

# PARASHAT BESHALACH

(AFTER HE HAD LET GO)

EXODUS 13:17-17:16

## ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

**Y**eshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

### Haftorah Reading

Judges 4:4–5:31

### B'rit Chadashah

On the mercy of Elohim: **Romans 9:15–23**

On Elohim's mighty acts: **Acts 7:36**

On Israel's faith: Hebrews **11:29**

On Elohim's judgment of spiritual Egypt: **Revelation 15:1–4**

On the spiritual manna: **John 6:25–58; Revelation 2:17**

On Yeshua leading ancient Israel: **1 Corinthians 10:1–13**

### Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion)

- 13:17 The Route to the Promised Land
- 14:1 Pharaoh Hardens His Heart One Last Time
- 14:9 Israel Panics in the Face of the Egyptian Army
- 14:13 YHVH Reassures His People
- 14:21 The Parting of the Red Sea
- 14:23 The Water Crashes Down Upon the Egyptian Army
- 14:30 The Salvation of Israel From Their Enemies
- 15:1 A Song of Praise
- 15:20 Miriam and the Women Sing
- 15:23 Israel Tests YHVH at the Waters of Marah
- 16:4 The Miracle of the Manna
- 16:22 The Sixth Day: Preparation for the Sabbath
- 17:2 Israel Complains Again: Water From the Rock
- 17:8 The First Battle in the Wilderness Against Amalek

**Study Questions for This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion)**

**1** Upon leaving Egypt, YHVH immediately subjected Israel to a series of faith tests to see if they would trust him or not. Why did he test them? (Read Deut 8:1–7.) In this Parashah, he tested them to see whether they would trust him for deliverance from their enemies at the Red Sea, for water at Marah, for food with regard to gathering manna during the week, for a double portion of food on the sixth day so that they could refrain from work on the Sabbath day by resting, again for water in the wilderness, and, finally, for victory over their enemies when they fought against the Amalekites. Would Israel remain as spiritual children in bondage to the lusts of flesh and eyes, walking by fear and not faith, or would they learn to trust in the Messenger of YHVH who was leading them physically and spiritually to the Promised Land?

Similarly, in our daily lives, we face all the same basic needs as Israel did, and YHVH tests our reliance on him over these issues as well (i.e., deliverance from enemies and oppressors, need for food and water, health issues, and whether to work on the Sabbath or not to provide for our families). Will we walk in fear and murmur and complain as Israel did, or will we obey and trust YHVH to meet our needs?

In this Torah portion, Israel went from the highest highs to the lowest lows spiritually in their walk with YHVH; they went from victory and praises one moment, to murmuring, defeatism, complaining, and even falsely accusing Moses and Elohim for failing to meet their needs the next moment. Are we ever guilty of exhibiting such attitude swings in our daily walk when faced with similar trials?

Have we learned to be content and to trust and even to praise YHVH in all the circumstances of life that confront us? How did Yeshua and the apostolic writers exhort us in this regard? (Read 1 Tim 6:6–14; Matt 6:32–33; Luke 12:31–32; 2 Cor 4:8–18; 2 Cor 6:1–10; Phil 4:12–13.)

**2** **13:17–18**, Why did YHVH instruct the Israelites to take the indirect route to the Promised Land through the wilderness instead of the straight line, direct route through northern Sinai to the Land of Israel—which was only an eleven days' journey? What does this tell us about the believer's spiritual walk? Couldn't Elohim just save us out of our spiritual Egypt of this world and transport us instantly into the spiritual New Jerusalem? So why must we go through the wilderness experience of this life? (Read Luke 21:19.) What does it mean to be an overcomer? Overcome what? We are called to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. (Read Rev 2:7,11,26; 3:5,12.) How are gold and silver refined? (Read 1 Cor 3:11–15.) Second Timothy 3:12 says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Messiah Yeshua shall suffer persecution." Why? Our Father in heaven wants to conform us to the image of Yeshua (Rom 8:28–29). There is no gain if there is no pain! The day you were delivered from your spiritual Egypt were you immediately ready to be a pillar in Elohim's spiritual temple (Rev 3:12)? It is doubtful. Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

**3** **13:18,21**, *But Elohim led the people...and YHVH went before them...to lead them the way.* What are some other ways YHVH leads or speaks to his people? Here are a few examples: (Can you think of any others?)

- Through his Word (Ps 119:105)
- By his Set-Apart Spirit who leads us into all truth (John 16:12)
- Through his anointed leaders (Eph 4:11–16)
- By directing the steps (through life's circumstances) of a righteous man (Ps 37:23–24; Prov 16:9)
- By directing the hearts of men (Prov 21:1)
- Through prophetic words (Num 12:6)
- Through dreams and visions (Num 12:6)
- Through wise counselors (Prov 24:6)
- Through Divine Messengers from heaven (e.g., Judg 6:11–14; 13:3)

**4** **13:21–22; 14:20**, What is the spiritual significance of the fiery cloud (i.e., the glorious Presence of YHVH) leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, and what is this symbolic of in the redeemed believer's life? On the day of Pentecost (*Shavuot*), the same fiery-like substance came down on each of Yeshua's disciples (Acts 2:1–4). If the Messenger of YHVH dwelt in the cloud that led Israel for

40 years, and if Moses received instructions from the Messenger of YHVH from within the cloud when it would descend upon the tabernacle (Num 12:5ff; Deut 31:15ff), then who is leading the believer now in his journey through the spiritual wilderness? Are you hearing the voice of YHVH from the “fire” of the Spirit of Elohim that dwells in your spirit? (Read Prov 20:27; 1 Cor 2:10–14; Eph 3:16; 1 John 2:27.)

**5** **14:19**, *Who* is this “Angel” of Elohim (or in other places he is referred to as “the ‘Angel’ of YHVH”)? The word *angel* is a very poor translation from the Hebrew, which is the word *malak* (מַלְאָךְ) and simply means “a heavenly or human messenger.” Prophetically this word can refer to human messengers such as the one coming in the spirit of Elijah prior to Messiah’s coming, as well as to the Messiah himself (e.g. the Messenger or *Malak* of the covenant in Mal 3:1). In Genesis 32:22–30, Jacob wrestled with a man that Scripture identifies as the “*Malak* of YHVH” (Hos 12:3–5), and whom Jacob called *Elohim* (verse 30). This same figure redeemed Jacob (Gen 48:16), and is identified with “the *Malak* of Elohim ... the Elohim of Bethel” (31:11 and 13), and he appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:2). Now he is leading Israel in the wilderness. Again who is he? (Read Acts 7:37–38 and compare this with 1 Corinthians 10:1–4. For more on this subject, see the my article entitled, “*The Deity of Yeshua Confirmed by the Hebrew Scriptures and the Jewish Sages*” at [http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/yeshua\\_in\\_ot.pdf](http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/yeshua_in_ot.pdf).)

**6** **14:1–30**, *Red Sea*. What is the Red Sea symbolic of in the redeemed believer’s life? Think of the color red, the idea of salt, and the concept of water. (Read 1 Cor 10:2 and Eph 5:26.) What is the spiritual symbolism or relationship between the Passover (*Pesach*) event, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Hag HaMatzot*), and the crossing of the Red Sea as they relate to our salvation walk? Egypt represents leaving spiritual enslavement to the world, flesh and the devil; Passover pictures the work of Yeshua at the cross, the Red Sea symbolizes immersion for the remission of sins, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures putting sin out of the spiritual houses of our lives. What a beautiful picture! (Read 1 Cor 10:11.) All that the Israelites did and went through were types and shadows for us “upon whom the ends of the world are come.” Thank you Israel (!) for teaching us so much about ourselves and our own spiritual walk. Father in heaven, help us to learn from their mistakes and to not repeat them!

**7** **14:1–2**, YHVH “engineered” the children of Israel’s journey so that they would be wedged between the devil and the deep blue sea, so to speak. Why would he do that? What was he trying to teach them? Have you found yourself in a similar situation in your spiritual journey? When your back was up against the wall, what did you do and what lessons did you learn? How did your spiritual walk improve as YHVH tested your faith?

**8** **Exodus 14:22**, *The children of Israel went*. According to Jewish tradition (e.g., in the *ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash* commentary on verse eight), the crossing occurred on Nisan 21 (or the Month of the Abib, which is the first month of the biblical calendar occurring in the early spring), which is the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, even though the Scriptures don’t explicitly say this. The Jewish sages deduce this from the chronology of events leading up to the crossing. On the fifteenth day of the first month, they reason, Israel left Egypt and traveled from Rameses to Succoth. On the sixteenth day, they traveled from Succoth to Etham, and on the seventeenth from Etham to Pi-hahiroth. Then on the eighteenth it was reported to Pharaoh that Israel had been gone for three days. On the 19th and 20th Pharaoh mustered his army and pursued Israel, and on the twenty-first day of the first month Israel crossed the Red Sea, which was the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

**9** **Exodus 15:1**, *This song*. The song of Moses may be more aptly titled, “The Song of the Redemption,” for it is a lyric song about our Heavenly Redeemer, as we shall now discover.

*I will sing*. Will this Song of Moses be sung again in the future? (Read Revelation 15:3.) Here we see that the glorified bride of Yeshua who YHVH has delivered from his judgments of wrath upon a wicked end-times world will be singing the Song of Moses. Where are they singing this song? (See Rev 15:3–5.) These same redeemed Israelites are those whom YHVH has brought out of Babylon the Great as part of the second exodus of redeemed Israelites from the nations where they have been long scattered and spiritually enslaved. The Song of Moses here (in Rev 15:3) also relates to the Song of the Lamb. As we shall see next, the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 does relate to Yeshua the Lamb.

- 10 Exodus 15:2, *The LORD/Yah.*** *Yah* is the shortened form of YHVH. This verse goes on to say about this same Yah “that he has become my salvation [Heb. *Yeshua*].” Was this phrase literally prophesying about the incarnation of Yeshua the Messiah?
- I will praise him.* The KJV translates this phrase as “I will prepare him an habitation.” The *ArtScroll Stone Edition Tanach* has, “I will build him a sanctuary.” Couple this with verse 17, which speaks of “the sanctuary [Heb. *miqdash*],” which YHVH has made for his dwelling, we have a solid reference to the Tabernacle of Moses that YHVH instructed the Israelites to build. Why did he want them to build him a habitation? (Note Exod 25:8 and 22.). What’s more, everything in the tabernacle pointed to Yeshua, the salvation of YHVH, and to his death on the cross to redeem man from sin and bring him into close communion with the Father in heaven!
- 11 Exodus 15:6,12, *Your right hand.*** Three times this phrase is found in the Song of Moses. Who is the outstretched right arm of YHVH? It is Yeshua (Isa 53:1 cp. Isa 52:10; 40:10; Ezek 20:34–35). Where is Yeshua now? (See Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; etc.)
- 12 Exodus 15:12, *The earth swallowed them.*** Even as the earth (or seas) swallowed up Pharaoh (a picture of Satan) who was attempting to destroy YHVH’s redeemed people, in the end times how will the earth come to the rescue of the saints who have fled into the wilderness after leaving the Babylon the Great world system? (See Rev 12:16.)
- 13 15:22–25 cp. 21–23,** How is it that Israel could transition so quickly from the Red Sea miracle with outburst of joyful praise on the one hand to complaining and murmuring on the other? Have you ever experienced YHVH’s deliverance and blessing in your life, only to fall victim to doubt and unbelief shortly afterwards? Repent! Look at the carnal “wilderness man” Paul describes in Romans chapter seven versus the Spirit-led, more-than-a-conqueror man of Romans chapter eight. Are you still bemoaning the past, walking in fear about the future and fretting and worrying about the present, or do you rejoice and give thanks to YHVH in all things? (Read Phil 4:4; Rom 12:12; and 1 Thess 5:18.)
- 14 15:23, *They came to Marah.*** When the Israelites murmured at Marah, it was because they had taken their eyes off of YHVH. What was the solution to the problem? What caused the waters to turn from bitter to sweet? What is the tree a prophetic shadow-picture of? (Read 1 Pet 2:24; Acts 5:30; 13:29; John 15:5; Rev 2:7; 22:14.) How does this speak to us when life situations go sour and bitter for us? What should we do about it? Who turns the bitter waters sweet again, so that we can drink and be refreshed? Do you love Yeshua for it? (Read Heb 12, the entire chapter; focus on verse two.)
- 15 Exodus 15:26, *I am YHVH that heals you.*** This is the first place in the Scriptures where YHVH promises to heal his people of sickness. (For other promises of divine healing, see Deut 7:12 and 15; Pss 30:2–4; 34:18–19; 41:1; 91 [entire chapter]; 103 [entire chapter]; Isa 40:28–31; 53:4–5; Jer 17:13–14; Mal 4:2; Mark 11:23–24; Luke 10:19; John 14:13; 15:7; 15:16; 16:23–24; Rom 8:31; 8:37; Phil 4:13; Jas 5:14–16; 1 Pet 2:24.) What are the stipulations that YHVH makes for his promise of healing to be fulfilled upon his people? “Diligently heed” is the Hebrew word *shema* meaning “to hear and to do.” What were the Israelites to hear and do? “Upright” is the Hebrew word *yashar* meaning “right, righteous, correct, straight.” What does this verse reveal is YHVH’s standard of uprightness or righteousness?
- 16 15:27, *Elim.*** The name of this oasis in the wilderness where the Israelites found refreshment is rich in meaning and prophetic significance. *Elim* is the plural of *ayil* meaning “porch, vestibule or hall” and probably refers to the large and imposing porch that existed in front of the main entrances of some ancient middle eastern temples including that of Solomon’s Temple. These porches were often supported by two large pillars. In the case of Solomon’s Temple, these two pillars were named *Yachin* [meaning “he will establish”] and *Boaz* [possibly meaning “fleetness” or “established in strength”]. Elsewhere *ayil* can refer to temple pillars (e.g. Ezekiel’s temple, Ezek 40–41), which sometimes featured palm tree ornamentation (Ezek 40:31). *Ayil* can also mean “mighty leader, ram, or a terebinth tree,” which grows in the Middle East and was likely the *Pistacia terebinthus* (or turpentine tree) or perhaps the *Pistacia palaestina*. This short (30 feet at mature height), stout, thick-trunked tree is sometimes translated in the Bible as *oak*, which is

a different species of tree altogether and is not related to the *pistacia* or *terebinth* tree. As we can see from this brief word study, *elim* is rich in meaning, and primarily refers to something which envisions strength (e.g., ram, a stout tree), and which supports something else (like a pillar that supports a building).

The word *Elim* and the oasis by this name is rich in spiritual significance with its 70 palm trees and 12 wells of water. Seventy is the number of nations listed in Genesis chapter ten. How else was the number seventy significant in YHVH's order of things? (See Exod 1:5.) Seventy is also the number of the elders that Moses chose to help him lead Israel (Exod 24:1; Num 11:16), and which eventually became the Jewish Sanhedrin (a.k.a "the Great Assembly") that, under the Romans, ruled Israel in the time of Yeshua. How many disciples did Yeshua choose to evangelize Judea (see Luke 10:1,17), who later became the founders and leaders of the apostolic church or *kehillah*? It was these same evangelists along with the twelve disciples who Yeshua commissioned to go to the descendants of those patriarchs of the seventy nations listed in Genesis chapter ten (Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8).

What is significant about the number twelve in the Scriptures? (See Gen 35:22 and Luke 6:13.) What might these two groups of twelve prophetically symbolize with respect to the seventy nations? Did YHVH commission his people to take the water (and the light or truth) of his Torah-word to the nations? (See Deut 4:6; Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8.) Water is a biblical metaphor for Torah or the word of Elohim (Deut 32:2; Eph 5:26), and Isaiah likens the message of the gospel or salvation to water from a well (Isa 12:3).

Israel's arriving at Elim, therefore, could be viewed as a prophetic vision of their future YHVH-ordained spiritual destiny as the people through whom YHVH would bring the fresh water of his Torah-word (including the good news of the Messiah, who was the Living Torah-word of Elohim incarnate) to a world dying of thirst and starvation in the midsts of the bleak wilderness of life called human existence. As such, YHVH expected his people to stand firm like pillars or trees, and resolutely strong like a ram in the face of great adversity and resistance as they fulfilled their divine commission to evangelize the world. What is the reward YHVH has promised to those who fulfilled this mission, and how does this reward relate to the meaning of the word *elim*? (Read Rev 3:12.)

**17** 16:5, 14–36, What is the spiritual relationship between manna and the Sabbath (Heb. *Shabbat*)? Why is the Sabbath one of the first commands given to Israel in the wilderness? What is the significance of the sixth day as a day of preparation for Sabbath? What does *the Testimony of Yeshua* tell us about the importance of the preparation day in first-century Jewish life? (Read Mark 15:42.) What specific instruction did YHVH give to his people on how to prepare for the Sabbath, especially relating to food preparation? (Note verse 23.) Do you follow YHVH's loving instructions and prepare on the sixth day for your needs of the seventh day so that you can fully rest and be refreshed body, soul and spirit on the Sabbath? If not, why not? The instructions in YHVH's Word are clear on this subject. They are for our own physical and spiritual well-being, growth and development—that our spiritual relationship with him may be deepened. (For additional information on this subject, see my article entitled, "*The Sabbath, Spirit and Truth*" at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/shbt.pdf>.)

**18** 17:1–7, Psalms 81:7 says that YHVH proved the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah. This was one of the many tests they had to pass in their wilderness journey. What was YHVH trying to accomplish in the lives of these people. In James 1:2–4 we read,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into different temptations trials knowing that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfectly mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Who is the Rock from which living waters flow? (Again reference 1 Cor 10:4 and John 7:37.)

For many believers in Yeshua, there is confusion as to who it was in the Godhead that interacted with Israelites and others of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). Was it the Father or the Son? In the apostles' minds, there seemed to be no confusion about this. Yeshua, in his preincarnate state, was the one YHVH Elohim the Father used to interact with mankind. This truth is easily confirmed in several passages in the Testimony of Yeshua (New Testament).

Yeshua himself claims to be YHVH or the *I Am* in the burning bush. The Jews viewed his statement as

blasphemy, which is why they picked up stones to kill him (John 8:58 cp. Exod 3:14). Yeshua declared that no man has seen the face of Elohim, the Father (John 5:37). Yet in the Torah, we have several instances of men seeing YHVH (e.g., Gen 17:1; 18:1; 26:2; 48:3). If we are to take the Scripture record at face value, it was not the Father these individuals saw, but YHVH the Son who became Yeshua. Not only that, Yeshua even goes so far as to say that the Israelites of old not only didn't see the Father's face, but never at any time even saw his form nor heard his voice (John 5:37). Therefore, while on Mount Sinai, Moses didn't see the backside of the Father, but of Yeshua (Exod 33:18–23).

What's more, in John 14:15, Yeshua speaking to his disciples, declares, "If you love me, keep my commandments." When Yeshua says *commandments* here, we know from Luke 18:20 that he had the Torah in mind. In this statement, Yeshua is actually quoting himself when he made the same statement to the children of Israel while he was delivering to them the oracles or Torah of Elohim (Exod 20:6; Deut 11:1).

Stephen, in agreement with John, clearly demonstrates that Yeshua was the prophesied prophet like Moses to come, and who was the Angel, or more correctly, *Divine Messenger from Elohim*, who gave the Torah to the Israelites (Acts 7:37–38). Paul goes on to say in enigmatic terms that Yeshua was the spiritual rock from which the Israelites drank and which followed them (1 Cor 10:4). And finally, Paul equates Yeshua, the Word of Elohim made flesh and that dwelt among us, with the Written Torah which YHVH gave through Moses to the Israelites. This he does when he quotes Deuteronomy 30:11–14 and substitutes the word *Torah* for *Yeshua* (Rom 10:5–13). In Paul's mind, Yeshua was not only synonymous with the Torah, but he was very much present with the Israelites.

Yeshua is our Rock of Salvation (Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 2:22; Ps 95:1; Isa 32:5; Matt 7:25; 16:18; 21:24)

**19** In this Torah portion, Israel went from the highest highs to the lowest lows. From victory and praises on moment, to murmuring, defeatism and complaining against (and even falsely accusing) Moses and Elohim the next moment. How different are we from exhibiting these attitude swings in our daily walk when faced with similar trials?

Have we learned to be content and to trust and to praise YHVH in all circumstances? Here are some points to meditate on and pray about:

- Godliness with contentment is great gain ... fight the good fight and seek to be godly. (1 Tim 6:6–14)
- Seek you first the kingdom of Elohim and his righteousness and the rest of your problems of life will take care of itself. (Matt 6:32–33; Luke 12:31–32)
- Though troubled on every side and persecuted, keep your eyes on Yeshua who having gone before us leads the way. (2 Cor 4:8–18)
- Be consistent in your walk whether spiritually you're in a valley or on a mountaintop. (2 Cor 6:1–10)
- Whether abounding or being abased in the physical circumstances of life, Messiah is our strength and victory. (Phil 4:12–13)

## Hold on to Torah— It Will Guide and Protect You Through the Wilderness of Life

by Natan Lawrence

### Steps In a Believer's Walk

**I**n this study, we will examine the spiritual stages of growth and development that a believer goes through while crossing the wilderness of life en route to our spiritual promised land—the kingdom of Elohim. We will see how Torah (YHVH's instructions in righteousness) plays a pivotal role that keeps us on the straight and narrow path that will eventually bring us safely to our spiritual destination. In view will be the oft-quoted verse from Proverbs 29:18 which says, "Where there is no vision [literally, prophetic revelation], the people perish [or cast off restraint, become lawless, unloosened, and unbridled], but he that keeps [hedge about, guards, protects] the Torah, happy is he." Many are familiar with the first part of this verse, but not the second part, where we see that Torah plays a vital role in guiding us to our spiritual or prophetic and eternal destiny.

Not only do we see Elohim directing his people into the path of Torah righteousness, but he is continu-

ally exposing them to the greater message of the everlasting gospel message (Rev 14:6), which involves salvation through faith in the shed blood of Yeshua, the Lamb of Elohim at the cross. What's more, Yeshua, the Word of YHVH incarnate (in flesh form, John 1:1–4,14), the Living Torah, was the one who, as the arm of YHVH (Isa 53:1), delivered Israel from Egypt, and who, as the Angel (Messenger) of YHVH, led them in the pillar of fire, who spoke to them from Mount Sinai and gave them the Torah, who was the Rock that gave them water, and who was the bread of life to them. Yeshua himself and the apostolic writers make these connections between Yeshua and the deity-figure who was with the Israelites throughout their tenure in the wilderness (John 8:58 cp Exod 3:14; John 6:32–58; Acts 7:35–39; 1 Cor 10:4,9).

As you read this study, note how little-by-little, like a parent training his child, Elohim is training his people to walk in his Torah commandments, all the while revealing to them the truth of the redemptive work of Yeshua. Please note that obedience to the Torah and belief in Yeshua go hand-in-hand. The two are indivisible. One cannot believe in, love, and even know Yeshua without obeying his commands (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3–6). Belief in Yeshua and walking in the ways of Yeshua are two sides of the same coin.

Interestingly, this message of the gospel (walking in Torah, the Written Word of Elohim, and having faith in Yeshua, the Living Torah/Word of Elohim) has never changed, for the last book of the Bible still identifies the end-time saints of Elohim as keeping the commandments of Elohim and having the testimony or faith of Yeshua (Rev 12:17; 14:12).

Article continued at [http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/hold\\_torah.pdf](http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/hold_torah.pdf)

## HAFTORAH READING—JUDGES 4:4–5:31

### Deborah—A Fiery Woman of YHVH

The Torah and Haftorah portions for this week bear many similarities. In both pericopes, Israel was languishing under oppressive foreign powers, and in both YHVH sent them a savior to deliver them and through miracles and against overwhelming odds, Israel defeated its oppressors and the nation was brought to a new spiritual level. Prophets were instrumental in both cases, and women were used of YHVH in the deliverance of his people. And finally, both scenarios climax in the production of a psalm of praise to YHVH for his mighty hand in setting his people free.

**1** The story of Deborah often brings up the question concerning the role of women among YHVH's people. Proponents of women in leadership roles point to Deborah as a champion of their cause. Those who decry any sort of women leadership blush when the example of Deborah is brought up and are often quick to add that she was a one-time exception to the rule. What is the truth as presented by Scripture? Please note the role of women in Scripture by reviewing the following examples as Batya Wootten points out in her book, *Mama's Torah—the Role of Women*:

- Miriam was a prophetess and coworker with her brothers Moses and Aaron in leading Israel (Mic 6:4).
- YHVH used the daughters of Zelophehad to help instruct Moses, and on the basis of their wisdom, the Torah was amended (Num 27:1–11).
- Huldah was a prophetess and an advisor to King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:11–20).
- Queen Esther helped to write law (Est 9:29).
- Phoebe was a deacon/minister within the spiritual body of early Messianic believers (Rom 16:1–2).
- Junia along with Andronicus, her husband, are listed as apostles (Rom 16:7).
- Priscilla and Aquila were a husband and wife ministry team and pastored a congregation that met in their home. There are times when the Scripture even records Priscilla's name first. She was evidently a dynamic leader, along with her husband (Acts 18:2,18,26; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).
- The women in Corinth prayed and prophesied publicly (1 Cor 11:5–6).
- Philip had four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

- A nucleus of women developed a congregation at Phillipi (Acts 16:12–15,40).

Wootten then deduces from the biblical record that “believing communities should be aligned with Biblical patterns of the Scriptures. And while it clearly depicts a pattern of male leadership, it also clearly shows female participation” (p. 37).

In light of the example of Deborah, we must ask the question: will YHVH’s plans and purposes be put on hold or thwarted simply because there lacks a person of the male gender to fulfill those plans? Can he who used Balaam’s ass for his purposes, and who said that he could raise up rocks to declare his praises not use women as he so chooses when there lacks a man to do the job, or, at least, use women to assist men in doing theirs?

- 2 4:4, *The wife of Lapidoth* (KJV). The *ArtScroll Tanach* has translated this phrase as “a fiery woman” since the Hebrew word *lapid* means *torch*. This implies that Deborah was energetic and decisive. The Jewish sages teach that *Lapidoth* is but another name for *Barak* since both names connote flashes of lightning, and therefore are used interchangeably (*ArtScroll Rubin Edition Joshua/Judges Commentary*, p. 137). If the sages are correct, then Deborah was assisting her husband, Barak. He was the military leader of Israel, while she was the spiritual leader. Does this shake your paradigm about the role of women in biblical societies? Many times fiery women are labeled and branded as *persona non grata*. Is this a fair thing to do if they are women who walk in and uphold biblical standards of righteousness, and who honor and defer to male headship, if there is righteous male headship worthy of honor?
- 3 Often Barak is viewed as a reluctant, even cowardly military leader. Is this a fair assessment? Didn’t he display great faith when he heeded the Word of Elohim through Deborah, and furthermore abandoned the strategic high ground when attacking the enemy on the plain where the enemy’s chariots would be most advantageous? If Barak and Deborah were husband and wife, what does this story teach us about husbands and wives not only respecting, but heeding each other’s counsel, and then working together as a team? Who knows, YHVH may be using your wife or husband to speak to you right now!
- 4 5:1, *On that day*. Deborah composed her praise psalm on the very day of battle and victory. She did not delay to offer up a sacrifice of praise to the Elohim of Israel. “Given the fragile nature of joy so great that it bursts into a song, it must be expressed immediately, before the heightened perception begins to fade away, or is depleted by sin” (Ibid., p. 141). Is your relationship that vital with your Maker and your joy and gratitude that child-like, spontaneous and unquenchable that you do not delay to praise YHVH the moment a blessing comes your way?
- 5 5:7, *A mother in Israel*. Along your spiritual journey, have you ever encountered a “mother in Israel” who YHVH used to change the course of your life and shape your spiritual destiny through her wise counsel and guidance? Such a Deborah-like woman is loving, but she does not fail to scold or discipline her children when they need it. May YHVH raise up such righteous and discerning women in Israel in our day!
- 6 Let’s not forget the other woman in this passage: Jael. While one woman, Deborah, was a well-known public figure functioning as a prophetess, judge and military leader in Israel, another woman was tucked away in the wilderness, out of sight fulfilling her role as a housewife (or, in this case, tentwife). She, too, was a mother in Israel, who was quietly walking in righteousness in her own home, yet YHVH brought a ministry opportunity her way. Though the task she was asked to do was a grisly one, she did not shrink back when duty called to her. In so doing, she helped to save the nation of Israel at a very tenuous time in its existence, and her name is immortalized in Deborah’s psalm of praise. What is the lesson for us? Be faithful to do what YHVH has called you to do, no matter how insignificant and out of the limelight it may seem, and he will bring you greater opportunities and reward you with blessings unspeakable.