



Beshalach

Shemot (Exodus) 13:17 – 17:16

G-d leads the Israelites out of Egypt by way of the Red Sea. In fulfillment of Joseph's wish (Genesis 50:25) Moses carries with him the bones of Joseph.

Soon the Egyptians pursue the Israelites. At the edge of the Sea of Reeds, the people hesitate, fearful of the advancing Egyptians. Then G-d parts the Red Sea and they pass through on dry land. (A famous Midrash teaches that the water only parted after the people actually entered the sea.) When the Egyptians pursue them, the sea closes and Pharaoh's army is destroyed. In gratitude for their deliverance, Moses and Miriam lead the people in songs of praise.

Traveling on through the wilderness, the Israelites are without water for three days. When they reach the bitter waters of Marah, G-d instructs Moses to throw a piece of wood into the water and the water becomes sweet and suitable for drinking.

Shortly afterward, the Israelites, in their hunger, begin to grumble against Moses and Aaron. G-d tells Moses and Aaron that the Israelites will soon eat. G-d sends manna to feed them, each according to his or her own need. They are instructed to collect only enough for each day, as any "leftovers" would spoil. On the sixth day, however, they are to gather a double portion, for on Shabbat no manna would appear. This manna would remain fresh enabling the people to rest on the seventh day. This double portion of manna is the origin of the custom of having two Challot on our Shabbat tables.

Later, the Amalekites come to attack the people. This is the first of the three historic encounters with Amalek. G-d instructs Moses to record these events and to remember Amalek as Israel's eternal enemy.



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