

Parshat Beshalach

Summary:

- The Jews are chased by the Egyptians and trapped by the Yam Suf; Hashem tells Moshe to raise his staff and in doing so splits the sea, allowing the Jews to cross safely before crashing back down on the Egyptians.
- Ecstatic at their survival and freedom, the Jews sing and dance to praise Hashem
- While in the desert, the Jews do not stop complaining; Hashem makes a miracle that the bitter water becomes sweet, but only after Moshe hits the rock he is supposed to talk to.
- Every day, bread rains down for the Israelites; Hashem commands the people to take two portions for Shabbos on Friday. Some of the Jews disobey and go out to collect bread on Shabbos.
- The Jews are attacked in Rephidim by the Amalekim but come out victorious.

Rashi

France; 1040-1105

Shemot: 14:5

had a change: He [Pharaoh] had a change of heart from how he had felt [previously], for he had said to them [the Israelites], "Get up and get out from among my people" ([Exod. 12:31](#)). His servants [also] had a change of heart, for previously they had said to him, "How long will this one be a stumbling block to us?" ([Exod. 10:7](#)). Now they had a change of heart to pursue them [the Israelites] on account of the money that they had lent them. — [based on Mechilta]

ויהפך: נהפך ממה שהיה, שהרי אמר להם (שמות יב לא) קומו צאו מתוך עמי, ונהפך לבב עבדיו, שהרי לשעבר היו אומרים לו (שם יז) עד מתי יהיה זה לנו למוקש, ועכשיו נהפכו לרדוף אחריהם בשביל ממונם שהשאילום:

This Rashi explores the reason behind Pharaoh's decision to chase after the Jews. In the basic Peshat, the Egyptians exclaim, "What have we done, that we have released Israel from serving us?" From here it seems the primary motivation for the chase was that the Egyptians regretted letting their servants go and wanted them back for their labor. This seemed interesting to me because after all the Jews had put the Egyptians through with the plagues, according to the peshat, they did not give chase for revenge in any way. At least according to Rashi, the chase was somewhat rooted in revenge: the Egyptians wanted their money back.

Midrash: Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 14:28:1

(Exodus 14:28) "And the waters returned and covered the chariot, etc.": even that of Pharaoh. These are the words of R. Yehudah, it being written (Ibid. 15:4) "the chariots of Pharaoh and his host, etc." R. Nechemiah says: except for that of Pharaoh, it being written (Ibid. 9:16) "But, because of this I have preserved you." Others say: Pharaoh descended last and he drowned, viz. (Ibid. 15:19) "For the horse of Pharaoh came with its chariot and its riders into the sea, and the Lord turned back upon them the waters of the sea."

וישובו המים כל מים שבעולם חזרו : ויכסו את הרכב ואת הפרשים לכל חיל פרעה. אפלו פרעה שנ' (ט"ו ד') מרכבות פרעה וחילו ירה בים, דברי ר' יהודה: ר' נחמיה אומר חוץ מפרעה שנ' (ט' ט"ז) ואולם בעבור זאת העמדתך, ויש אומרים באחרונה בא וטבע שנאמר (ט"ו י"ט) כי בא סום פרעה:

This Midrash is addressing an issue with the language of the Passuk. In the Passuk it says the water covered the whole force of Pharaoh, and "not even one of them survived." This begs the question: what happened to Pharaoh? Usually, Midrashim are more clear in their interpretations but this one just sources multiple different opinions. I think the Midrash is being vague and not taking a stance, to show us that it is not an issue we need to be worried about. The Jews have left Egypt and are finally free from bondage. What happens to their leader is of no concern to us. Instead of focusing on the minute details, we should understand that our sages have drawn multiple conclusions as to what Pharaoh's fate was, and that coming to a unanimous decision as to what happened is irrelevant and unnecessary.