes”** in the waters that Moshe was taken and raised to become the instrument of Yah’s deliverance for B’nei Yisra’el. He was the chosen from among the fruitful, or the chosen out of the chosen. So, Elohim elected to bring His chosen people unto Himself, by the way of His Word and the instrument of His deliverance.

**Verse 18** also tells us; **And the children of Yisra’el went up armed from the land of Mitsrayim.** So, after the death of Egypt’s first-born, they came with the wealth of Mitzrayim, following the Word of Elohim and His deliverer Moshe. And, they came out of Mitzrayim **“armed”**. This doesn’t just mean with swords and spears and Glocks and AR-15’s and stuff. You see, the Hebrew word used here for **“armed”** is **“chamushim”**, which is the plural of the root word **“chamush”** (*chet-mem-shin*), which means **“equipped”**, **“brave”** and **“ready for war”**. This spelling of *“chet-mem-shin”* is pronounced several ways and with several meanings; but all the words have a connection. First, there’s **“chamesh”**, which is the Hebrew counting number **“five”**, as in **“five sheqels”** or **“chamesh sheql’im”** (*the redemption price of the first-born*). Then, there is our word **“chamush”** which means **“brave”** or **“equipped for war”**; because the connotation is that of being **“arrayed for battle by fives”**, which is why the King Jimmy translates it as **“harnessed”**. Next, is the word **“chumash”** (as in the Hebrew compilation of Torah plus commentaries); because it represents the **“Five Books of the Torah”**. And finally, we have the word **“chemesh”**, which means the **“belly”**, **“loins”** or **“womb”**. The picture here is of one’s **“loins being girded”**. So, HaShem had equipped and girded them, by miracles and judgments of Torah, to enter the wilderness. They would be tested and they would fail. But, He prepared them and gave them what they needed to serve Him in the wilderness and enter their inheritance. We need to pay attention to these pictures, as we need to understand that He equips us to succeed in our wilderness battle.

Now, as B'nei Yisra'el went up, out of Mitzrayim, they began their encampments in the wilderness. In past teachings, we've looked at the meanings and pictures of the names of these encampments and how they related to our story. But here again, we begin anew to see these pictures in our forefathers' journey and testings.

We read in **Shemot / Exodus 13:20**; *And they departed from Sukkoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness.* “**Sukkoth**” or “**Tabernacles**” was their first stop on the way out of bondage. This was not the “**Sukkoth**” established by Ya'aqob in Kena'an, as this one is still well within Mitzrayim. As we've talked about before, this was the Bedouin city, of approx. 250,000 people, that was always on the move. It was here that the Israelites (*city dwellers*) bought tents and learned how to be campers. This too represents leaving the “**tabernacles**”, “**tents**” or “**worship**” of Mitzrayim. Remember that “*dwelling in tents*” is a Scriptural metaphor for “*learning*” their ways. The second encampment was “**Etham**”. Etham is an Egyptian word and, according to Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, means “**border of the sea**”. Its importance is that it bordered the Yam Suf, the Sea of Reeds, the instrument of YHVH's Deliverance.

When the Children of Yisra'el came out of bondage (*Mitzrayim*), they left the tabernacles of the pagan worship system and headed for the “**border of the sea**”; because they had to pass through the “**mikvah**” from the “**world**” into the “**Midbar**” (the “*wilderness*” and the “*Mouth*”). They needed to begin feeding on everything that proceeds from the “**Mouth of Elohim**”. And, they had to pass through the instrument of their deliverance in order to approach Elohim at Har Sinai. It is the same for us. If we make *teshuva* and turn and pass through the “**Sea**”, the “**mikvah**” or “**immersion**”, as our fathers did then, we can approach HaShem.

Next, we read in **Shemot / Exodus 13:21-22**; *“And YHVH went before them by day in a column of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a column of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. The column of cloud did not cease by day, nor the column of fire by night, before the people.”* This is important to remember as we're going to be seeing this picture throughout the rest of Torah. I know we've looked at these before. But, let's understand it now, as we begin to study again the first “**exodus**”, as it will help us understand the “**second greater exodus**”. The Hebrew word for “**column**” or “**pillar**” (*depending on your translation*) is “**awmood**” (*ayin-mem-vav-dalet*) which is from the root “**amad**”, meaning to “**stand firm**” or “**establish**”. The numeric value of “**awmood**” is 120 which equals “**ami**” or “**my people**”, “**Masada**” or “**the foundation**” and “**va'eef d'noo**” or “**did redeem you**”. And, 120 also equals “**va'a latah**” or “**thick darkness**”. So HaShem went before them in this “**pillar**”.

We'll read next week, that as Elohim spoke to the Children of Israel at Sinai and they were afraid, Moshe drew near in **Shemot / Exodus 20:20-21**; *And Mosheh said to the people, “Do not fear, for Elohim has come to prove you, and in order that His fear be before you, so that you do not sin.” So the people stood at a distance, but Moshe drew near the thick darkness where Elohim was.* Regarding us, the prophet declares in **Yehezqel / Ezekiel 34:11-13**; *‘For thus said the Master YHVH, “See, I Myself shall search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so I shall seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered in a day of cloud and thick darkness. And I shall bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the lands, and shall bring them to their own land. And I shall feed them on the mountains of Yisra'el, in the valleys, and in all the dwellings of the land.*

Now again, the word for “**cloud**” here is “**anan**” (*ayin-nun-nun*). This isn't a rain cloud; but, literally means to *cloud*, “**veil over**” or “**to obscure**”. What's really interesting here is that its use in Scripture, including twice in **Yehezqel / Ezekiel 38**, is about “**armies**” that are referred to as *clouds* covering the

“**land**” or “**earth**”. They are also referred to as causing great darkness to cover the earth or land. The picture is that this “**pillar of cloud**”, which concealed Elohim, is made up of the “**armies of heaven**” or the “**Heavenly Host**”. Also of interest here is the numeric value of “**anan**”, which is 170 and equals “**I’Olam**” or “**forever**” and “**I’panah**” or “**before me**”, as “**in my face**”. 170 also equals “**la’milah’im**” or “**they were circumcised**”. This is indeed quite an army, in that they are eternally before the Face of Elohim and they are circumcised, or part of His Covenant. They are the “**Host of Heaven**”. This is the “**pillar of cloud**” that led them by day.

By night HaShem was in a “**column of fire**” or “**awmood aish**” (*aleph-shin*). “**Aish**” is indeed “**fire**”. Elohim refers to Himself as a “**Consuming Fire**” many times in Scripture. This compares with the “**burning fire**” in our hearts for what we are passionate about. Elohim also speaks of the “**fire of His wrath**”. Of course, “**fire**” or “**aish**” gives heat and light. Light is what is referred to here, in this verse. That is why another meaning for “**aish**” is “**splendor**” or “**brightness**”. In numerous scriptures, Yah tells us that His word, Torah, is a light, a lamp. The numeric value of “**aish**” is 301, which equals “**Cha’rah**”, “**He called**” or “**He is called**”, “**ha Tsuwr**”, “**the rock**” and “**raphana**”, “**that heals you**”. HaShem indeed calls to us from the “**fire**”, from the “**brilliance**” that is His Word. He called Moshe from the bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed. In this “**column of fire**” dwells the Rock who heals us. Over a dozen times in Scripture HaShem is referred to as the “**Rock of Yisra’el**” and the “**Rock of our deliverance**”. This was the “**Rock**” that followed them in the wilderness to give B’nei Yisra’el water. He’ll be there for us as well.

If we can understand these two columns, or pillars, we will go a long way in understanding just how Torah applies to our lives. Think about it. The column of cloud suggests that the heaven and HaShem are veiled and can’t be seen. This is the picture we see in Rosh Chodesh, when the moon is veiled, and is then revealed. There are times when Elohim is obscured, hidden to us. Then, in the night, in our darkest hour, the Light breaks through and we know He’s there. He was there all along. In the Hekal (*House of Elohim*), HaShem was obscured behind the veil. But, in the kingdom of Mashiach, when the Hekal is built, there will be no veil. Whenever our faith, our trust, is tested, we need to remember that it’s still His leading that we follow. **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 4:2-6** speaks to this in our future; *In that day the branch of YHVH shall be splendid and esteemed. And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for the escaped ones of Yisra’el. And it shall be that he who is left in Tsiyon and he who remains in Yerushalayim is called set-apart, everyone who is written among the living in Yerushalayim. When YHVH has washed away the filth of the daughters of Tsiyon, and rinsed away the blood of Yerushalayim from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then YHVH shall create above every dwelling place of Mount Tsiyon, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night, for over all the esteem shall be a covering, and a booth for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.*

As we live our lives, isn’t our biggest question really; “**Why?**” “**Why all of this?**” Look at all the struggle in Torah; from an individual basis in **B’reshith**, from Adam to Qayin and Hebel, then Noach, then Avraham to Yitzaq, Ya’aqob and Esau. Now, we see a national struggle being played out in the remainder of Torah and the Prophets. First B’nei Yisra’el finds themselves in bondage, abject slavery in Egypt. Then, just when they are released, they’re driven to certain death, or at least recapture at the shore of the Yam Suf. Even when they are delivered from that mess and their pursuer is destroyed, they begin a 40 year struggle to find and earn their way home. They go from one disaster to another, even after they reach Eretz Yisra’el. It seems never to end. That’s how life is, one struggle after another. For some, it’s over money. With others, it’s addictions or health or peace of mind.

In Hebraic thought, this process is described as “**emanations**” of darkness and light. The darkness, the seeming absence of Elohim’s presence is called “**tzimtzum**”, which is the cloud or veil that

obscures heaven. It can be “**darkness**” that is felt, as Scripture describes it. But, HaShem is there, in it. In **B’reshith / Genesis 15:12-13** this darkness falls upon Avraham and Elohim is there speaking to him, even though Avraham is seemingly unaware of it, as he’s asleep. ***And it came to be, when the sun was going down, and a deep sleep fell upon Avram, that see, a frightening great darkness fell upon him. And He said to Avram, “Know for certain that your seed are to be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.*** He’s not just speaking to Avraham; Yah is speaking to him of the future, the events we’re now reading about.

Next, the emanations of light are called, in Hebrew thought, “**kav**”, which represent the light that “**pierces**” the darkness. It’s likened to a light bulb that is suddenly turned on and the darkness is just gone, that quick. These emanations of “**tzimtzum**” and “**kav**” are the process into which Elohim spoke and all was created. **B’reshith / Genesis 1:2-4** says; ***And the earth came to be formless and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of Elohim was moving on the face of the waters. And Elohim said, “Let light come to be,” and light came to be. And Elohim saw the light, that it was good. And Elohim separated the light from the darkness.***

But, we ask, “**What about us, today?**” I mean, Bible stories are a great read. But, is it our destiny to struggle forever? Is true “*peace*” (*shalom*) just another version of “*nirvana*” or eternity on a cloud in heaven”? Is the only way “**home**” death or a rapture? There is a promise in Torah that’s repeated throughout the “*Prophets*” and the “*Writings*” of our return; the return of B’nei Yisra’el and those who “*sojourn*” with them. This promise runs throughout the Torah, as we’ve been studying, and we’ll continue to look at this.

To quote Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum in his [Universal Torah](#) series, “***The promise*** is that at the end of the journey lies the ‘happy ending’ -- the Land flowing with milk and honey. But unlike in fairy tales, the path through the speaking, teaching Wilderness of reality is long and arduous, twisting and turning in frightening ways. Each twist and turn in the journey comes to teach a new aspect of faith in G-d: faith in the miracles that take place in and through the workings of nature (‘and they BELIEVED in HaShem and in Moses his servant’, Ex. 14:31); faith in the miracles through which we receive our livelihood (the root of the word MANNA is the same as EMUNAH, faith); faith in G-d’s miraculous power to heal through our keeping the Torah (‘I, HaShem am your healer’ Ex. 15:26); faith in G-d’s power to conquer the forces of evil (‘and his hands were faith’ Ex. 17:12).

*Faith is the sustenance needed to survive in the wilderness of this world and to reach the promised ‘inhabited land’ (Ex. 16:35) that surely lies at the end of the road. The very twists and turns in the road are trials sent to bring us nearer to this sustaining faith. For that reason, it is not written (Ex. 14:10) that ‘Pharaoh drew near’ (KARAV) to the Children of Israel, but rather, Pharaoh (HIKRIV), ‘Pharaoh BROUGHT closer’. That is Pharaoh brought the Children of Israel closer: his very onslaught and the fear it caused brought them closer to G-d, forcing them to turn to Him in prayer and faith.”*

HaShem has a story to tell, a message that He’s trying to get us to see. You’ve no doubt read in Scripture that in the judging of Pharaoh and Mitsrayim, He also judged the mighty ones of Egypt as well. Some have suggested that Elohim did so with the 10 plagues. I’ve seen teachings on this, and I do not want to just dismiss them. But, I really can’t find where they thought of lice or gnats, or even flies as gods. It doesn’t fit that way. As we read about the first Passover in **Shemot / Exodus 12:12**, HaShem says; ***“And I shall pass through the land of Mitsrayim on that night, and shall smite all the first-born in the land of Mitsrayim, both man and beast. And on all the mighty ones of Mitsrayim I shall execute judgment. I am YHVH.”*** He says this after He describes the last plague. So, when then does He judge these false mighty ones?

Our parsha answers that in **Shemot / Exodus 14:1-9**; *And YHVH spoke to Moshe, saying, “Speak to the children of Yisra’el, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Ba’al Tsephon – camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh shall say of the children of Yisra’el, ‘They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has closed them in.’ And I shall harden the heart of Pharaoh, and he shall pursue them. But I am to be esteemed through Pharaoh and over all his army, and the Mitsrites shall know that I am YHVH.” And they did so. And it was reported to the sovereign of Mitsrayim that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people. And they said, “Why have we done this, that we have let Yisra’el go from serving us?” So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him. And he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Mitsrayim with officers over all of them. And YHVH hardened the heart of Pharaoh sovereign of Mitsrayim, and he pursued the children of Yisra’el, but the children of Yisra’el went out defiantly. And the Mitsrites pursued them, and all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Ba’al Tsephon.*

Remember, we just read that Elohim brought B’nei Yisra’el to **Etham** (*the border of the sea*). But, He now brings them into the exact place He wants them in order to accomplish His purpose. They camp before (*in the face of*) “**Pi Hahiroth**” which literally translates in Egyptian as “**the mouth of the graves**”. It is between “**Migdol**” and “**Ba’al Tsephon**”. “**Migdol**” is another Egyptian word meaning “**high places**”. This place is near the northern border of Mitzrayim and from here, the mighty ones of Egypt were supposed to be watching over Mitzrayim’s northern border. When the word “**Migdol**” was brought into the Hebrew language, it was translated as “**tower**”. “**Ba’al Tsephon**” means “**lord of the north**”. Now, this lord of the north’s name is “**typhon**” in Egyptian, and this guy is the oldest and mightiest of Egypt’s mighty ones. It even pre-dates “**ra**”, their sun deity. Are you seeing the picture? HaShem brings it all together here, in the face of the graves (*Egypt’s past*), in the face of all the mighty ones that are watching over Mitzrayim, even the mightiest one, the “**lord of the north**”. He brings them all into judgment before B’nei Yisra’el. It’s interesting to note here also that this northern border is the one that separates Kena’an (*Israel*) from Mitzrayim (*Egypt*). Here, HaShem destroys Pharaoh’s in the face of those mighty ones, who are powerless against the Mighty One of Yisra’el. He used the very instrument of B’nei Yisra’el’s deliverance, the Mikvah of the Sea, to judge Mitzrayim, its army, its sovereign and its mighty ones.

Now, in the remainder of **Chapter 14**, we read of the miraculous deliverance of the Children of Yisra’el in the Yam Suf. And in the first 21 verses of **Chapter 15**, we have what is called “**The Song of the Sea**”, which the Children of Yisra’el, led by Miryam, sang to Elohim. In fact, this is why this Shabbat is called “**Shabbat Shirah**”, or the “**Sabbath of Song**”. Songs are very important in Scripture. Understanding this concept is very important to understanding Judaism.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks’ teaching for this week’s *parsha* addresses this beautifully, as the title suggests, “[Music, Language of the Soul](#)”. He writes, “*There is an inner connection between music and the spirit. When language aspires to the transcendent and the soul longs to break free of the gravitational pull of the earth, it modulates into song... So when we seek to express or evoke emotion we turn to melody. Deborah sang after Israel’s victory over the forces of Siserah (Judges 5). Hannah sang when she had a child (1 Sam. 2). When Saul was depressed, David would play for him and his spirit would be restored (1 Sam. 16). David himself was known as the ‘sweet singer of Israel’ (2 Sam. 23:1). Elisha called for a harpist to play so that the prophetic spirit could rest upon him (2 Kings 3:15). The Levites sang in the Temple. Every day, in Judaism, we preface our morning prayers with Pesukei de-Zimra, the ‘Verses of Song’ with their magnificent crescendo, Psalm 150, in which instruments and the human voice combine to sing God’s praises. Mystics go further and speak of the song of the universe, what Pythagoras called ‘the music of the spheres’. This is what Psalm 19 means when it*

says, 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands ... There is no speech, there are no words, where their voice is not heard. Their music carries throughout the earth, their words to the end of the world.' Beneath the silence, audible only to the inner ear, creation sings to its Creator."

Rabbi Sacks continues, "So, when we pray, we do not read: we sing. When we engage with sacred texts, we do not recite: we chant. Every text and every time has, in Judaism, its own specific melody. There are different tunes for shacharit, mincha and maariv, the morning, afternoon and evening prayers. There are different melodies and moods for the prayers for a weekday, Shabbat, the three pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot (which have much musically in common but also tunes distinctive to each), and for the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. There are different tunes for different texts. There is one kind of cantillation for Torah, another for the Haftorah from the prophetic books, and yet another for Ketuvim, the Writings, especially the five Megillot. There is a particular chant for studying the texts of the written Torah, for studying Mishnah and Gemarah. So by music alone we can tell what kind of day it is and what kind of text is being used. There is a map of holy words and it is written in melodies and songs."

Next, we read in **Shemot / Exodus 15:23-26**; **And they came to Marah, and they were unable to drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. So the name of it was called Marah. And the people grumbled against Moshe, saying, "What are we to drink?" Then he cried out to YHVH, and YHVH showed (yarah, yud-reish-hey – "taught") him a tree. And when he threw it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a law and a rightruling for them, and there He tried them. And He said, "If you diligently obey the voice of YHVH your Elohim and do what is right in His eyes, and shall listen to His commands and shall guard all His laws, I shall bring on you none of the diseases I brought on the Mitsrites, for I am YHVH who heals you."**

In past teachings we've examined this incident well. The spring at Marah still exists and the water is still bitter. The water contains minerals that kill parasites. The Egyptian today charge money for this water. Elohim brought them to a place of healing from the diseases of the Mitsrites. But, the cure was bitter. Sometimes, the waters of healing taste bitter; but, what "**tree**" (that is taught) sweetens the bitterness of life? Torah, the Tree of Life.

Then, we read in **Shemot / Exodus 15:27**; **And they came to Eylim, where there were twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees. And they camped there by the waters.** It's interesting that both of the two tests that occur after the deliverance at the Yam Suf involve water, which refers to Torah. Here Moshe leads the Children of Yisra'el to "**Eylim**". Now, "**Eylim**" (Aleph-yud-lamed-mem) is an interesting word. On one level, it means "**palms**" or "**upright trees**". This is odd, in that we read that there were 70 palm trees (**tamar'im**) along with the 12 fountains, at Eylim. Another meaning for "**eylim**" is the "**rams**", as in the rams of the offerings. Since the rams were used as offerings (**korban'ot**) for drawing near, ascension and as sin offerings, etc.; we can see that this was a very special place of drawing near and ascending to HaShem for B'nei Yisra'el. Plus, "**Eylim**" means "**mighty ones**" or "**the mighty**". In our liturgy each week, we sing Mi Chamochah. It opens with, "**Mi chamocha ba eylim YHVH**". In English it reads "**Who is like you among the mighty YHVH**". This was indeed a prophetic place of Elohim's visitation and providence. The 12 fountains, (**ayin'ot**), are the 12 Tribes of Israel, possessing the water (**Torah**) that comes from beneath. This is the deep hidden water that comes to the surface by revelation. The 70 palms (**tamar'im**) represent the 70 nations (**goyim**) of the world. This place of Yisra'el drawing near to Elohim shows us their calling to bring the Torah, received by the revelation at Sinai that was about to come from HaShem, to the nations of the earth.

Next, we read in **Shemot / Exodus 16:1-13**; *And they set out from Eylim, and all the congregation of the children of Yisra'el came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Eylim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their going out of the land of Mitsrayim. And all the congregation of the children of Yisra'el grumbled against Moshe and Aharon in the wilderness. And the children of Yisra'el said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of YHVH in the land of Mitsrayim, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to satisfaction! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to put all this assembly to death with hunger." And YHVH said to Moshe, "See, I am raining bread from the heavens for you. And the people shall go out and gather a portion every day, in order to try them, whether they walk in My Torah or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." And Moshe and Aharon said to all the children of Yisra'el, "At evening you shall know that YHVH has brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim. And in the morning you shall see the esteem of YHVH, for He hears your grumblings against YHVH. And what are we, that you grumble against us?" And Moshe said, "In that YHVH gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to satisfaction, for YHVH hears your grumblings which you make against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against YHVH." And Moshe said to Aharon, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Yisra'el, 'Come near before YHVH, for He has heard your grumblings.' " And it came to be, as Aharon spoke to all the congregation of the children of Yisra'el, that they looked toward the wilderness and see, the splendor of YHVH appeared in the cloud. And YHVH spoke to Moshe, saying, "I have heard the grumblings of the children of Yisra'el. Speak to them, saying, 'Between the evenings you are to eat meat, and in the morning you are to be satisfied with bread. And you shall know that I am YHVH your Elohim.' " And it came to be that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp.*

Here, Elohim provides meat, quails, for all to eat. And then, the next morning, He provides bread (*lechem*) by means of the dew (*tal*). However, what's really interesting, is what we read in the last half of **verse 4**, speaking of this "**bread**" (*lechem*) or "**manna**"; *And the people shall go out and gather a portion every day, in order to try them, whether they walk in My Torah or not.* HaShem said they were to gather a "**portion**" every day, in order to test them, to see if they will walk in His Torah. In the Hebrew Torah, the word translated as "**portion**" is "**debar**" (*dalet-beit-reish*). That's right, "**debar**", the "**word**", "**that which is spoken**", as well as the "**mouth**", as in the "**Mouth of Elohim**". Moshe also reminds us, as he's reminding B'nei Yisra'el in the wilderness, in **Debarim** (*plural of debar*) / **Deuteronomy 8:3**; *"And He (HaShem) humbled you, and let you suffer hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, to make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of YHVH."*

As we draw to a close today, let's consider what we've seen so far in our Torah study this cycle. We have seen the creation of the universe, our world and man. We followed along in the destruction with the "*great flood*", to see how HaShem created and called a people. We've seen Him deliver His "**chosen people**" from bondage into freedom. Now, as we begin to study, anew this year, the return of our fathers to their inheritance, Eretz Yisra'el, let's pray and earnestly seek to understand this story. Because, if we are a part of this "*chosen generation*", born for a time such as the end, we are going to live it out again. We don't have to make the same mistakes. It's an "**open-book**" test. Let us learn of our Husband and learn to be His Bride. Earlier, I mentioned "**the promise**". Let's understand that "**Promise**". The twentieth chapter of **Yehezqel / Ezekiel** recounts, again, the setting apart of B'nei Yisra'el through the exodus and their time in the wilderness, as well as the first occupation of the "**Land**". While it refers to the House of Yisra'el, it is very clear that it is speaking to all Yisra'el, as HaShem describes Yisra'el's deliverance, the giving of Torah, the entry into Eretz Yisra'el and the sins and scatterings of both houses.

But, then we're given a "**Promise**". This promise will be fulfilled just as surely as it happened before. We read in **Yehezqel 20:34-44**; *"And I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out. And I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and shall enter into judgment with you face to face there. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Mitsrayim, so I shall enter into judgment with you," declares the Master YHVH. "And I shall make you pass under the rod, and shall bring you into the bond of the covenant, and purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me. From the land where they sojourn I bring them out, but they shall not come into the land of Yisra'el. And you shall know that I am YHVH. As for you, O house of Yisra'el," thus said the Master YHVH, "Go, serve each of you his idols, and afterwards, if you are not listening to Me. But do not profane My set-apart Name any more with your gifts and your idols. For on My set-apart mountain, on the mountain height of Yisra'el," declares the Master YHVH, "there all the house of Yisra'el, all of them in the land, shall serve Me. There I shall accept them, and there I shall require your offerings and the first-fruits of your offerings, together with all your set-apart gifts. As a sweet fragrance I shall accept you when I bring you out from the peoples. And I shall gather you out of the lands where you have been scattered. And I shall be set-apart in you before the gentiles. And you shall know that I am YHVH, when I bring you into the land of Yisra'el, into the land for which I lifted My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you were defiled. And you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you did. And you shall know that I am YHVH, when I have dealt with you for My Name's sake, not according to your evil ways nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Yisra'el," declares the Master YHVH.' "*

As we continue, week by week, to study this "**derech midbar**" this "**way of the wilderness**", the "**way of His Word**", let me challenge you to meditate on this "**Promise**" and our obligation to gather our "**portion**" – "**His word**" every day. Remember what the Psalmist wrote in **Tehillim / Psalms 81:3**; *"I am YHVH brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim; Open your mouth wide, and I fill it.*

**Baruch HaShem!**