

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: B'Shalach

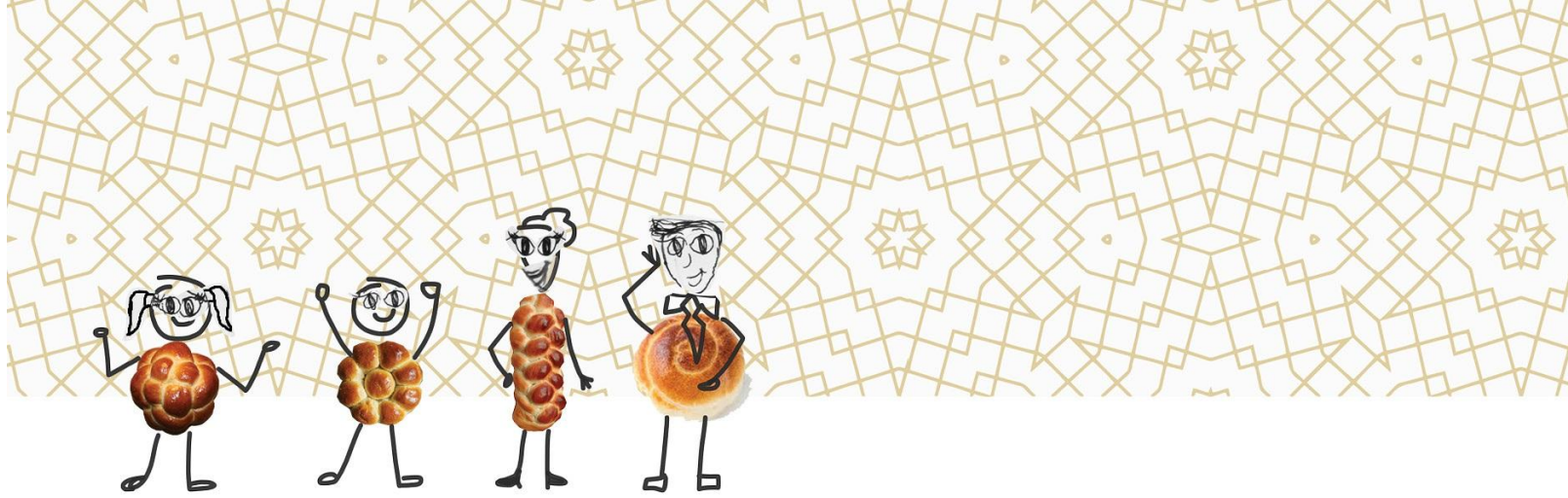
Title: Selective Memory

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The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

This week's *parsha* begins with *Bnei Yisrael* making a harrowing escape from Egypt only to find themselves trapped by a raging sea in front of them and an angry Egyptian army charging behind them. The people are understandably terrified and they turn to Moshe and exclaim, "What have you done to us, taking



us out of Egypt... it is better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness!” (Exodus 14:11-12).

Then a miracle happens! The sea splits, Bnei Yisrael cross on dry land, and the waters return just in time to crash down on the Egyptian enemy. Bnei Yisrael watch in safety on the seashore as their Egyptian oppressors drown in the sea. After experiencing this life-saving miracle, the people “had faith in God and in His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:30), and they burst into song and dance.

Zooming In:

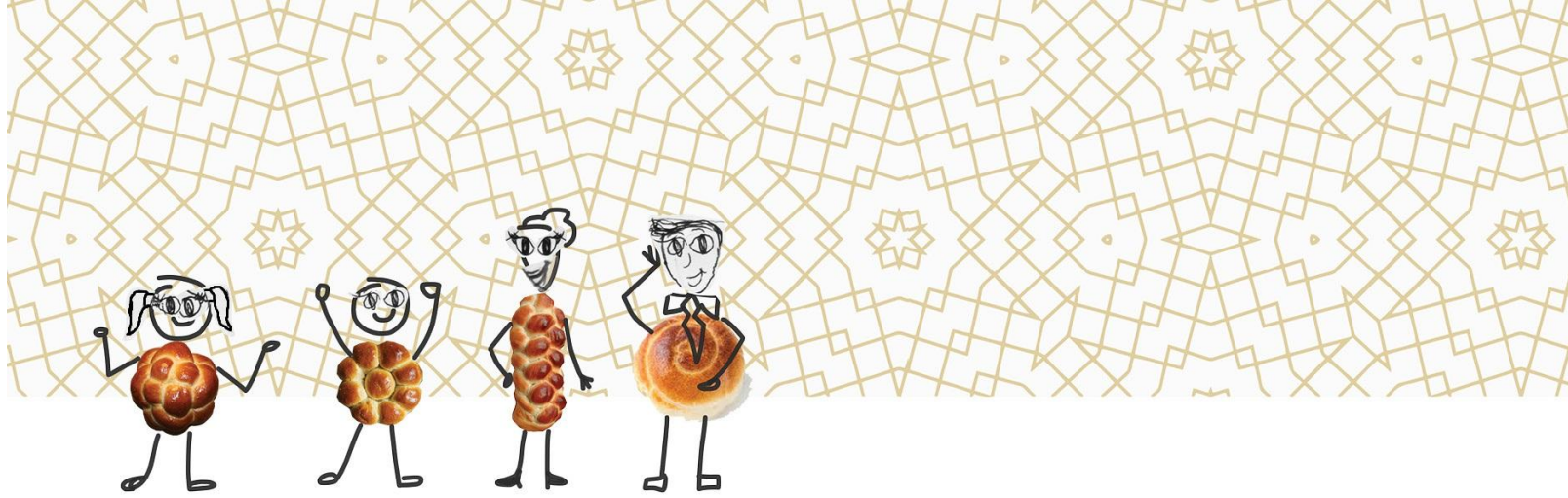
The strange part is that this massive miracle does not seem to have a lasting effect on Bnei Yisrael’s faith in God and Moshe. Following the miracle at the Red Sea, the people face a series of challenging situations in the wilderness. They typically respond by declaring how much better life was in Egypt than in their current situation. Here are two examples:

- A. The people are hungry -
“If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in Egypt when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we ate our fill of bread! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to starve.” (Exodus 16:3)

- B. The people are thirsty -
“Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock...?” (Exodus 17:3)

Questions for Consideration:

- Is it really true that life was so good in Egypt?!
- Is it possible that in just a few months, Bnei Yisrael have forgotten the back-breaking work quotas the Egyptians imposed on them or the decree that every Jewish baby boy was to be thrown into the river?!

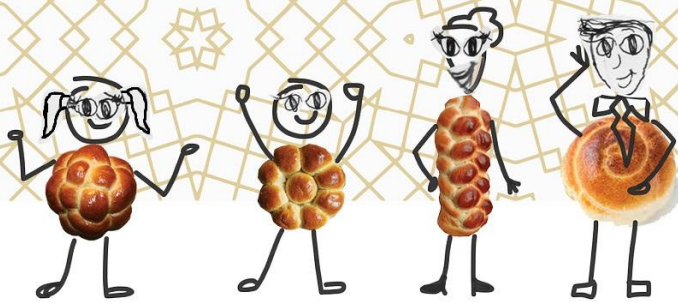


- Why are the people so quick to despair when the going gets tough?

Many commentators point out that although Bnei Yisrael are now free of oppressors, they still operate in a slave mentality. In other words, they still think like slaves and experience the world as slaves because they don't know how to live as free people.

A slave doesn't have any practice making his own decisions since his master makes all the decisions for him. For example, the master decides what a slave eats, when he drinks, and how he spends his time. A person experiencing freedom for the first time is likely to panic at the first sign of trouble, because he has never learned how to take care of himself.

Life in Egypt was not actually better for Bnei Yisrael. However, they fondly remember Egypt as the "good ol' days" each time they face frightening circumstances because they don't know how to handle the scary situation themselves. They become nostalgic for the time when their Egyptian masters took care of everything, but they forget that those same Egyptian masters worked them until the point of death and killed their baby boys. Through the challenges that Bnei Yisrael face in the wilderness, God will teach the people to shed their slave mentality and transform them from a nation of slaves into a free nation that bravely looks forward to their next stage of life in the land of Canaan.



The Parsha Through Another Lens

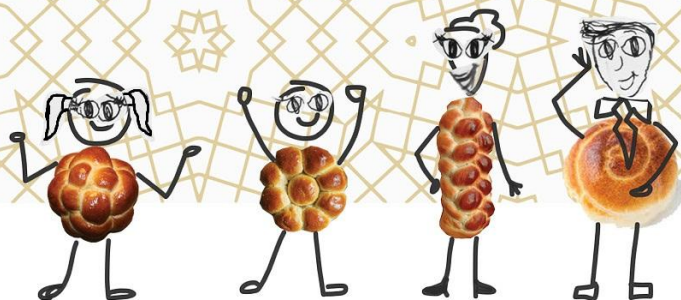
Would You Rather...?:

It's not always easy to make our own decisions in life, but the freedom to do so is a privilege. Let's embrace that privilege by playing the game "Would You Rather...?" :)

Each person around the table is asked one of the 16 "would you rather" questions listed below. For a slight variation of the game, try to make up a "would you rather" question yourself.

(Questions taken from [this](https://conversationstartersworld.com/would-you-rather-questions-for-kids/) website;
<https://conversationstartersworld.com/would-you-rather-questions-for-kids/>)

1. Would you rather be a detective or a pilot?
2. Would you rather live in a house shaped like a circle or a house shaped like a triangle?
3. Would you rather do school work as a group or by yourself?
4. Would you rather be the author of a popular book or a musician in a band who released a popular album?
5. Would you rather have a magic carpet that flies or a see-through submarine?
6. Would you rather everything in your house be one color or every single wall and door be a different color?
7. Would you rather see a firework display or a circus performance?
8. Would you rather start a colony on another planet or be the leader of a small country on Earth?
9. Would you rather be a wizard or a superhero?
10. Would you rather be able to see things that are very far away, like binoculars, or be able to see things very close up, like a microscope?



11. Would you rather be an incredibly fast swimmer or an incredibly fast runner?
12. Would you rather be able to jump as far as a kangaroo or hold your breath as long as a whale?
13. Would you rather be incredibly funny or incredibly smart?
14. Would you rather be able to type/text very fast or be able to read really quickly?
15. Would you rather have the chance to design a new toy or create a new TV show?
16. Would you rather become five years older or two years younger?

Shabbat Shalom!