

א שטיקל תורה

פָוּ פְרָשָׁת דָעַר וּוְאַךְ

FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION

January 31, 2026



“Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality”

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

ברוך אתה ייִהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אָשֶׁר קָדַשְׁנוּ בְמִצּוֹתָיו, וְצַדְקָנוּ לְעַסּוֹק בְדִבְרֵי תּוֹרָה :

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: b'Shallach

Consists of: Exodus 13:17-17:16

Sequence—

in annual Torah cycle: 16th of 54

in Exodus: 4th of 11



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Exodus 13:17-22

Context: Exodus, second of the Five Books of the Torah, is an account of how God liberated the Israelites from Egypt and entered into a Covenant with us at Mount Sinai, and a record of the legislations we undertook for the conduct of the society we were to establish in the Promised Land.

Content: The Israelites from all over Goshen, summarily released from servitude, depart the Nile delta and converge on a temporary tent-city before undertaking their roundabout journey through the Wilderness to the Promised Land.

13:17a] - Now when Pharaoh let the people go, God not guide them on the road to the land of the Philistines, **although it was nearer**;

וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פָרָעָה אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא
נָחַם אֱלֹהִים ذֶרֶךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי
קָרוֹב הַוָּא

כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים פָוּ יְנַחֵם הָעָם
בְּרַאֲתֶם מִלְחָמָה וְשַׁבּוּ מִצְרִים
וַיִּשְׁבַּט אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָעָם ذֶרֶךְ
הַמִּדְבָּר יָם סִוְּף

וְחַמְשִׁים עַלְוָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם וַיִּקְחֵח מִשְׁהָ אֶת עַצְמֹות
יְוָסֵף עָמֹו כִּי הַשְׁבַּע הַשְׁבִּיעַ אֶת בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאָמֹר פָּקֵד יְפָקֵד אֱלֹהִים
אֶתְכֶם וְהַעֲלִיתֶם אֶת עַצְמֹתִי מִזָּה
אַפְּכֶם

- more over

13:17b] - for God reasoned: “Lest the people have a change of heart, when they see war, and return to Egypt.” [13:18a] - **So God led the people round about**, on the wilderness road to the Border Sea.

13:18b] - Now the Israelites went up armed out of the land of Egypt. [13:19] - And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph (who had exacted an oath from the children of Israel, saying: “God will assuredly take account of you, and at that time carry up my bones from here with you.”

13:20] - They set out from Sukkot, and encamped at Eitam, at the edge of the wilderness.

13:21] - The Eternal One went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to guide them along the way—and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, that they might travel day and night; [13:22] - nor did the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, ever depart from before the people.

וַיָּסֹעַ מִסְכָּת וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּאַתֶּם בְּקַצָּה
הַמִּדְבָּר

וַיְהִי הַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵיכֶם יוֹמָם בַּעֲמֹד
עַנְּנוּ לִנְחֹתֶם מִדָּרְךָ וְלִילָּה בַּעֲמֹד
אֲשֶׁר לְהַאֲיר לְךָם לַלְכָת יוֹמָם
וְלִילָּה לֹא יִמְיִשׁ עַמּוֹד הָעֵנָן יוֹמָם
וְעַמּוֹד הָאֲשֶׁר לִילָּה לִפְנֵי הָעֵם



לֹא נָחַם אֱלֹהִים ذָרָךְ אֶרְץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים

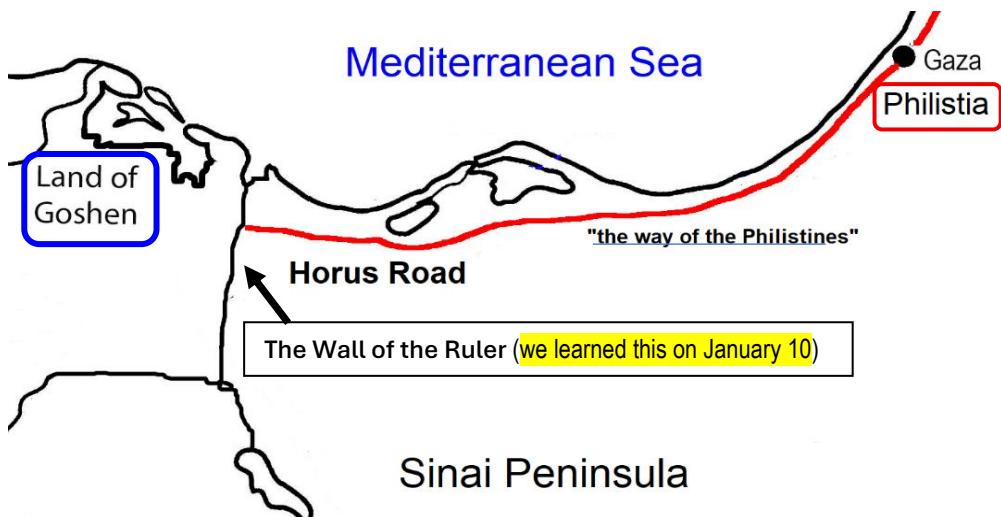
13:1 - God did not guide them on the road to the land of the Philistines,

בַּי קָרוּב הוּא

although it was nearer—

פֶּן יִנְחַם הָעָם בְּרִאַתְּמָה מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבּוּ מִצְרִים

lest the people have a change of heart, when they see war,
and return to Egypt.



- continued

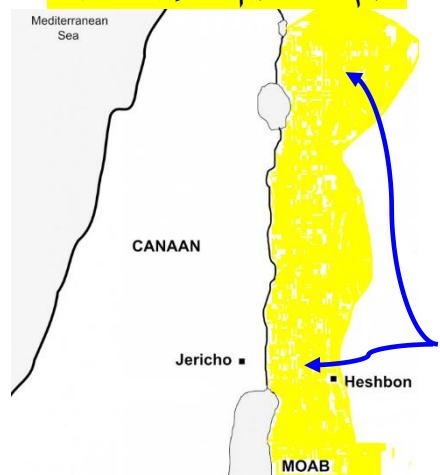
לא נחם אלהים דרך ארץ פלשתים אשר הוא קרוב וטוב לנוחותם בדרך ההוא כי אמר אלהים פן ינחם העם בראותם מלחמה ושבו מצירימה

A) RaMBaN (Bonastruc da Porta, 1194-1270) - God was not willing to guide them on the road to the land of the Philistines—which would have been **the most direct route**, as well as the easiest to travel—**because** God reasoned that **once the people experienced warfare they would relent** and return to Egypt.

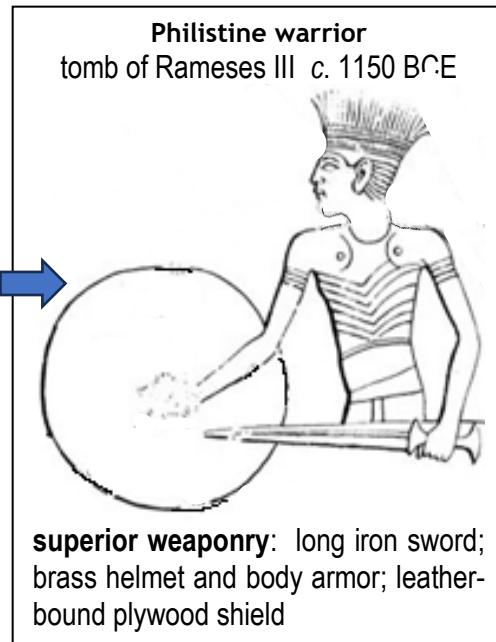
וטעם המלחמה שיהיה להם לעبور דרך ארץ פלשתים ופלשתים לא יתנום לעبور בשלום וישבו למצרים

The reason for that warfare, is that they would have to cross Philistine territory—and since the Philistines would certainly not allow them to pass without a challenge, they would then return to Egypt.

אבל בדרך המדבר לא יראו מלחמה עד היוטם בארץ סיכון וועג מלכי



האמור כי שהיא נתונה להם ורוחקים הם ממצרים בעת ההיא



But by taking the round-about desert route, they would not encounter any armed challenge [for another forty years,] until they were in their own land—in **the territory of the Amorite [colonist-kings] Sichon and 'Og, which was being given to them...** and by that time they would be a long way from Egypt.

ובבורה כי הם לא יעברו עלייהם והוא שבא מארצו ונלחם בהם לשנאותו אותם

And as for the battle with 'Amaleiq at R'fidim [shortly after arriving in the southern Sinai, as described in this week's portion in Exodus 17], there would have been no need to go back [to Egypt] on their account. For [the Israelites] had not encroached upon ['Amaleiq]; rather, [the 'Amalequites] **came forth from their land to attack us out of their malice towards us.**

ואם יתנו ראש לשוב למצרים לא יועיל כי ילחם בהם בדרך ו גם רוחקים היו ממצרים בדרך העקום אשר הילכו בה ולא ידעו דרך אחרת

Neither would it have availed [the Israelites] to turn tail and flee back to Egypt, since ['Amaleiq] would simply have harried their rear on the way—and, besides, on account of the circuitous route they had followed, **they were already very far from Egypt, and they knew no other way to go.**

כי קרוב הוא - ונוח לשוב באותו הדרכם למצרים

B) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 1040-1105) - “**Although** it was nearer” – so that it would have been easy enough for them to have gone back to Egypt by that same route.”

ימדרש אגדה יש הרבה

And [there is plentiful aggadic *midrash* [on this verse].

conjunction כִּי	“even though...” “when it happens that...” “should it happen that...” “that...” “for...” “because...”	adjective קָרוּב	“close[er/est]” “nearby” “near[er/est]” “adjacent” “kin relation” “soon”
-------------------------	--	-------------------------	---

כִּי קָרוּב הָוּא - שָׁהַם קָרוּבֵין שֶׁל הַקָּבָ"ה

C) Midrash Tanchuma, B'shallach 10 - “**Because** He is **close**” – signifies that [the Israelites are] **kin to The Holy And Blessed One**.

שְׁנָאָמָר וַיַּרְא קָרְנוּ לְעַמּוֹ לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עִם קָרוּבוֹ

Even as it is said in Scripture: “May he exalt the triumph of His People— the Israelites, the People who are His Own **close kin**!” [Psalm 148:14].

כִּי קָרוּב הָוּא - פִּירּוֹש קָרוּב הָוּא לְרַמּוֹז הָעֵם מִקָּרוּב בָּא

D) Chayim ibn-Attar (1696-1742), Or haChayim - “**Because** they were **near**” – the word “**near**” is an allusion here to [that mixed multitude of people who— having witnessed God’s wonders wrought in Egypt—] **came along from within that immediate area**.

וְאַיִן לוּ חֹזֶק בְּקָדוֹשָׁה קָרוּב הָוּא לְהַרְשִׁיעַ וַיְסֹבֶּבֶת רָעָה גָּם לִיְשָׂרָאֵל

Since [this rabble of idolatrous pagans] had no presumptive claim to the holiness [of the descendants of Abraham and Sarah], **their proximity was**[, as will be seen in Numbers 11:4,] **a corrupting influence**, returning evil against the Israelites as well.

כִּי קָרוּב הָוּא - קָרוּב הָוּא הַדָּבָר שָׁאָמַר הַקָּבָ"ה לְמִשְׁה בְּהַזְׁכִּיר אֶת הָעֵם מִמְצָרִים תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַהָר הַזֶּה

E) Midrash M'chilta d'Rabi Yishma'El, b'Shallach Prelude - “**Because** it is **near**” – the time is **nigh for the fulfillment of what The Holy And Blessed One had told Moses**: “When you bring forth the People from Egypt, you will all worship God together on this mountain” [fifty days after leaving Egypt - Exodus 3:12].

כִּי קָרוּב הָוּא - קָרוּבָה הִיא פּוֹרָעָנוֹת שֶׁל פְּרָעָה הַרְשִׁיעַ שִׁיפְרָעַה הַקָּבָ"ה מִמֶּה

F) Midrash P'sikta d'Rav Kahanah, 11:9 - “**Because** it is **near**” – the time is **nigh for the punishment of the wicked Pharaoh**, who had oppressed the people of The Holy And Blessed One[, by overthrowing him in the depths of the Sea].

דְּאָכִי קָרוּב הָוּא – קָרוּבָה



Pharaoh and his host engulfed in the Sea
by Frederick Arthur Bridgman, c. 1895

היא פורענות של מצרים שיפרע הקב"ה ממה

Alternately: “**Because** it is **near**” – the time is **nigh** for the punishment of the wicked **Egyptians**, who had oppressed the people of The Holy And Blessed One[, by overthrowing them— together with their leader, Pharaoh— in the depths of the Sea].

ד"א כי קרוב הוא - קרוב הוא החסד שעשו הכנענים עם אבינו יעקב הצד
הוא דכתיב וירא יושב הארץ יונת הכנעני את האבל

Alternately: “**Because** it is **near**” – how **intimate** is the **kindness** that the **Canaanites showed** [in honoring the burial of] our forebear Jacob. This is as it is written: “When the residents of the land, the Canaanites, saw the scope of the mourning[attendant upon the entombment of Jacob, they declared: ‘This is a great grieving of the Egyptians’ ” - Genesis 50:11].

ד"א כי קרוב הוא - קרוב היה השבעה שהשבי עבימלך את אבינו אברהם
הזה דכתיב ועתה השבעה לי באלהים הנה אם תשקר לי ולנני ולנכדי וגו'

Alternately: “**Because** it is **near**” – how **imminent** is the [long-delayed fulfillment of] **the oath that** [the Canaanite ruler] **AviMelech exacted** of our Patriarch Abraham. This is as it

is written: “And now, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me and [my descendants for three generations...” Genesis 21:23].



Abimelech and Abraham enter into a treaty (Genesis 21)

by Jan van Vianen, c. 1725

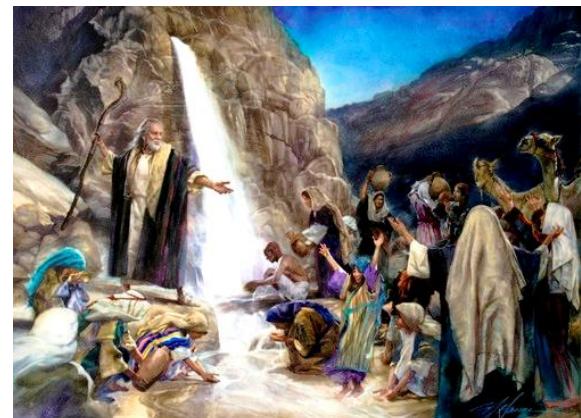
כי קרוב הוא - קרוב הוא שירשו הכנענים את הארץ דכתיב ודור רביעי ישבו
הנה ועודין לא היה להם דור רביעי והקיף במדבר ארבעים שנה

G) Midrash Tanchuma, b'Shallach 1 - “**Although** it was **near**” signifies that **it was too soon** for them to dispossess the Canaanites from the land. For it is written [that God had informed Abraham, centuries earlier:] “**the fourth generation shall return here**” [Genesis 15:16]. Now at that point it was not yet their fourth generation— **and so it is that He circled them around the Wilderness for forty years.**

אמר הקב"ה אם אני מוליכן דרך עצה מחזקין איש בשדה
ובכרם ומבטלין מון התורה אלא אני
مولיכן דרך המדבר ויאכלו את המן
וישתו מי באר והتورה מותירה מתישבת בגוףן

The Holy And Blessed One reasoned: “**If I take them straight there now, each one on acquiring a field and vineyard will neglect My Torah.** Instead I will guide them through the Wilderness, where they will eat *manna* from Heaven and drink water from the rock, so that the discipline of Torah will become incorporated into their bodies.”

ועוד כשהשמעו הכנענים שישראל



וכנסין לארץ עמדו ושרפו את הזרעים ועקרו את האילנות וקצצו את הנטיעות
וסתרו את הבניינים וסתמו את המעיינות

- more over

Moreover, when the Canaanites heard that the Israelites were coming into the land [Exodus 15:15-18], they burned the grain; uprooted the trees; hewed down the plantings; tore down the buildings; and stopped up the wells.

אמר הקב"ה אני הבטחתי את אברם אביהם להכניסם לארץ מלאה כל טוב הריני מעכban במדבר ארבעים שנה עד שיעמדו הכנענים ויתקנו מה שקללו

So The Holy And Blessed One reasoned: “I swore to their forebear Abraham that I would be bringing his descendants into a land full of every good thing. I will therefore postpone them in the Wilderness for forty years, **until the Canaanites have made good all that they just destroyed.**”

=====

H) David Feinstein (1929-2020), *Kol Dodi* - To understand **why The Eternal One found it best to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land the long way around**, we must understand the deep spiritual darkness in which the Jews lived at that time, and how weak was their appreciation of God's power in the world. To attain each new level of awareness, they had to overcome the influence of centuries of exposure to Egyptian idol worship and ignorance of the One God.

Each realization was so hard won, that **they could not be expected to go too far all at once**. God, for His part, chose not to show the Jews too much of His power at once, in order to introduce them gradually to a new way of looking at the world: that every minute detail of everything that happens is under His control. But **that learning process would take time**.

ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם וכו' - נוכל לומר דהנה האדם השב בתשובה לפניו
יתברך שמו איזי **מעלה עצמו** מעומק הקליפות שהיה נשתקע שם **ומוציא עצמו**
לחירות

I) Mei'ir haLeivi Rottenberg of Apt (1760-1827), *Or laShamayim* - “Now when Pharaoh **let the people go**” etc. - We can say that the person who repents before The Holy And Blessed One **raises himself up** from deep within the husks of sin in which he was enveloped, **and has thereby brought himself out to freedom**.

**ואיתא בגמרא מ"מ תליא כרעה דה"י דאי בעי ליעול בהא וליעול בהז לא
מסתיעו מילתא מלחמת שבאותו דרץ חטא וצריך לדחוק עצמו ולהעלות עצמו
בתשובה שעושה**

It is found in the Gemara [Babylonian Talmud, M'nachot 49b] that whoever desires The Ineffable and Blessed Name, who seeks help will receive help, taking delight in you even as you take delight in Him. Because **in the same manner that one sinned, one must push oneself and elevate oneself** by the penitence that we do.

Mei'ir haLeivi Rottenberg of Apt (the Apter Rebbe; the “*Or laShamayim*”)

	1760-1827	4 times great-grandfather
Pin'chas Rottenberg	1788-1852	3 times great-grandfather
Yitzchaq M'nachem Rottenberg	1822-1874	great-great-grandfather
Jacob Rottenberg	1847?-1913	great-grandfather
Lena Rottenberg	1894-1973	grandmother
Fred Farber	1920-1994	father
Carol Gross	1951-	