

# NACH NUGGETS

## Sefer Yehoshua Perek 3:14 through Perek 5:3

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Vol. 3

Welcome everyone to our third installment of Nach Nuggets. This week we covered Sefer Yehoshua Perek 3 starting from pasuk 14 and going up to and including Perek 5 Pasuk 3.

A major focus of this week's learning was Yehoshua leading Bnei Yisroel through the Jordan River as the first step of entering Eretz Yisroel. As we saw, the crossing of the Jordan River was miraculous as the waters parted for Bnei Yisroel enabling them to pass through on dry land.

The pesukim in this week's learning, are brought down quite a few times throughout Talmud Bavli, most prominently in Maseches Sotah. The Gemarah in Maseches Sotah beginning on daf 33b elaborates and fills in some blanks regarding the episode of the crossing of the river.

The Gemarah begins by pointing out a few differences between the practices of that particular day and every other days practices. (NOTE: this part of the Gemarah actually goes back to the tail end of last weeks learning)

תנו רבנן כיצד עברו ישראל את הירדן בכל יום ארון נוסע אחר שני דגלים והיום נסע תחילה שנאמר (יהושע ג, יא) **הנה ארון הברית אדון כל הארץ עובר לפניכם בכל יום ויום לויים נושאים את הארון והיום נשאוהו כהנים שנאמר (יהושע ג, יג) והיה כנוח כפות רגלי הכהנים נושאי ארון ה' וגו'**

The Sages taught (*Tosefta* 8:1): How did the Jewish people cross the Jordan? Every day the Ark would travel behind the two flags of Judah and Reuben, but on that day the Ark traveled in front, as it is stated: **"Behold, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing before you"**(Joshua 3:11). On every other day, the Levites would carry the Ark, but on this day the priests carried it, as is stated: **"And when the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the Ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest"**(Joshua 3:13).

The Maharsha explains the significance of these differences as follows: When the Jews were in the impure lands outside of Eretz Yisroel, the Shechinah dwelt only in their midst. But when they entered Eretz Yisroel, the Shechinah (which rested on the the Aron Kodesh) preceded them. Additionally, the Maharsha points out that on this sacred occasion of entering Eretz Yisroel, it was only fitting that the Aron be carried by the Kohanim, who are more sacred than the Leviim.

The Gemarah further discusses just how high the water actually rose.

וכמה גובהו של מים שנים עשר מיל על שנים עשר מיל כנגד מחנה ישראל דברי ר' יהודה

What was the height of the water? Twelve *mil* by twelve *mil*, parallel to the size of the camp of the Jewish people who were passing through the Jordan. This is the statement of Rabbi Yehuda.

אמר לו ר' אלעזר בר' שמעון .....מים נגדשין ועולין כיפין על גבי כיפין יתר משלש מאות מיל עד שראו אותן כל מלכי מזרח ומערב שנאמר (יהושע ה, א) **ויהי כשמוע כל מלכי האמורי אשר בעבר הירדן ימה וכל מלכי הכנעני אשר על הים את אשר הוביש ה' את מי הירדן מפני בני ישראל עד עברם וימס לבבם ולא היה בהם עוד רוח מפני בני ישראל**

Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon, said to him: .....the water gathered and rose in heaps upon heaps to a height of more than three hundred *mil*, until all the kings of the East and West saw it, as it is stated: **“And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, that were beyond the Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, that were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel, until they were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore, because of the children of Israel”** (Joshua 5:1).

Of course this is not the first time that we see a miracle of waters parting in the Torah. As we know, a similar (though not exactly the same) miracle occurred earlier when Bnei Yisroel left Mitzraim. It doesn't take great imagination to see the similarities between the two “splittings” of the seas. In fact, upon first learning this portion of Navi I imagine that most of us at least thought about the “original” splitting of the sea during Yitzias Mitzraim. Although there is not a lot written about this seemingly obvious parallel we do allude to it every time we say Hallel. In Tehilim chapter 114 it says: הַיָּם רָאָה וַיִּנָּס הַיַּרְדֵּן יָסֹב לְאַחֲרָיו: - The sea saw them and fled, the Jordan turned backward. Clearly there is a strong connection between these two monumental events. However there is one critical difference. At the Red Sea, the people of Israel had their 'backs to the wall', i.e. they were in imminent danger of an Egyptian attack, with nowhere to turn. To save them from that predicament, Hashem performed the miracle of splitting the Red Sea. By contrast, when Bnei Yisrael are encamped in Arvos Moav and prepare to cross the Jordan River, they are not under attack, nor do they face any imminent danger - they simply need to get across the river! To do so, they could have used one or more of the existing crossing points (or they could have built a new one). As anyone who has seen the Jordan River knows, you don't need a miracle to cross it. Certainly, the two spies who crossed the River didn't need a miracle to do so. Yet Hashem performed this particular miracle at this particular time for various different reasons that we already mentioned and learned through this week.

- 1) As was mentioned earlier in Perek 3:7 Hashem explains to Yehoshua as follows: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחָל גְּדֹלְךָ בְּעֵינֵי כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יִדְעוּן כִּי כִאֲשֶׁר הָיִיתִי עִם-מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ - Hashem said to Joshua, “This day, for the first time, I will exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so that they shall know that I will be with you as I was with Moses.
- 2) Only a few pesukim later in Perek 3:10 - 13 when Yehoshua prepares the people to cross the Jordan River he explains a different reason: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּזֹאת תִּדְעוּן כִּי ק-ל חַי בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהוֹרֵשׁ יוֹרִישׁ מִפְּנֵיכֶם אֶת-הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת-הַחִתִּי וְאֶת-הַחִיטִּי וְאֶת-הַגִּרְגָּשִׁי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַיְבוּסִי - By this,” Joshua continued, “you shall know that a living God is among you, and that He will dispossess for you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites:
- 3) Later on we find yet another reason for the miracle. In Perek 4:21-25 Yehoshua explains to the nation that all people of all generations of all nations will have the need to know about this miracle. The perek ends off by saying לְמַעַן דַּעַת כָּל-עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ אֶת-יְד הַ כִּי הַזִּקָּה הִיא - So that all the peoples of the earth shall know how mighty is the hand of Hashem, and you shall fear Hashem your God always.

- 4) Finally in the first pasuk of Perek 5 we see another reason. To stop a joint attack against Bnei Yisroel. וַיְהִי כִשְׁמַע כָּל־מְלָכֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן יָמָּה וְכָל־מְלָכֵי הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַיָּם אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הוֹבִישׁ יְהוָה אֶת־מִי הַיַּרְדֵּן מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־עֲבָרָם] וַיִּמָּס לִבָּם וְלֹא־הָיָה בָּם עוֹד רוּחַ מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל - When all the kings of the Amorites on the western side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites near the Sea, heard how Hashem had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the sake of the Israelites until they crossed over, they lost heart, and no spirit was left in them because of the Israelites.

Perhaps we can break down these four reasons as follows: There are four different groups that the Navi is talking to.

- 1) Yehoshua himself. As we saw earlier Hashem reassured Yehoshua during this trying time. What better way to reassure Yehoshua that he was a worthy leader than by telling him that a miracle, similar to the perhaps the greatest miracle ever performed during the time of Moshe, was going to occur under his watch as well.
- 2) Bnei Yisroel. Perhaps Bnei Yisroel were worried that they would not succeed in conquering the Land. After all, they were not able to enter the Land until now. Thus Yehoshua informs them that this miracle will serve as a proof that Hashem will indeed assist them.
- 3) Future generations. The generation that crossed over the Jordan River and entered Eretz Yisroel would understand the greatness of the event. But future generation may not. To that end, Hashem performs a miracle and erects monuments of the miracle to make sure that people for all time will understand.
- 4) The general reader of the Navi. There was a practical need for this miracle to happen. To scare off the nations of the world who wanted to stand in their way. By performing this miracle Hashem fulfilled his promise to Avrohom Aveinu. The reader of the Navi sees how this promise came full circle.

It's interesting to note that the splitting of the Red Sea during the exodus from Mitzraim was *also* not the first instance of waters dividing mentioned in the Torah. Way back in Sefer Bereishis (Perek 1:7) on the second "day" in the history of the world we find Hashem separating the waters of the world. וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹקִים אֶת־הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר מֵתַחַת לַרְקִיעַ וּבֵין הַיָּם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לַרְקִיעַ - Hashem made the expanse, and separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. Continuing on the third the Parsuk says just one pasuk later: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקּוּוּ הַיָּם מֵתַחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מְקוֹם אֶחָד וַתִּרְאָה הַיַּבְּשָׁה - God said, "Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear."

We already discussed the connection between the Bnei Yisroel's two crossings. Perhaps we can also explain how these crossings are connected to the separation of waters during the creation of the world. It says in Bereishis Rabbah: אמר רבי יוחנן תנאין התנה הקדוש ברוך הוא עם הים: וישב הים לאיתנו, לתנאו שהתנה עמו R' Yochanan says: Hashem stipulated with the sea that it should split before Israel; thus it is written (Shemos 14:27), "And the sea returned... to its strength (l'eisano)" - to the stipulation (l'tano) that [God]

*made with it.* A little further on the midrash says *אמר רבי אלעזר מתחלת בריתו של עולם גזר הקדוש ברוך הוא ואמר: יקוו המים* - *R' Eliezer says, from the beginning of the world's creation, Hashem decreed and said, 'Let the waters be gathered' (Genesis 1:8).* Perhaps Hashem incorporated this *nes* - or miracle - of waters being able to separate, into the creation of this world, thus making the occurrence of splitting waters more natural - or *teva* - so that Hashem can allow future generations to “tap into” this power when it is needed.

The idea that it is preferable for events to occur naturally as opposed to supernaturally is indeed alluded to in several places. Rav Eliyahu Dessler points out that that *nes* and *teva* are both equally not difficult for Hashem. However *teva* is more common because it is more beloved. To support this, we can point to a Gemarah in Shabbos on daf 53b

מעשה באחד שמתה אשתו והניחה בן לינק, ולא היה לו שכר מניקה ליתן, ונעשה לו נס ונפתחו לו דדין כשני דדי אשה והניק את בנו. אמר רב יוסף: בא וראה כמה גדול אדם זה, שנעשה לו נס כזה! אמר לו אביי: אדרבה, כמה **גרוע אדם זה שנשתנו לו סדרי בראשית** - There was an incident where one man's wife died, and she left him a son to nurse, and he did not have money to pay the wages of a wet-nurse. And a miracle was performed on his behalf, and he developed breasts like the two breasts of a woman, and he nursed his son. Rav Yosef said: Come and see how great this person is that a miracle of that magnitude was performed on his behalf. Abaye said to him: On the contrary, **how dishonorable is this person that the order of creation was altered on his behalf.** A miracle was indeed performed on his behalf; however, it was performed in a demeaning and unpleasant manner.

Furthermore the Shela”h cites a Gemarah in Maseshes Yoma 57a that discusses the Kohen sprinkling blood in the direction of the Paroches, not necessarily on the Paroches. However, R' Elazar testified that he saw the Paroches in Rome and that it had blood stains on it. The Shelah says that the blood which seeped out of the Paroches when Titus stabbed it (as related on Gittin 56b) could actually have been the accumulated blood of the Yom Kippur sacrifices. The reason why the Shelah says this, is to point out that even this supernatural event (*nes*) of blood seeping out of the Paroches has a source in the natural world (*teva*). Perhaps we can say something similar here. Even the supernatural event (*nes*) of crossing a body of water on dry land has a source in the natural world (*teva*).

The crossing of the Jordan River is not the last we will see of waters splitting either. (The idea of waters splitting is also mentioned in Midrash and in the Gemarah but that is beyond the scope of this “nugget”. For our purposes we will be dealing only with those times that this phenomenon is mentioned in Tanach.) In Melachim 2:5 there's a fascinating and somewhat mysterious story of Elisha Hanavi and Eliyahu Hanavi. Elisha was a disciple of Eliyahu and in this story he quite literally takes the mantle from Eliyahu. Twice the navi describes Eliyahu and Elisha as journeying together: first in their initial meeting, in the fields of Avel Mechola, when Eliyahu takes Elisha from his father's house and Elisha follows him, to minister to him (Melakhim 1 19:19-21); the second time is in Melachim 2 2:1, in their last encounter, where Elisha accompanies his master to the place from where he ascends in a storm to the heavens. These

are the only two instances where the text speaks about Eliyahu and Elisha together. In this encounter the two neviim end up at the Jordan River. (Perhaps we will go more in depth into this story when we reach there in our journey through Nach) The navi describes the scene at the Jordan River: *וַיִּקַּח אֵלֵיהֶוּ אֶת־אֲדָרְתוֹ וַיִּגְלֹם וַיִּכֶּה אֶת־הַמַּיִם וַיִּחְצוּ הַנָּהָ וְהַנָּהָ וַיַּעֲבְרוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם בְּחַרְבָּה - Thereupon Elijah took his mantle and, rolling it up, he struck the water; it divided to the right and left, so that the two of them crossed over on dry land.* As they were crossing through the river, Eliyahu suddenly ascends to the heavens via a chariot of fire. Elisha is left alone at the Jordan River. At that point Elisha wonders if Hashem will be with him as he was with Eliyahu. Pasuk 14 describes Elisha's actions in response to Eliyahu ascending to the Heavens and "leaving him alone": *וַיִּקַּח אֶת־אֲדָרְתוֹ אֵלֵיהֶוּ אֲשֶׁר־נִפְלָה מֵעֲלָיו וַיִּכֶּה אֶת־הַמַּיִם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵיךָ הִיא אֶלְקִי אֵלֵיהֶוּ אִי־הוּא וַיִּכֶּה: Taking the mantle (literally and quite possibly figuratively as well) which had dropped from Elijah, he struck the water and said, "Where is Hashem, the God of Elijah?" (as if to say: Is He with me as He was with Eliyahu?) As he too struck the water, it parted to the right and to the left, and Elisha crossed over.* The splitting of the water was a response to Elisha's question. Just as Bnei Yisroel saw that this miracle can occur for Yehoshua, and Yehoshua was reassured of his own abilities as leader through this miracle, so too was Elisha assured of his abilities and Bnei Yisroel was assured as well through the very same miracle. As we see in the very next pasuk: *וַיֵּרְאוּהוּ בְנֵי־הַנְּבִיאִים אֲשֶׁר־בִּירְיֵחוֹ מִנֶּגֶד וַיֹּאמְרוּ נָחָה רֵיחַ - When the disciples of the prophets at Jericho saw him from a distance, they exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah has settled on Elisha!"* Once again Hashem used the miracle of parting waters to assure the disciple - and all of Klall Yisroel - that the disciple was worthy of "taking the mantle" from his predecessor.

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Haftoros mentioned in this week's learning:

- 1) The continuation of the haftorah for the first day of Pesach. Perek 5:2 - 6:1