

In Parshat B'Shalach, Sam explores the parting of the sea, delving into the story of Nachshon and asking the question: What did the Israelites really see on the banks of the sea?

[View this email in your browser](#)



Sam Blustin

Torah From The Holy Land Parshat B'Shalach

To view this on my website or download a PDF, please click [here](#).

Torah: Why Do You Cry To Me? Go Forth!

Parshat B'Shalach focuses on the climax of the Israelite's quest to worship their God: The splitting of the sea which allows them to escape from Pharaoh's army, while drowning the pursuing soldiers. In this scene, the Israelites are encamped at Pi-hahiroth, Egypt behind them and the sea directly in front of them. Pharaoh's heart is hardened, and he sends his army to bring the Israelites back to servitude. The people, trapped, begin to panic. "How could you bring us out of Egypt only to die here?!" Moses tries to comfort the people, saying "Do not fear! Stand fast and see the salvation of Hashem that He will perform for you today; for as you have seen Egypt today, you shall not see them ever again! Hashem shall make war for you, and you shall remain silent" (Ex. 14:13-14). There's nothing to worry about, he says. Sit back, relax, have a little faith, and Hashem will fight this war for you. But as we see, this is the wrong response.

Instead, Hashem responds to Moses, "Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth!" (Ex. 14:15). Stop praying to me, God says! Go and do something about your predicament, and I'll be there to support you and make you successful. But the question remains: How are they supposed to journey forth with the sea blocking their path?

Various midrashim and the Talmud relate a version of the well know story of Nachshon. When God gave the command to go forth, the people knew they had to do something, but who would go first? They looked around, nodding to their friends, trying to convince them to go first. Suddenly, Nachshon, the head of the tribe of Judah, wades into the water. He walks until the water is up to his knees, but nothing happens. To his waist, but nothing happens. To his neck, but nothing happens. Finally, when his head is completely submerged, and his breath about to run out, the sea splits before him, and the people cross safely on dry land.

Nachshon knew what Moshe did not. Despite the formidability of the sea, Nachshon had faith in God and knew that faith requires action. It is not enough to sit back and have faith that everything will be okay. We must go out and act in the name of justice, freedom, equality, and love, no matter what the obstacle or cost. What are you waiting for? Go forth!

T'fillah: Vayar Yisrael - Breaking Free From Our Bonds

After the Israelites cross the sea, they turn back, and to their disbelief, the waters collapse, drowning the pursuing soldiers. "*Vayar Yisrael et Mitzrayim met al sefat hayam*" (Ex. 14:30). This verse is often translated: "And the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead on the banks of the sea." However, the Rabbis teach us not to read *Mitzrayim* as Egyptians, but rather Egypt. What does it mean that the Israelites saw Egypt dead on the banks of the sea?

After crossing the sea, they left their mindset of servitude behind them. The forces that had kept them chained up and oppressed, that had restricted them from becoming their true and full selves, were shed at this moment. While these forces were literal servitude, we too have forces, both self-imposed and imposed upon us by society and culture, that prevent us from becoming all that were are meant to be. What forces are at play in your life? How can you break free of these bonds to experience your own splitting of the sea?

Sam Blustin is an alumnus of the Conservative Yeshiva (2014-2015) and a current Rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary (Class of 2020). You can view more divrei Torah at www.samblustin.com or contact Sam directly at samblustin@gmail.com.



Copyright © 2017 Sam Blustin, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

samblustin@gmail.com

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)