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*Parashat Beshalach* (Shemot 13:17-17:16)

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January 25, 2018

## **SUMMARY**

This week's Torah reading is *Parashat Beshalach*, and I will be reading from *Sefer Shemot*, the Book of Exodus, Chapter 13 Verses 17-18. This week we read about the Israelites leaving Egypt and heading into the wilderness. God goes with them, appearing as a pillar of cloud during the daytime and as a pillar of fire at night. After setting them free in last week's *parasha*, Pharaoh now changes his mind and goes after the Israelites with warriors and chariots. The Israelites find themselves trapped between Egyptian warriors and the Sea of Reeds.

God tells Moshe to hold his staff out over the sea, and when he does, the sea splits! The Israelites cross over on dry land and then the sea closes up on the Egyptians as they are still crossing. Miriam and Moshe lead the people in musical celebration. *Sheerat HaYam* (The Song of the Sea) is chanted with a special melody and is written in the Torah in a brick-like pattern. This week's Shabbat is known as *Shabbat Shirah*--the *shabbat* of song.

Three days into their wilderness journey, the Israelites complained about not having water to drink. When they came to *Marah*, the water they found was bitter, so they complained to Moshe. God showed Moshe a piece of wood to throw into the water to sweeten it--making it drinkable for the Israelites. The Israelites then complained of hunger so God sent birds to be eaten as meat and also sent mannah.

The Israelites were told to gather and eat just what they needed of the mannah, but some tried to store it. By the next day it smelled terrible and became infested with insects. On the sixth day, they were told to gather double the amount of mannah and save half for Shabbat, and that mannah stayed fresh the next day. On Shabbat there would be no mannah from heaven, and when some went out to gather it anyway they found none. Once again, the people find no water. God tells Moses to strike a rock so water may come out from it. The Israelites are attacked by the tribe of Amalek, but with God's help, they defeat their attackers.

## QUESTIONS

**1) When the Israelites are wandering in the desert, they complain about a lot of things. What do you think might make something a good complaint? <<pick 3>>**

The point of a complaint is to share information with someone who may not know it. If you have been hungry for a couple of days because you have been wandering in the wilderness then it is ok to complain, because your life is in danger. But complaining about being hungry when you've just eaten lunch at school, is not information that needs to be shared because nothing bad is going to happen.

**2) Towards the end of this week's *parasha* the nation of Amalek attacks the Israelites in the wilderness. Moshe watched from a hill as the Israelites did battle. When Moshe raised his hands, the Israelites did well in battle, but when he put his hands down, they struggled. Why do you think the Israelites might have been more successful when Moshe raised his hands? <<pick 3>>**

I think it may be because when the Israelites in the war saw Moshe with his hands pointing up they looked up above Moshe and were reminded that G-d was really there looking out for them while they fought. It gave them strength to do better in battle.