

January 17, 2018

Maya

Zachary

Corey

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

*Bracha Na'ariya bat Aliza v'Gedaliah Mendel*

*Zachariya ben Mordechai V'ha-chazzan Nechama Batya Zahava*

*Caleb Levi ben Melekh Yitzchak*

### **SUMMARY**

**MAYA:** This week's Torah reading is *Parashat Beshalach*, and we will be reading from *Sefer Shemot*, the Book of Exodus, Chapter 13 Verses 17-19. 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 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.

**ZACH:** 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. This is the *parasha* where we read *Mi Chamocho! 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.

**COREY:** 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*.

**MAYA:** The Israelites were told to gather and eat just what they needed of the *mannah*, but some tried to gather more and to save 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*. That *mannah* stayed fresh the next day. Once again, the people find no water. God tells Moshe to strike a rock to bring water out of it. The Israelites are attacked by the tribe of Amalek, but with God's help, they defeat their attackers.

## QUESTIONS

1) **MAYA:** Almost as soon as Pharaoh let the Israelites go, he changed his mind and sent chariots and soldiers after the Israelites to bring them back. If he was just going to send soldiers to bring the Israelites back to Egypt, why in the world would he have sent the Israelites out in the first place? <<Corey picks 3>>

**ZACH:** Maybe Pharaoh let them go because he was feeling beaten and like it was the right thing to do after all those plagues. He may have made the decision in the moment without knowing he would change his mind later. After he made the decision, maybe he suddenly realized how much Egypt needed the Israelites to work for them.

2) **COREY:** Pharaoh was definitely not the best leader, but sometimes we can learn what good leadership should look like from bad examples. What can we learn about good leadership from thinking about Pharaoh's bad example? <<Maya picks 3>>

**MAYA:** One of the things that made Pharaoh a bad leader is that he didn't make well-thought out decisions. He made decisions based on however he was feeling in the moment, which was why he changed his mind so often after each of the plagues and even after letting the Israelites go.

**ZACH:** One of the important things about being a leader is to think ahead about how your decisions will affect things and then about how you might feel about these effects later.

3) **COREY:** In the first two verses we read today, the Torah made a point of telling us that God did not take us directly from Egypt into the Promised Land. Instead--to avoid war with the Philistines--God took us on a much longer route. In addition to avoiding immediate war, what might be other benefits of taking a longer route to get from Egypt to the Promised Land? <<Zach picks 3>>

**COREY:** Maybe God just wanted to give the Israelites a little more exercise. Also--it could be that God was trying to teach them patience.

**ZACH:** I also think it might be that God wanted to take the Israelites on a route that would be confusing for the Egyptians just in case they decided that they wanted to try to catch up.

**MAYA:** Maybe it was important to God that the Israelites have some time together, not as slaves, to get to know each other before they reached the Promised Land and needed to fight or to set up their own country.