

# א ב י ס כ ל ת ו ר א !

January 30, 2026

THE PARSHA NEWSLETTER  
OF MAIMONIDES SCHOOL

י"ב שבט תשפ"ו · בשלח

## Why Did Hashem Send פרעה After the Jews?

By Sheva Burstein '27

In this week's פרשה בשלח, פרעה leaves Egypt. At first, they are sent out by the Egyptians, and the Jews head toward the desert. However, Hashem tells פרעה he will harden פרעה's heart, and send him and his army after the Jews again. Hashem says, "אֶת־לֵב־פַּרְעֹה, וְרִדְף אַחֲרֵיהֶם" "I will harden פרעה heart, and he will chase after them." (שמות יד:ד) After the Jews leave Egypt, פרעה's heart is hardened, and he and his army chase after the Jews, intending to capture or kill them. Despite this, because of Hashem's miracle, בני ישראל are able to pass through. As פרעה and the Egyptians enter the sea to pursue בני ישראל, the sea closes over פרעה and the Egyptians, who consequently drown. פרעה is unable to harm the Jews because of Hashem's miracle, but this raises a question: If Hashem knew that He was going to rescue the Jews from their pursuers, why did He harden פרעה's heart and make him chase בני ישראל?

One answer to this question is given by the רמב"ם, who says that Hashem wanted to perform miracles for בני ישראל, in order to show them his power. פרעה was still frightened of בני ישראל after מכת בכורות, so he would not be inclined to chase after the Jews on his own accord; he would have chosen to just let them go. Therefore, Hashem hardened פרעה's heart so that he would take his army and chase them. The רמב"ם's explanation is based off the following פסוק: "וְאֶנִּי הִנְנִי: פִּסּוֹק

מִחֶזֶק אֶת־לֵב מִצְרַיִם וַיָּבֹאוּ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וְאֶפְבְּדָה בַּפֶּרַעַה וּבְכָל־חֵילוֹ "בְּרָכְבוֹ וּבְפָרָשָׁיו" "And I am hardening Egypt's heart, and they will go after them, and I will be honored through Pharaoh and his soldiers, chariots, and horses" (שמות יד:ד). From this we see that the reason Hashem hardened Egypt's heart is so that He will be honored through the miracles that He will do.

The מלבי"ם gives another answer to this question. The מלבי"ם says that by hardening פרעה's heart, Hashem makes פרעה the tool through which Hashem's glory can be seen. The destruction of פרעה and his large army is heard throughout the lands, and this causes פרעה, פירסום הנס, the publicizing of the miracles that Hashem performs for בני ישראל. He would not have been able to publicize His miracles without using פרעה, so it had to be this way that Hashem got פרעה to free the Jews and then go after them again.

Finally, the שמו"ת יד:ד on טור הארוך says that פרעה had become humiliated and embarrassed by all of the plagues, and unless Hashem gave some self-confidence back to him, פרעה would not dare to pursue בני ישראל. After all, he had just chased them out of מצרים and asked them for Hashem's blessing for himself. Without G-d, even if פרעה should have reached the conclusion that בני ישראל had escaped, he would not have the audacity to chase after them.

A lesson we can learn from this is that everything Hashem does is for a reason. Sometimes one may think that Hashem is doing something that one does not think one deserves. However, from this פרשה we

can learn that although we may view the things that Hashem does for us as unfair in the moment, they are truly the best thing He could have done for us. Here, Hashem freed the Jews and then immediately sent פרעה after them. Even though the Jews may have seen this as cruel, it was all so the world could see how great Hashem is. Hardening פרעה's heart was a crucial part of Hashem's master plan, so that His Ultimate Power would be publicized and recognized by the Jews, and all the nations of the world.

## Being Thankful Before There is Anything to be Thankful For

By Anna Szalat '28

One of the most powerful moments in פרשת בשלח is the song sung after בני ישראל crosses the ים סוף, otherwise known as אַז יִשִּׁיר. The men are led by משה in song, but immediately afterward, the תורה highlights a second, equally significant response: וַתִּקַּח מִרְיָם הַנִּבִּיאָה אָחוֹת אֶהֱרֹן אֶת־הַתֵּף בְּיָדָהּ וַתִּצְאֵן "Then מרים the prophetess, sister of אהרן, took the tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing" (שמות ט"ז: כ'). The commentators ask a question: how did the women have musical instruments with them in the desert? בני ישראל had left מצרים in such a hurry there was barely time to prepare food, let alone pack instruments?!

רש"י, quoting the מדרש, explains that the righteous women of that generation possessed extraordinary trust. They were so certain that Hashem would

perform miracles for them that they prepared in advance. They brought tambourines because they knew there would come a moment when they would need them - to sing, to dance, and to praise Hashem. This detail reveals a profound idea about faith. Faith is not only believing after salvation occurs. True faith is the courage to trust Hashem before the miracle, while the future is still unclear. The women did not wait to see the sea split before preparing their song.

This also explains why מרים is called a נביאה, a prophetess. Her leadership was not only expressed through words, but through vision. She helped the women see beyond slavery, fear, and uncertainty. When redemption finally came, they were spiritually ready to respond - not just with gratitude, but with joy.

The תורה emphasizes that the women followed מרים together, dancing as a group. This teaches us that faith is often strengthened through community. One person's confidence in Hashem can inspire many others to rise, celebrate, and believe.

מרים's tambourine teaches a timeless lesson. In moments of uncertainty, we are challenged to decide what kind of faith we will have. Will we wait passively for clarity, or will we live with trust so strong that we are already preparing our song? פרשת בשלח reminds us that redemption is not only about being saved - it is about recognizing Hashem's presence and responding with joy. Like מרים and the women, may we strive to live with a faith that dances, a faith that prepares, and hearts that are always ready to sing.

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### A BISL TORAH

is published weekly  
at Maimonides School,  
Brookline, Massachusetts



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