

# Torah Weekly

בס"ד

February 2-8, 2020  
7-13 Shevat, 5780  
Torah: Bo: Beshalach:  
Exodus 13:17 - 17:16  
Haftorah: Judges 4:4 - 5:31  
**PARSHAT BESHALACH**

**Calendars**  
We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

**Family Programs**  
Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

**Grape Juice & Matzah**  
We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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**ALEPH INSTITUTE**  
No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

**Why The Need To Split The Sea? A lesson on why the Jews needed to travel through the Red Sea Dear Rabbi, Why did the Israelites have to pass through the Red Sea? On my map of the Middle East, the route from Egypt to Israel is directly through the desert. The sea is totally out of the way. G-d led them on a detour, trapping them between the sea and the chasing Egyptians, and then split the sea. Does G-d have no sense of direction?**  
*Answer:* In describing the Exodus, the verse tells us that "G-d did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, which was close by, because G-d said, 'The people might reconsider when they see war, and return to Egypt.'" Nevertheless, the biblical story is meant to provide us a lesson for our personal lives. So here's how I understand the words of the sages on this: The earth is comprised of oceans and continents, sea and dry land. The difference between the two is: On dry land, all is open and visible. The trees, animals, mountains and people that occupy it are all easily recognizable. The sea, on the other hand, is a big blue expanse of mystery. Though the sea is teeming with life, when you look at it you can identify nothing; all is hidden beneath the surface. So it is with a person. Our personality has two layers: our sea and our land. What we know of ourselves, our visible strengths, our tested talents and our known abilities, the elements of our character that we are aware of—these comprise the "dry land" of our personality. But below the

surface of our character lies a vast sea of latent talents, inner strengths and untapped abilities that we never knew we had. In the depth of our soul lies a reserve of dormant energy waiting to be discovered. This is our "sea," and even we ourselves are unaware of what lies there. How can we access this reservoir of potential? How can our sea become dry land? There is only one way. And we know it from the encounter at the Red Sea. The Israelites had their back to the wall: Egyptians closing in on one side, a raging sea threatening on the other. They had only two options: despair or faith. Logic and reason demanded that they give in. There was no possible way out of their predicament. But faith demanded that they keep marching to the Promised Land. Sea or no sea, this is the path on which G-d has led us, so we have to have faith and march on. And so they did. It was at that moment, when hopelessness was countered by faith, that the impossible happened, and the sea opened up to become dry land. The most formidable obstacle dissolved into nothingness, without a struggle, just with faith. The people became empowered exactly when they acknowledged G-d as the only true power. By surrendering themselves to a higher force, they discovered the force within them. They split their own sea. The Jewish people are no strangers to times of challenge. At the very birth of our nation, we needed to learn how to face these challenges. So G-d took us on a detour to the sea and opened it up for us. He was telling every Jew for all times:

*Obstacles are not interruptions to the journey; they are the journey. Keep marching towards the Promised Land. Every challenge along the way will give you deeper insight and renewed power. Just have faith. It will split your sea.*  
**The Bones of Joseph** They say *adapt or die*. But must we jettison the old to embrace the new? Is the choice limited to modern or antiquated, or can one be a contemporary traditionalist? Do the past and present ever co-exist? At the beginning of this week's Parshah we read that Moses himself was occupied with a special mission as the Jews were leaving Egypt. *Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.* (Exodus 13:19) Over a hundred years before the great Exodus, Joseph made the Children of Israel swear that they would take him along when they would eventually leave Egypt. As viceroy of Egypt, Joseph could not hope to be buried in Israel when he died, as his father Jacob was. The Egyptians would never tolerate their political leader being buried in a foreign land. But he did make his brethren give him their solemn undertaking that when the time would come and all the Israelites would depart they would take his remains along with them. And so it was that while everyone else was busy packing up, loading their donkeys, and getting ready for the Great Trek into the Wilderness, Moses himself was busy with this mission, fulfilling the sacred promise made to Joseph generations ago. Now Joseph was not the only one to be re-

interred in the holy land. His brothers, too, were accorded the very same honor and last respects. Yet, it is only Joseph whom the Torah finds it necessary to mention explicitly. Why? The answer is that Joseph was unique. While his brothers were simple shepherds tending to their flocks, Joseph was running the affairs of state of the mightiest superpower of the day. To be a practicing Jew while blissfully strolling through the meadows is not that complicated. Alone in the fields, communing with nature, and away from the hustle and bustle of city life, one can more easily be a man of faith. But to run a massive government infrastructure as the most high-profile statesman in the land and still remain faithful to one's traditions — this is not only a novelty, this is absolute inspiration. Thrust as he was from the simple life of a young shepherd boy into the hub of the nation's capital to juggle the roles of viceroy and Jew, Joseph represented tradition amidst transition. It was possible, he taught the world, to be a contemporary traditionalist. One could successfully straddle both worlds. Now that they were about to leave Egypt, the Jews were facing a new world order. Gone were slavery and oppression, and in their place were freedom and liberty. During this time of transition, only Joseph could be their role model. They would need his example to show them the way forward into uncharted territory, the new frontier. That is why the Torah mentions only Joseph as the one whose remains went along with the people. They needed to take Joseph with them so that, like him, they too would make their own transition successfully. Ever since leaving Egypt, we've been wandering. And every move has brought with it its own challenges. Whether from Poland to America or Lithuania to South Africa, every transition has come with culture shocks to our spiritual psyche. How do you make a living and still keep the Shabbat you kept in the *shtetl* when the factory boss says "Cohen, if you don't come in on Saturday, don't bother coming in on Monday either!" It was a test of faith that wasn't at all easy. Many succumbed. But many others stood fast and survived, even flourished. It was the test of transition — and those who modeled themselves on Joseph were able to make the transition while remaining committed to tradition. Democracy and a human-rights culture have made that part of Jewish life somewhat easier, but challenges still abound. In all our own transitions today, may we continue to learn from Joseph. *By Rabbi Yossi Goldman*

*\*Passover order forms have been sent to the Chaplains and Rabbis. Please begin speaking with your Chaplain about Passover*

**February 2, 2020 --- 7 Shevat, 5780**

**R. Dovid of Lelov (1814)**

Chassidic master Rabbi Dovid Biederman of Lelov (1746-1814) was a disciple of the "Seer of Lublin." Rabbi Dovid was known for his extraordinary *ahavat yisrael*; it was said of him that he was incapable of seeing faults in a fellow Jew. Two printed collections of stories about him are *Migdal David* and *Kodesh Hillulim*.

**February 3, 2020 --- 8 Shevat, 5780**

**End of the "Elders Era" (1228 BCE)**

The last of the Elders (*z'keinim*) who were contemporaries of Joshua and outlived him, passed away in the year 2533 after creation. They were part of the chain of Torah transmission as listed at the beginning of Ethics of the Fathers: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets..."

In ancient times, this day was marked as a fast day.

[Some are of the opinion that this occurred on the 5th of Shevat].

**February 4, 2020 --- 9 Shevat, 5780**

**"Moshiach's Torah Scroll" completed (1970)**

The writing of the "Sefer Torah to greet Moshiach," initiated at the behest of the 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, in 1942, was concluded 28 years later at a special gathering convened by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Friday afternoon, the 9th of Shevat, on the eve of the 20th anniversary of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's passing.

**February 5, 2020 --- 10 Shevat, 5780**

**Passing of Rebbetzin Rivkah (1914)**

Rebbetzin Rivkah Schneerson was born in Lubavitch in 1833; her maternal grandfather was Rabbi DovBer, the 2nd Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch. In 1849 she married her first cousin, Rabbi Shmuel, who later became the fourth Lubavitcher Rebbe. For many years Rebbetzin Rivkah, who survived her husband by 33 years, was the esteemed matriarch of Lubavitch, and Chassidim frequented her home to listen to her accounts of the early years of Lubavitch. She is the source of many of the stories recorded in the talks, letters and memoirs of her grandson, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak (the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe). The Beth Rivkah network of girls' schools, founded by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak in the 1940's, is named after her.

**February 5, 2020 --- 10 Shevat, 5780**

**Yahrtzeit of R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1950)**

The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, passed away on Shabbat morning, the 10th of Shevat, of the year 5710 from creation (1950)

**February 5, 2020 --- 10 Shevat, 5780**

**Lubavitcher Rebbe assumes leadership (1951)**

At a gathering of Chassidim marking the first anniversary of the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the late Rebbe's son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, delivered a Chassidic discourse (*maamar*) entitled *Basi LeGani* ("I Came into My Garden"), signifying his formal acceptance of the leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

**February 6, 2020 --- 11 Shevat, 5780**

**Birth of the "Chafetz Chaim" (1838)**

Birth of the revered Torah scholar, pietist and Jewish leader Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (1838-1933) of Radin (Poland), author of *Chafetz Chaim* (a work on the evils of gossip and slander and the guidelines of proper speech) and *Mishnah Berurah* (a codification of Torah law).

**February 8, 2020 --- 13 Shevat, 5780**

**Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah Schneersohn (1942)**

Wife of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom DovBer Schneerson, and mother of the sixth Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah (1860-1942) lived through the upheavals of the first half of the 20th century. She fled the advancing front of World War I from Lubavitch to Rostov, where her husband passed away in 1920 at age 59. In 1927, she witnessed the arrest of her son by Stalin's henchmen the night he was taken away and sentenced to death, G-d forbid, for his efforts to keep Judaism alive throughout the Soviet empire. After Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak's release, the family resettled in Latvia and later, Poland; in 1940, they survived the bombing of Warsaw, were rescued from Nazi-occupied city, and emigrated to the United States. Rebbetzin Shterna Sarah passed away in New York on the 13th of Shevat of 1942.