

## The Seventh Day of Pesach (Observed on Monday and Tuesday)

1) On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach, a week after leaving Egypt and heading to the desert, the Israelites stood facing the Red Sea with the Egyptians closing in from behind. The Torah stresses repeatedly in Shemot 14 'Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen' in some combination. Why do you think that the Torah does not simply call them 'the Egyptians'?

2) How would you have reacted in a dire situation of this nature? How do the Israelites react (Shemot 14:10-12)? If their reaction differs from what you would have done, to what do you attribute that?

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The weekly Haftarah Commentary  
By Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, Senior CY Faculty in Talmud and Midrash,  
may be found at: <http://www.uscj.org.il/learn/commentaries/>

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## TORAH SPARKS

### Pesach

### Shabbat Hol Hamo'ed

April 9-15, 2017 – 19 Nisan 5777

Annual (Exodus 33:12-34:26)

Maftir (Numbers 28:19-25)

Haftarah (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

## Ezekiel's Vision – Then and Now

**Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb**, CY Faculty and Coordinator, Torah Sparks

The Torah and Haftarah readings for Shabbat *Hol haMoed* Pesach and Sukkot are among the oldest we know. The Talmud (Megilla 31a) says that the Torah reading for both these Shabbats is the same, 'See, You say unto me' (from Ex 33, where the Festivals are mentioned), while the Haftarot are different – Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones for Pesach (Ch 37) and of the war of Gog and Magog (Ch 38) for Sukkot. Both these Haftarot foretell the end of days and future redemption.

The vision of the dry bones is very dramatic, but the reason for its selection for Shabbat *Hol haMoed* Pesach is unclear. The Talmud gives no explanation and nothing in the text itself (Ezek 37:1-14) suggests a connection.

Interestingly, there is a *minhag* (custom) among some to begin this Haftarah reading from Ezek 36:37-38, the two prior verses, which, unrelated to the vision of the dry bones, speak of the animals for the festival offerings in

Jerusalem. But for the majority who start right into Chapter 37 (including both Hertz and Etz Hayim), even this connection is lacking.

There is a fascinating discussion in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 92b) about Ezekiel's vision – was he describing something he actually saw or was it a vision, to be explained metaphorically? There are rabbis in the Talmud who support both positions. What is clear is that Ezekiel, who lived in Jerusalem *before* the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and was taken to Babylonia, was trying to give faith to the exiled community that just as God revived the dried bones here, so the Jewish people would be revived and returned to Jerusalem. If he is speaking metaphorically, predicting some future redemption for the Jewish people deep in distress, the relation to Pesach can be found in an old tradition – mentioned by Rav Hai Gaon and later the *Tur* - that *techiyat ha'metim*, the resurrection of the dead, will be on *Hol haMoed* Pesach.

But there are also those, like the leading 3<sup>rd</sup> century rabbi Rav, who held that Ezekiel was looking at real bones. Rav, and Rashi follows this line, says that these were the bones of the *Bnei Ephraim* who had miscalculated the date of the freedom from slavery and the Exodus from Egypt. They escaped from Egypt 30 years ahead of time and were killed shortly thereafter by the people of Gat. The Midrash says that their ill-conceived plan for freedom was at Pesach time.

And there is an intriguing modern interpretation, that Ezekiel was looking at the bones of the Jews who had died in the battle against the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar, which conquered Jerusalem in 586 BCE and destroyed Beit HaMikdash. The large number of skeletons he sees indicates that the Jews had put up a valiant and costly fight – “the valley was full of bones...and they were very dry (37:2).” Ezekiel is paying tribute to them, the first memorial ceremony for *chayalei tsaal*, the precursor of the IDF, 2600 years ago. Ezekiel is saluting them and prophesizes that they will come back to life and return hope to a people who had said, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost [*avda tikvateinu*] (37:11)." Ezekiel anticipated Naftali Hertz Imber and the Zionist Movement, and his prophecy is most appropriate for reading *Chol haMoed* Pesach in Israel, less than two weeks before Memorial Day for those who died in the defense of Israel, and *Yom Ha'Atzma'ut*, a day later.

### A Vort for Pesach Shabbat Hol Hamo'ed Rabbi Daniel Goldfarb, CY Faculty

We read *Shir HaShirim*, King Solomon's Song of Songs, on Shabbat *Hol haMoed* Pesach, but in many places it was the custom to read it in synagogue early Friday afternoon every week. As a youngster, Rabbi Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowicz (the *Tiferes Shlomo*, [*Hasidut Radomsk*], Poland, 19<sup>th</sup> C) was reading for his father when R' Yaakov Yitzchak Rabinowicz (*HaYehudi HaKadosh*, "The Holy Jew", another great Hasidic leader) visited Radomsk. The *Yehudi HaKadosh* was in awe; "This boy reads *Shir HaShirim* as if he were Shlomo HaMelech himself." He kissed the boy on the forehead. And the *Tiferes Shlomo* would later tell that he had the same sensation of the *Yehudi HaKadosh's* kiss on the forehead the first time he put on tefillin.

## Table Talk

*Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, CY Faculty*

*On Shabbat Chol Hamoed our reading takes us to Pesach as it will be observed for generations to come. But on the Seventh Day of Pesach we go back into the story of the Exodus that just took place and is threatening to come to a disastrous ending.*

### Chol Hamoed Pesach (Shemot 33:12-34:26)

- 1) The main connection to the chag and to Shabbat comes fairly late in the reading. Look at Shemot (Exodus) 34:18-20. What chag is described? What name does it go by? What is the reason given for celebrating this chag? Look at vv.19-20. Why was this Mitzvah placed here?
- 2) Now let us look back at the topic that preceded the Mitzvot of chagim (34:11-17). What is the Torah warning us about? Why do you think that the Mitzvot about the chagim (Pesach, Shavuot and Succoth) follow this topic? (Consider what observing holidays of any sort does for a person's identity.)
- 3) Shemot 34:23-24 points to a Mitzvah that is unique to Pesach, Shavuot and Succoth. What is the Mitzvah? V. 24 suggests a solution for a concern of people performing this Mitzvah. What was the concern?