

ONEG!

A collection of fascinating material on the weekly parsha!

RABBI ELCHANAN SHOFF

PARSHAS BESHALACH

...because it is close... (Ex. 13:17). The *Daas Zekanim* explains that instead of reading this passage to mean "because *it* is close" it should be read "because He is close," for God is close to the Jewish people, as it says (Tehillim 148:14) *livnei Yisrael am krovo*, "to the Jewish people, his close nation."

And the Children of Israel came up from Egypt armed (Ex. 13:18). Rashi explains that the word "armed" (חמושים, *chamushim*) should be understood as "one-fifth" because only one-fifth the entire Jewish population exited Egypt, the other 80% of Jews died during the Plague of Darkness. Elsewhere, Rashi (to Ezek. 20:8) writes that some say that it was one out fifty Jews who merited the Exodus, while other say that it was even one out of 500 Jews. These three opinions also appear in the *Mechillta* (here). Rabbi Shimon Schwab (*Maayan Beis HaShoeava*) contends that it cannot be that all of this should be taken literally, because if there were 600,000 adult male Jews who exited Egypt, then according to the third opinion, that would mean that they were 300,000,000 adult males Jews in Egypt, and much more Jews in total. Rabbi Schwab contends that the land of Egypt simply could not hold such an exaggerated number of people (remember, these are all just the Jewish inhabitants, not including the local Egyptians). Rather, Rabbi Schwab explains that in reality, **only a few wicked individual Jews** died during the Plague of Darkness, but it's result was as though a plethora of Jews died then, like the Mishna (cited in Rashi to Gen. 4:10) explains about the *passuk*, "The voice of your brother's *bloods* cries out to Me from the ground," and we learn that this word "bloods" means the blood of Hevel, and the blood of all of his potential descendants who died when he died in a sense since they would never be born. The Mishna explains from there that killing one person is in reality killing all of the people who would have come from that person for the rest of history. It is worth noting that Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz of Frankfurt (*Panim Yafos*, beginning of *Parshas Shemos*) addresses Rabbi Schwab's concern of the overpopulation in Egypt. He explains that although there were an exorbitant amount of Jews in Egypt during this time, they were miraculously able to settle the land and not crowd each other. He compares this to the Mishnah (*Avos* 5:5) which says that there was a miracle in the *Beis HaMikdash* that nobody every complained that there was not enough space for them. In Rabbi Horowitz's estimation, the same miracle happened in Egypt before the Exodus.

And the Children of Israel came up from Egypt armed (Ex. 13:18). As mentioned above, Rashi explains that only a small percentage of the total amount of the Jewish people actually exited Egypt, the rest of the Jews—who were branded wicked—died in the Plague of Darkness. Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (*Chochmas HaTorah*, *Parshas Bo* p. 568) explains that the Jews were supposed to be exiled to Egypt for 430 years, yet the Exodus happened after a mere 210 years. How does this work out? The Jews who merited to participate in the

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Exodus had accrued extra merits which is why Hashem took them out of Egypt earlier than expected. However, the wicked Jews did not accrue these merits, and should have been left as slaves in Egypt for another 220 years ($430 - 210 = 220$), until the duration of their exile would have run its course. On the other hand, it would be quite embarrassing for those wicked Jews to continue living in exile in Egypt, while a significant portion of the Jewish population had already been redeemed (and were in the Holy Land). Instead, Hashem had those wicked Jews killed during the Plague of Darkness with the plan of resurrecting them and bringing them to the Holy Land when their years of Egyptian Exile would expire.

And Moshe took Yosef's bones with him, for he [Yosef] made the Children of Israel swear saying, 'God will surely remember you, and [then] you will bring up my bones from this [land] with you' (Ex. 13:19). The words “with you” in this passage seem superfluous. Indeed, if one looks at the wording the Torah uses when describing the oath which Yosef imposed on his brothers, he does not say “with you” (see Gen. 50:25). Rabbi Chaim Vital (*Etz HaDaas Tov*, end of *Vayechi*) explains that indeed the Jews would end up taking the Bones of Yosef “with themselves” as their fate depended on bring with them the Yosef's bones. This is because the Gemara (*Sotah* 13b) expounds on the verse “The sea saw and ran away” to mean that the Red Sea saw Yosef's coffin, and ran away, i.e. split. This implies that if the Jews would not have taken Yosef's bones, then the sea would not have seen his coffin, and would not have split, and the Jews would not have survived their encounter with the Egyptian army at the Red sea.

And Moshe took Yosef's bones with him... (Ex. 13:19). The Talmud (*Sotah* 13a) says: Come and see how dear the *mitzvos* are to Moshe, for all other Jews were toiling in gathering the booty of Egypt, while Moshe was busy with the *mitzvah* [of bringing Yosef's bones], as it says, “[He who is of a] wise heart, takes *mitzvos*” (Ecc.). Rabbi Shmuel Borenstein (*Shem MiShmuel*, Bishalach Year 1916) asks that taking the Egyptian was also a *mitzvah*, as Hashem specifically commanded the Jews to ask of their Egyptian overlords golden and silver vessels? So why was Moshe's *mitzvah* considered more of *mitzvah* than everybody else's? Also when Hashem introduces the *mitzvah* of gathering the booty, He says to Moshe, “please speak...”, which is an expression of “request”, so we see that Hashem wanted them to go seek out the booty? To answer this, Rabbi Borenstein quotes his father, Rabbi Avraham Borenstein (author of *Annei Nezer*) who explained that the idea of taking the gold and silver from Egypt represented the fact that the Jews were expected to take all sparks of holiness from Egypt and empty the land of anything significant. Nonetheless, in practice, those golden and silver vessels also served another purpose, that is, the Jews who took them could use them for their own personal use. On the other hand, when taking Yosef's bones out of Egypt only served to rid Egypt of its last sparks of holiness, but offered no practical to use

to whoever did so. Accordingly, Moshe Rabbeinu's endeavor of fetching Yosef's bones is more of a pure *mitzvah* because it serves no other purpose than to fulfill Hashem's will of ridding Egypt of its sparks of holiness. On the other hand, what all the Jews did was considered less of a *mitzvah* because while it too would help achieve that objective, there was also an element of personal gain because the Jews could use the gold and silver for themselves.

And it was told to the King of Egypt that the nation ran away (Ex. 14:5). Rabbi Chaim Palagi (*Amudei Chaim, Amud Avodah* 19) writes that the word "that... ran away" (כי ברח = 240) equals Amalek (עמלק = 240) in *gematria*. This alludes to what the Targum (to Song of Songs 2:15) writes, that the Amalekites attacked the Jews after the Exodus because they claimed the firstborn right and the blessings which they felt that Yaakov unjustly took away from Esav. The Talmud (Kiddushin 29a) says that a father is obligated to ensure his son's circumcision and, if he is a firstborn, to redeem him. Accordingly, when Hashem took us out of Egypt, He was fulfilling this Halacha by redeeming us from our Egyptian bondage (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 17:1, *Midrash Tanchuma* 14, *Yalkut Shimoni* 745). However, the way that the Amalekites look at this, Hashem was not "redeeming" the Jewish people, because they were not His firstborn, because that right really belonged to Esav, not Yaakov. Instead, the Amalekites looked at the Exodus as the Jews simply "running away" from Egypt, defying God. Alternatively, the Amshinover Rebe (*Mashmia Shalom*, vol. 2 pg. 16) explains that Pharaoh was aware that the Jews were supposed to be slaves for 400 years, yet they left before their time was up—after only 210 years—so he considered them as simply "running away", and chased after them. The word "ran away" adds to 210 (ברח = 210) alludes to this connection. However, Pharaoh was unaware of the fact that "for Yaakov, Y-ah¹ has chosen for Himself, Israel, His treasure", the word "chosen" (בחר = 210) also equals 210, and alludes to the idea that because Hashem elected the Jewish People as His Nation, He gave them a reprieve of sorts and redeemed them early---after only 210 years instead of after 400 years.

Hashem will fight for you, and you will be quiet (Ex. 14:14). In the Book of Esther, Mordechai warns Esther, "If you will surely be quiet at this time, then successes and salvation for the Jews will come from another place". From the contrast between these two passages, we see that when fighting against the Egyptians, Hashem expected the Jewish

¹ This passage uses the two-letter name Y-ah for Hashem, instead of His usual four-letter name. Whenever His two-letter name is used instead of the full four-letter name, this is because of Amalek's efforts to stop the spread of Hashem's honor and glory in This World. As we mentioned above, word "that... ran away" (כי ברח = 240) equals the *gematria* of Amalek. Their efforts, however, are thwarted by the election of the Jewish People about whom it says, "for Yaakov, Y-ah has chosen for Himself, Israel, His treasure" (כי...בחר).

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people to be “quiet” and let Him take care of everything, however when fighting against the Amalekites, the Jewish people themselves were expected to take up arms and fight—they could not afford to “be quiet”. What is the difference between these two wars? The *Sefer HaPliyah* (cited by *Yalkut Reuveni*) explains that when fighting against the Egyptians, Hashem Himself “did battle” with the angelic representatives of the Egyptian nation in Heaven, so He took care of everything, and the Jewish people were quiet. However, when it comes to Amalek, there is no angelic representative of the nation, because Amalek does not really exist; Amalek really has no power, it is simply an illusion perpetuated by the Evil Inclination. In order to fight against them, the Jews themselves had to get involved and dispel themselves of the notion of Amalek’s existence, only then could they succeed. They could not simply rely on Hashem to do this for them.

And the Children of Israel walked on the dryland through the sea, and the water was for them a wall, on their right and on their left (Ex. 14:29). The *Be'er Mayim Chaim* explains that the minimum amount of people referred to by the expression “children of Israel” is two, because that is the lowest number that can still be considered plural. Accordingly, he explains that this verse alludes to the fact that the sea split for two people—Dasan and Aviram. Rabbi Nachum Lichtenstein (*Kovetz Tzefunos*, Tishrei 5750 p. 109) explains that *Beer Mayim Chaim* is referring to a passage in Targum Yerushalmi (to Num. 16:13) which says that after the sea split of the Jews and the Egyptian were drowned, the sea split again to allow Dasan and Aviram who were straggling behind to also cross the river and join their Jewish brethren. The Slonimer Rebbe, Beis Avraham (p. 166) writes that when the Jews were stuck between the sea and oncoming Egyptian army, Dasan and Aviram were from among the people who decided that it was worthwhile to turn back and return to Egypt. They did so and started going back to Egypt, but afterwards when they heard about the miracle at the sea and drowning of the Egyptians, they decided to rejoin the Jewish people, so they followed the Jews’ path into the sea, and Hashem miraculously split the sea again for them.

And the Children of Israel walked on the dry land through the sea, and the water was for them a wall, on their right and on their left (Ex. 14:29). *Daas Zekanim* explains that the word “wall” (חמה) is writing without the letter *vav*, as it said “anger” (חמה). This is because initially, the waters of the sea rose up upon the Jewish People in anger, until the archangel Gavriel came and made the waters into a wall to protect the Jewish people. He said to the waters on their right side, “Be careful of the Jewish People who are destined to receive the Torah which will be given with the Right Hand of Hashem” and he said to the waters on their left side, “Be careful of the Jewish People who are destined to put *tefillin* on their left [arm]”. From this source, it seems that the Jews had not yet began keeping the

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mitzvah of *tefillin*. However, *Otzar HaTefillos* (vol. 2, pg. 12) cites in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua Leiv Diskin, the Seraph of Brisk, that on the afternoon of the first Erev Pesach after the Jews already slaughtered their Paschal Sacrifices and still had some time until nightfall when they could eat the sacrifice, Moshe taught them the Parshah of *Kadesh Li Kol Bechor* and taught them about the commandment of *tefillin* and they immediately used the skin of the animals they slaughtered to write *tefillin* which they wore for the rest of that day. He finds support to this approach in the liturgical poem recited in the Hoshana services which refers to the Jews' "glory" (*yakar*) coming across the sea along with them; *tefillin*, is also called *yakar* (see *Megillah* 16b).

And they travelled three days in the desert and did not find water (Ex. 15:22). In the commentary of the *Rosh*, he cites the teaching of the talmud that "water" refers to Torah, and that because of this scriptural story, Ezra instituted that the Jewish community should not go three days without publicly reading the Torah. He therefore established public reading the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays. But why did Ezra institute reading the Torah on Shabbos afternoon, if they already read the Torah on Shabbos morning? The *Rosh* explains that he did this in order to alleviate jealousy between the Tribe of Levi, (the Kohanim and Leviim), and the rest of the Jews. If there was Torah reading on just Monday, Thursday, and Shabbos morning, then every week there would be six *aliyahs* given to Kohanim and Leviim (2 on Monday, 2 on Thursday, and 2 on Shabbos), but seven *aliyahs* given to regular Jews (1 on Monday, 1 on Thursday, and 5 on Shabbos). This would create animosity between the Kohanim/Leviim and the rest of the Jews, because the latter would get more *aliyahs* each week than the former. To fix this, Ezra instituted reading the Torah on Shabbos afternoons, so that every week there would be eight *aliyahs* given to Kohanim and Leviim (2 on Monday, 2 on Thursday, 2 on Shabbos morning, and 2 on Shabbos afternoon) and eight *aliyahs* given to regular Jews (1 on Monday, 1 on Thursday, 5 on Shabbos morning, and 1 on Shabbos afternoon).

All the maladies which I have put on Egypt, I will not put upon you— for I am Hashem your Healer (Ex. 15:26). This passage seemingly means that if Hashem would punish the Jewish people for whatever reasons He deems necessary, He would not punish them with the same maladies that He wrought upon the Egyptians. Based on this, *Yalkut HaGershuni* writes that the Rabbis in the *Haggadah* sought to explain that each of the Ten Plagues in Egypt was comprised of multiple plagues itself. By doing so, they lessened the amount of possible maladies that He could bring on the Jewish people, because the more plagues the Egyptians had, the less plagues Hashem would possibly bring against the Jews. If each of the Ten Plagues was comprised of ten different types of plagues, then ultimately that amounts to 100 maladies that Hashem promised to bring upon us. Nonetheless, *Imrei Shefer*

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explains that this passage does not mean to say that if Hashem would afflict the Jews He would not put upon them same the plagues He brought upon the Egyptians, but would rather put upon them *other* maladies. Rather, he explains that this passage means that He will not bring maladies upon the Jewish people in the same way that He brought them upon the Egyptians. For the Egyptians, He brought maladies and plagues as a means of punishing them in retribution for their sins. However, for the Jewish People, He does not bring maladies as “revenge” in order to punish them, but brings maladies upon the Jewish People as a means of doing well to them. These maladies and other sorts of punishments serve to help heal the Jewish People and keep them on the right track, in the same way that a doctor might prescribe a bitter-tasting medicine to help heal his patient. The doctor does not do this to spite his patient, rather he does it out of the recognition that sometimes the bitter-tasting medicine is the best way to treat the person. So too, Hashem is our Healer in that He sometimes must use bitter maladies to heal us of our own imperfections.

...it is manna, because they did not know what it is... (Ex. 16:15). Rashi explains that the word “manna” (מַן) denotes preparing sustenance, as when mentioning the children who ate at the king’s table (Daniel ch. 1), it says וַיִּמְנֵן meaning the king’s court prepare for them sustenance. With this in mind, Rabbi Eliyahu Dovid Rabinowitz-Teomim, the father-in-law of Rav Kook, writes (*Seder Parshiyos to Parshas Vayera* pg. 141), that when Avraham greeted the three angels at his tent, he said that he would bring them bread, but when recording what actually happened the Torah does not say that Avraham *brought* them bread. Yet, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 48:10) says that in the merit of saying that he will bring them bread, Avraham’s descendants received the manna. How can they get manna in the merit of something that never actually happened? He explains that the word “manna” does not imply *providing* sustenance, it merely implies *preparing* sustenance, as Rashi noted above. Accordingly, even though Avraham did not actually provide the angels with bread, he simply has the bread *prepared*, but did not serve it, his descendants still merited to received manna which also denotes the *preparation* of sustenance (regardless of whether it is actually provided).

And you staff that you hit the river with, take in your hand and go... (Ex. 17:5). The word “that” (אשר = 501) in *gematria* equals exactly the acronym of the Ten Plagues (דצ"ך = 501). Our sages tell us that etched upon the staff of Moshe was the acronym דצ"ך עדיש באחי"ב. Rabbi Avraham Palagi (*Avraham Anochi*, vol. 2 on the *Haggadah Shel Pesach* 32) points to his father’s comment in *Chaim le-Rosh* (page 22a) who wrote something else about the word “that”. The first of the Ten Commandants reads, “I am Hashem your God that took you out of the Land of Egypt...” (Ex. 20:2). In that context, Rabbi Chaim Palagi writes that the *gematria* of the word “that” (אשר = 501 + 1) equals the lifespans of all three

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forefathers— Avraham (175), Yitzchok (180), and Yaakov (147)—added together (175 + 180 + 147 = 502). With this in mind, Rabbi Avraham Palagi notes that the appearance of the word “that” in the context of Moshe’s staff serves to bolster the Chida’s claim (in *Simchas HaRegel*) that the names of the three patriarchs were also etched on Moshe’s staff. Rabbi Chaim Palagi finds another hint to this idea in another passage when Hashem mentioned Moshe’s staff and said, “the stick that you did the signs with” (תעשה בו את האותות = 408). The first letter of the words in that phrase equals the *gematria* of the word “forefathers” (אבות = 408).

And Moshe said to Yehoshua: ‘Chose for us men, and go out and fight against Amalek (Ex. 17:9). The *Ksav Sofer* explains that Moshe himself did not lead the fight against Amalek because Moshe grew up in the house of Pharaoh, and, as a member of the royal household, he had studied tactical strategies and war theory. If Moshe would have lead the Jews in battle and claimed victory, then people would have said that the victory came about through Moshe’s great wisdom and command of battle strategy. However, once Moshe appointed Yehoshua—who did not previously study these subjects—to lead the battle, the Jewish victory would clearly be something Divine and could not be ascribed to any particular body of knowledge.

...write this as a memory in a book, and put it in the ears of Yehoshua, for I shall surely wipe out the memory of Amalek from underneath the Heavens (Ex. 17:14). Rabbi Yaakov Baal HaTurim writes that first letters of the words in the phrase “as a memory in a book, and put it in the ears” (זכרון בספר ושים באזני) spell out the word “fly” (זבוב). The Evil Inclination is called a “fly” because one of the approaches of the Evil Inclination in convincing man to sin is by arousing his desires (as opposed to the concept of “hair” which represents the Evil Inclination convincing somebody to sin through anger). With this in mind, Rabbi Chaim Palagi (*Yisamach Chaim, Maareches Zayin* 3) writes that we can now better understand an otherwise cryptic passage in the Chida (*Chomas Anach* to Gen. 24:1). The Torah says about Avraham, “And Abraham became old, advanced in days and Hashem blessed Avraham with everything”, which the Chida points that the first letters of the words in the beginning of that passage (ואברהם זקן בא בימים) spell out the word “fly”. What is the connection between Avraham becoming old and “flies”? The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 59:8) explains that when it says “Hashem blessed Avraham with *everything*” this means that Avraham was able to wholly control his Evil Inclination. Accordingly, explains Rabbi Palagi, the Chida found an allusion to a “fly” in this passage because a “fly” alludes to one of the tricks of the Evil Inclination in enticing man to sin. See also *Midbar Kedemos (Maareches Peb* 8). Rabbi Aharon of Candia, an early Kabbalist, writes in *Sefer Karnayim (Maamar* 13) that the evil force of the “fly” serves to punish those who sin by defiling their circumcision (i.e. using

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their reproductive system for something other than reproduction), and that this force can be overpowered through Torah Study. Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropolia in his commentary *Dan Yadin* (21–22) to *Sefer Karnayim* explains that this very much has to do with the battle against Amalek. The Torah writes that when the Jews reached Refidim, then the Amalekites attacked. What is the significance of the Jews reaching this place Refidim? The Midrash explains that the word Refidim is related to “weakness” (*rifyon*, רפיון), in allusion to the idea that when there is a weakening in Torah study, then the Amalekites will attack. When the Jews reached Refidim, they had slightly weakened their devotion to Torah Study, thus giving room for the Amalekites to attack. The main thrust of Amalek’s opposition to the Jewish People was that they opposed the Jewish concept of procreation. This is why they took the foreskins of the Jews who were circumcised in the desert and threw them up in the air to mock the Jews’ commandment. This is also why, when beheading the Amalekite king Agag, Samuel said: “Just as your sword made women childless, so shall your mother become childless from amongst the women”. Amalek’s fight against the Jewish people was to stop their idea of a holy concept of procreation. Accordingly, the Amalekites are associated with the evil force of the “fly”, which as we mentioned above, is connected with man’s desire to sin and to the misuse of the reproductive organs. When Torah study is weakened, those forces reign free.

And he said, ‘for there is a hand on the throne of Y-ah, a battle for Hashem against Amalek, for generation [to] generation (Ex. 17:16). Rashi explains that the Hand of Hashem is “lifted” as if to swear on His throne that He will always have a war and animosity against Amalek. Why does it say “throne” (כס) instead of the usual word “throne” (כסא)? And why is His name cut in half such that it says Y-ah (י-ה), instead of (י-ה-ו-ה)? This teaches us that neither His name nor His glorious throne are complete as long as the name of Amalek has not yet been obliterated. This implies that when Amalek will be finally wiped out, then His name and His chair will be restored to their ideal state. *Peirush HaRokeach* (Beshalach, p. 94), *Siddur haRokeach* (vol. 1, p. 134), *Tsafos HaShaleim* (here), and *Sefer HaPliyah* all find an allusion to this in another verse. Out of the word throne, the letter א is missing, while out Hashem’s name, the letters ו and ה are missing, such that all together the three missing letters are ה,ו,א, which spells out the word “he desires” (ארה). This is alluded to in the verse that expresses Hashem’s yearning for a final resting place, “For Hashem has chosen Zion, He desires (ארה) a place for resting for Himself” (Ps. 132:13). The Maharsha (*Menachos* 87a) writes that in This World, Hashem has chosen Zion to be His permanent place of resting, and the word “he desires” (ארה) alludes to the letters missing in order to make His throne and His name complete. *Tsafos HaShalem* (to Lam. 1:6 §5) finds another allusion to this in the passage which laments the Jewish exile, “And they did not find

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pasture” (לא מצאו מרעה). The last letters of those three words spell out “he desires” (ארה) and again allude to the incompleteness of His throne and His name.

...for there is a hand on the throne of Y-ah... (Ex. 17:16). The word “hand” (יד = 14) and the word “Y-ah” (יה = 15) equal fourteen and fifteen respectively. Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano (*Maamar Maayan Ganim*, 1:213) explains that this serves as a Biblical allusion to the two days of Purim in the month of Adar, which is the 14th and the 15th of the month.

... a battle for Hashem against Amalek, for generation [to] generation (Ex. 17:16). Maimonides’ opinion in Laws of Kings ch. 10 is that if a member of one of the seven Canaanite nations or Amalek wants to make peace and accepts upon themselves the Seven Noahide Commandments and Jewish right of sovereignty, then we must treat them nicely, and they may not be killed. Rabbi Avraham Borenstein in *Annei Nezer* (*Orach Chaim* 508) questions Maimonides’ position by asking that there is no source to say that an Amalekite who accepts upon himself the Seven Noahide Commandments is no longer supposed to be killed. He explains: the Talmud (*Sotah* 45b) derives from the verse “So that you shall not learn to do like their abominations” that the obligation to kill Canaanites only applies as long as those Canaanite practice abominable things and could serve as a bad example for the Jews to learn from. However, if a Canaanite ceased to practice abominable things (i.e., he accepts upon himself the Seven Noahide Commandments), then there is no obligation to kill him. Rashi understands that this only applies to Canaanites living outside of the Holy Land, *Tosafos* understands that it applies even to Canaanite living in the Holy Land as long as they accepted the Noahide Laws before the war against them broke out, and Maimonides evidently understood that this even applies to Canaanite living inside the Holy Land and even after a war against already began. From this, Rabbi Borenstein says that we have a source for Maimonides’ ruling that if a Canaanite accepted the Noahide Laws, he is no longer supposed to be killed. But from where did Maimonides see here that if an *Amalekite* accepted those laws he too is no longer to be killed? R. Borenstein then notes that the law concerning Amalekites cannot be derived from that of the Canaanites, because the reason for the commandment to kill the Amalekites differs fundamentally from the reasoning behind the commandment to kill the Canaanites: the Canaanites are supposed to be killed so that they do not set a bad example for Jews to learn from their abominable ways, but Amalekites are supposed to be killed as retribution for the historical Amalekites attacking the Jewish People after the Exodus. If the reason behind the two commandments are so different, then their details cannot be derived from one another. So, again, what is Maimonides’ source that if an Amalekite accepts the Noahide Commandments, then he’s off the hook? Rabbi Borenstein explains that truth be told, it’s obvious that if an Amalekite accepts the Noahide Commandments, then he’s off the hook, the Talmudic passage above

only have to teach that the same is true regarding Canaanites for a different reason. As we mentioned above, the Canaanites are supposed to be killed because they practice abominable acts. This means that the Canaanites themselves are liable for capital punishment on account of those abominable acts (bear in mind that we're talking about such aberrations as incest and idolatry). The Halacha is that if somebody is liable for capital punishment—i.e. he violated a severe prohibition that carries the death penalty in the presence of two *kosher* witnesses who warned him beforehand—then even if he does *teshuvah* afterwards, he cannot escape the capital punishment that is imposed upon him. Therefore, when the Torah said that the Canaanites should be killed **because of their abominable actions**, one might have thought that their punishment resembles that of anybody that *beis din* puts to death in that even he would do *teshuvah* afterwards, the death penalty is not lifted. In order to counter this impression, the Talmud derived from Scriptural sources that if a Canaanite does *teshuvah* and accepted upon himself the Noahide Laws, then he is no longer liable for the death penalty. This is because the Canaanites' death penalty differs from the regular death penalty. The regular death penalty serves to punish evil-doers, but the Canaanites' death penalty serves to eliminate a bad example for the Jewish people. If that bad example is eliminated without having to kill the Canaanite who did the abominable deeds (i.e. in a case where said Canaanite does *teshuvah*), then he is off the hook. On the other hand, when it comes to the Amalekites, it is so obvious that if they do *teshuvah* that they are off the hook that the Talmud did not even need to derive this fact from any outside sources. The commandment to kill the Amalekites has nothing to do with any offense that the Amalekites committed at the time that the Jews entered the Holy Land. Rather, the commandment to kill the Amalekites is because of a historical injustice that the Amalekites perpetuated when their ancestors attacked the Jews exiting Egypt. The fact that the Torah commands us to kill the Amalekites generations later seems to be a violation of the Torah's principle, "Fathers shall not die on account of their children, and children shall not die on account of their fathers", so how can the Torah command us to kill the Amalekites for a sin committed generations earlier by their ancestors? Rabbi Borenstein explains that Hashem knows that Amalek's hatred of the Jewish people is so deep-rooted that one can expect that all descendants of the original Amalekites are equally as bad as their evil forefathers and continue in their fathers' path. The Talmud says that if a son follows in the sinful path of his father, then he may be punished for his father's sins. Accordingly, in general there is a commandment to kill Amalekites because they are assumed to be followers of the evil tradition of the original Amalekites who attacked the Jews. However, **if an Amalekite accepts upon himself the Noahide Laws, then he has shown that he is not a spiritual heir to his forefathers' evil tradition, but has chosen a better, more positive path. There is no justification for killing such an Amalekite, because the entire commandment of killing Amalekites does not apply to this person.**

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RABBI ELCHANAN SHOFF

PARSHAS BESHALACH

Accordingly, Maimonides ruled that even if an Amalekite accepted upon himself the Seven Noahide Commandments, he is not supposed to be killed.