

Beshalach Aliyah Summary

General Overview: In this week's reading, *Beshalach*, Pharaoh pursues the Israelites into the desert. The Red Sea splits, the Israelites cross the sea while the Egyptian army is drowned. Moses and the Israelites sing a special song thanking G-d for this miracle. The Israelites complain about a lack of food and drink. G-d sends Manna and quail for them to eat, and miraculously produces water from a rock. Amalek attacks the Israelites and is soundly defeated.

First Aliyah: After Pharaoh sent the Israelites from his land, G-d did not allow them to take the most direct route to the Promised Land, fearing that any confrontation would then frighten the Israelites, causing them to return to Egypt via this short route. Instead G-d had them take the circuitous desert route, leading them with a pillar of cloud during daytime and a pillar of fire after dark. G-d then commanded the Israelites to backtrack and encamp along the Red Sea. They would thus appear to be hopelessly lost, which would prompt the Egyptians to pursue them. The Israelites followed this instruction, and, indeed, the Egyptians armies set out after the "lost" and cornered Israelites.

Second Aliyah: The Israelites noticed the approaching Egyptian armies, and they panicked. "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us to die in the desert?" they screamed at Moses. "Don't be afraid," Moses reassured. "Stand firm and see G-d's salvation that He will wreak for you today . . . G-d will fight for you, and you shall remain silent."

Third Aliyah: G-d instructed Moses, "Speak to the children of Israel and let them travel!" G-d told Moses to stretch out his staff over the sea and divide it, and the Israelites should then proceed through the split sea. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am G-d, when I will be glorified through Pharaoh, through his chariots, and through his horsemen." Meanwhile, the pillar of cloud that normally led the Israelites moved to their rear, insulating the Israelites and plunging the Egyptian camp into darkness. Moses stretched out his staff and the sea divided, and the Israelites walked on the seabed, on dry land. The Egyptians quickly pursued them into the sea.

Fourth Aliyah: Moses stretched his hand over the sea and the waters that had been standing like walls now fell upon the Egyptians, drowning them all. Moses then led the Israelites in song, praising G-d for the wondrous miracle that had transpired. Miriam, Moses' sister, then led the women in song and dance, with musical accompaniment. The Israelites traveled on in the desert, journeying three days without encountering water. They then arrived in Marah, where there was water—but bitter water. Moses miraculously sweetened the water.

Fifth Aliyah: One month after the Exodus, the Israelites' provisions ran dry. They complained to Moses, mentioning nostalgically "the fleshpots of Egypt," that they left behind. G-d responded that He will rain down bread from heaven in the mornings, and meat will be provided every night.

Sixth Aliyah: The meat, in the form of quails, appeared in the evening and covered the Israelite camp. In the morning, bread – called [manna](#) – fell from heaven, encased between layers of morning dew. Moses told the Israelites to gather one *omer* (a biblical measure) of manna per household member every day. Miraculously, no matter how much manna one picked, he arrived home with precisely one *omer* per head. Furthermore, Moses commanded the Israelites not to leave any manna over from one day to the next. Some disregarded this instruction, and next morning found their manna worm-infested. On Friday everyone picked two *omers*. Moses explained that the second portion was to be prepared and set aside for Shabbat—when no manna would fall. Again some disregarded Moses' directive, and went out pick manna on [Shabbat](#). G-d was angered by this disobedience. G-d instructed Moses to take a jar of manna and place it in the (yet to be constructed) Tabernacle, as a testament for all future generations.

Seventh Aliyah: The Israelites journeyed further and as they arrived in Rephidim their drinking water ran out again. The Israelites complained, and G-d instructed Moses to smite a certain rock with his staff. Water came pouring out of the rock and the people drank. The Amalekites then came and attacked the Israelites. Moses directed his student Joshua to assemble an army and battle Amalek. Joshua did so, and the Israelites were victorious—aided by Moses' prayer atop a mountain. G-d told Moses to record in the Book that He will "surely erase the memory of [Amalek](#) from under the heavens."