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פרשת בשלח
Parshat Beshalach

Ashreinu אשרינו

Happy Tu B'Shvat Birthday to our Editor-in-Chief, Atara Keehn!

Enhancing your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

Mrs. Allie Goldenberg

Wearing our Spiritual Armor

Mrs. Allie Goldenberg

Lia Sedaghati ('24)

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In our Parsha, the Torah tells us וַחֲמֻשִׁים עָלוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם ...(13:18). According to Rashi's understanding, the Torah is describing that *Bnei Yisrael went up armed from Egypt*. They left with weapons, ready to fight any enemies that would attempt to harm them in the desert. In the following pasuk, the Torah continues to tell us. וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ . "*And Moshe took the bones of Yosef with them*" (13:19). Yosef had his brothers promise him that his body will be buried in the land of Israel and as they departed Egypt many years later, Moshe fulfilled this promise.

The Kli Yakar, a commentary on the Torah written by Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, believes that these two pesukim are interconnected. On the one hand, Bnei Yisrael went into the desert וַחֲמֻשִׁים, armed with weapons. But even more important than being physically armed was their carrying the *aron* of Yosef, the coffin of Yosef. For as a tzaddik, Yosef represented the Torah, and commitment to its mitzvot. As they entered into the unknown of the desert, they wore spiritual armor as well.

As we know, following the building of the mishkan, Bnei Yisrael will bring the *aron hakodesh*, the holy ark which houses the *luchot*, out to the battlefield. For as Jews, the physical measures that we take to protect and defend ourselves, while necessary, are not enough, it's our spiritual commitment that truly arms us.

Attitude

Lia Sedaghati ('24)

In this week's parsha, Hashem redeems the Jews from their oppression and splits the sea. They traveled through the desert without any water for three long days. The Jews became upset and started to question their leader, Moshe. They have been waiting for such a long time to be liberated into the promised land, and now they are dying of thirst? They finally reached a place called Mara. It was blessed with an abundance of water, however: וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לִשְׁתֹּת מַיִם מִמָּרָה - "and they (the Jews) couldn't drink from it כִּי מָרִים הֵם - because they were bitter (15:23).

The Maggid of Mezritch explained that throughout those three days, the Jews ceaselessly complained. They criticized their leader who took them out of persecution. They were so bitter, they even asked Hashem why He brought them into the wilderness. From this, we see understand that " כִּי מָרִים הֵם " does not refer to the water, but the people. They were so infused with bitterness that it caused them to taste the bitterness. Their attitude made an impact on the water they drank.

We learn from this that so much depends on our attitude. Our perspective on even the smallest things can affect the way we feel about others. If we have a negative attitude, then we only perceive the negative in life. If we have a positive attitude, then we will always find the good things in life.

Constant

Caleb Berman ('23)

The parsha begins by describing the famous story of the Jews escape from Egypt, specifically the *Ananei HaKavod*. The pasuk states,

וַה' הֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן לַנְחֹתָם
הַדָּרֶךְ וְלַיְלָה בְּעַמּוּד אֵשׁ לְהָאִיר לָהֶם לָלֶכֶת

"And Hashem went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to guide them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, that they might travel day and night" (13:21).

The words יומם ולילה are very strange because surely the Jews couldn't have traveled day and night. A large group cannot travel constantly without becoming completely exhausted?! There are a few answers given: The IbnEzra answers that such a large camp could only travel a short distance at a time. Bnei Yisrael would advance little by little per day, rest, and then advance further throughout the evening.

The two pillars made it possible for them to travel whenever it was necessary. The Rashbam disagrees. He holds that

even though it is impossible for a large group to keep up good speed for a long time, the Jews only traveled in the beginning of their escape at a constant fast pace. This would alarm Pharaoh who would naturally assume they were permanently trying to escape. Thus, setting the stage for Egypt's later entrapment at sea.

Rabbi Chananel raises a different question on the pasuk. Why would Hashem lead the Jews through the desert and not an easier route?

Hashem wanted the Jews to be in certain circumstances where they would have to see constant miracles in order to survive. This would teach the Jews to have more faith. They would see, through the *mun* and constant protection from the elements, that Hashem is omnipresent and all powerful.

Today, we should learn from the Jews' journey in the desert. Hashem did miracles to remind them that he is always around and watching out for them and all they had to do was look around them. The same applies to us. If we stop, just once a day, to look around ourselves and contemplate how miraculous our existence and everyday lives are, we will be able to see Hashem's hidden message: he is always there and watching out for us.

Move Forward

Atara Keehn ('23)

In this week's Torah portion the Torah talks about how the Jewish people were in the desert and suddenly found Pharaoh and his troops chasing after them. The Jews were scared and declared,

כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ עֲבֹד אֶת מִצְרַיִם מִמֻּתֵנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר

"...We'd rather be slaves in Egypt than die in the desert" (14:12).

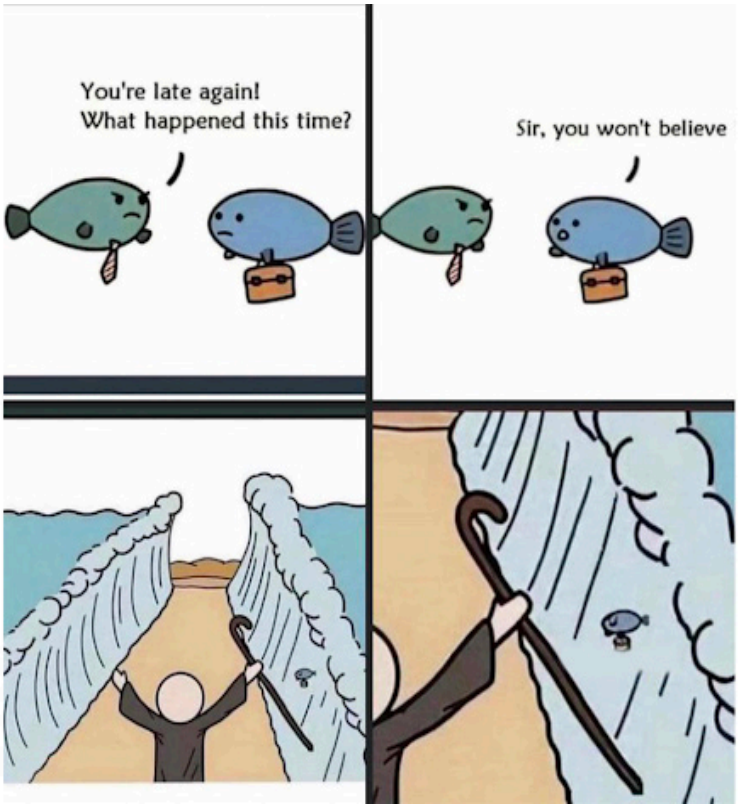
How could being a slave be better than the freedom they now have?

Slavery has one great advantage to it- comfort. In Egypt, the Jews were provided with all their basic needs and they didn't have to make any decisions about how and what to do with their days. The Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzrayim, is similar to *maitzar*, a narrow place. On one level, the Jewish people preferred to live in a confined environment than to have the responsibility that accompanies freedom. Sometimes it is the smallest boxes which make us feel secure. Every transition in life is scary. Even a baby in a mother's womb is terrified of what awaits him on the other side. But we need to fight against the enticement of comfort or we'll never move forward in life. Having a strong belief in God helps. When you're in a tough situation and you just want to run away from the challenge, that's when you need to turn to God.

Nachshon Ben Aminadav saw the Egyptians behind him, he saw the sea in front of him, and he jumped into the sea. The water was up to his neck. It came to the point where the water was about to reach his nose when all the sudden, the sea split. That is the ultimate test of belief in God. We all face challenges in

life that test the strength of our belief in God. May we all have the strength and clarity to pass any difficult test we are placed in, fight through the comfort, and hold onto our belief in God.

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