



January 30-31, 2026

יג שבט תשפ"א

Candle Lighting 5:02 PM

Shabbat Shirah

Parashat B'shalach - בשלח - Exodus 13:17 – 17:16

Stone – p 366 Hertz – p 265 Etz Hayim – p 399

Haftarah – Judges 4:4-5:31

Stone – p 1152 Hertz – p 281 Etz Hayim – p 424

Kiddush luncheon following services
is sponsored by Traude & Gary Wilson
in honor of Gary's recent birthday

Shabbat ends 6:03 PM

On This Week's Parashah - B'shalach

This summary is adapted from this week's [main Covenant & Conversation essay](#) by Rabbi Sacks.

In 2010, a sensational scientific discovery was announced. Researchers at a US National Center for Atmospheric Research and the University of Colorado were now able to use computer simulation to replicate the miraculous parting of the Red Sea.

Using sophisticated modelling, they demonstrated how a strong east wind, blowing overnight, could have pushed water back at a bend. The water would have been guided into the two waterways, and a land bridge would have opened at the bend, allowing people to walk across the exposed mudflats. As soon as the wind died down, the waters would have rushed back in. As the leader of the project said when the report was published, "The simulations match fairly closely with the account in Exodus."

So we now have a scientific explanation to support the biblical account. Rabbi Sacks notes that this raises questions like: How should we view God's miraculous interventions? Are they supernatural phenomena that lose their impact if science can explain it?

The miraculous splitting of the Yam Suf can be read in different ways. The first is that what happened was a suspension of the laws of nature. The waters stood, literally, like a wall - a supernatural event.

Another option is that although science can explain the strange behaviour of the water, the timing was miraculous. It happened just there, just then, when Bnei Yisrael seemed trapped, unable to go forward because of the sea, unable to turn back because of the army pursuing them. Hashem acted with perfect timing to save the people, and this was the miracle.

There is a significant difference between these two interpretations. The first appeals to our sense of wonder. How extraordinary that the laws of nature should be suspended to allow an escaping people to go free, through the sea! It is a story that captures the imagination of every child. But the naturalistic explanation is wondrous at another level entirely. What's more, here the Torah is using the device of irony. What made the Mitzrim of the time of Paroh so strong was the fact that they had the latest and most powerful form of military technology: the fearsome horse-drawn chariot. It made them unbeatable in battle.

What happens at the sea is therefore poetic justice of the most exquisite kind. There is only one circumstance in which a group of people travelling by foot can escape a highly trained army of charioteers, namely when the route passes through a muddy seabed. The people can walk across, but the chariot wheels get stuck in the mud. The army can neither advance nor retreat. The wind drops - the water returns. The powerful are now powerless.

This second narrative has a moral depth that the first does not. The elegantly simple way in which the division of the Red Sea is described in the Torah so that it can be read at quite different levels - one as a supernatural miracle, the other as a moral tale about the limits of technology when it comes to the real strength of nations - this to Rabbi Sacks is what is most striking. It is a text carefully written so that our understanding of it can deepen as we mature, once we are no longer so interested in the mechanics of miracles and more interested in how freedom is won or lost.

*Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l*

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The office will be closed
Tuesday, Feb. 3 -
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If you need to reach Rabbi or Marian,
please EMAIL us (no calls or texts, please):
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Soup lovers, this is your day!!

PRAYER

It is good to thank You, O God
To sing praises to Your name,

*To proclaim Your love every morning,
And Your faithfulness every night.*

Your works, O God, bring me gladness;
Of Your deeds, I joyously sing.

*How great are Your deeds, O God;
How profound are Your designs.*

The superficial cannot comprehend,
The foolish cannot grasp this.

*Though the wicked may thrive like grass,
And doers of evil seem to flourish,*

Those who oppose You shall be destroyed;
Workers of evil are sure to be routed.

*I have seen the defeat of my foes,
I have heard the doom of my enemies.*

The just, however, grow strong like the palm tree,
They thrive like the cedar of Lebanon.

*Planted on the temple grounds,
They flourish in the courts of our God.*

They yield fruit even in old age,
They remain vital and vigorous.

*They proclaim “God is just;
My Fortress, having no faults.”*

From Psalm 92

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Today's necessity was yesterday's luxury

Unknown