

Yemei Iyun BeTanakh – Yarden and Yam Suf: Redemptive Moments in Sefer Yehoshua – M. Hattin

The splitting of Yam Suf is one of the epic events in Tanakh, a moment of transcendence that leaves its mark both on the nascent Israelite people as well as on their sacred texts. We will study Yam Suf through one of its many analogs in the Hebrew Bible - the crossing of the Yarden in Sefer Yehoshua. As we compare and contrast the two, we will discover that embedded in the parallel is a profound story of spiritual development and growth.

Narrative events of Sefer Yehoshua, Chapters 1 – 5

- 1 God's triple charge to Yehoshua after Moshe's death: **וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ** Yehoshua's command to the officers to prepare people for crossing Yarden in 3 days time. Yehoshua's charge to Reuven, Gad and ½ Menashe.
- 2 Yehoshua sends 2 spies to Yericho. With Rachav's help, they evade capture and return with a glowing report.
- 3 The journey to the Yarden commences with specific instructions to Israel – "follow the ark", and to Kohanim – "carry ark before the people". 12 men are appointed. The Kohanim enter the water, the river stops flowing, the waters form a wall and the people cross.
- 4 God tells Yehoshua that the 12 men must remove 12 commemorative stones from under the feet of the Kohanim to be conveyed to the place of lodging. They do so and Yehoshua puts 12 other stones in their place. The people complete the passage, the Kohanim emerge on the other side and the stones are conveyed to Gilgal.
- 5 The Canaanites are alarmed by news of the Yarden's halt. God tells Yehoshua to prepare knives of flint in order to circumcise the people who were not circumcised at the time of the Exodus. This is done and the site is called Gilgal in commemoration. The people celebrate the Pesach and the miraculous manna ceases on the next day. An angelic messenger appears to Yehoshua at the outskirts of Yericho and bids Yehoshua to remove his shoes.

הקבלות וניגודים

1. עברו בקרב המחנה וצוו את העם לאמר הכינו לכם צידה כי בעוד שלשת ימים אתם עברים את הירדן הזה (א:יא)=====ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגת מצות כי לא חמץ כי גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם צדה לא עשו להם (יב:לט).
2. וישכם יהושע בבקר ויסעו מהשטים ויבאו עד הירדן הוא וכל בני ישראל וילנו שם טרם יעברו (ג:א)=====ויהי בחצי הלילה וה' הכה כל בכור בארץ מצרים...ותחזק מצרים על העם למהר לשלחם מן הארץ...(יב:כט-לג).
3. ויאמר יהושע אל הכהנים לאמר שאו את ארון הברית ועברו לפני העם...(ג:ו)=====ויסע מלאך האלקים ההלך לפני מחנה ישראל וילך מאחריהם...(יד:יט).
4. ויאמר יהושע בזאת תדעון כי א-ל חי בקרבכם והורש יוריש מפניכם את הכנעני...הנה ארון הברית אדון כל הארץ עבר לפניכם בירדן (ג:יא)=====ויאמר ה' אל משה מה תצעק אלי דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו (יד:טו).
5. ויבאו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה והמים להם חומה מימנם ומשמאלם (יד:כב)=====ויעמדו המים הירדים מלמעלה קמו נד אחד הרחק מאד מאדם העיר אשר מצד צרתן...(ג:טז).

פירוש ר' אברהם בן עזרא לשמות יד:יג

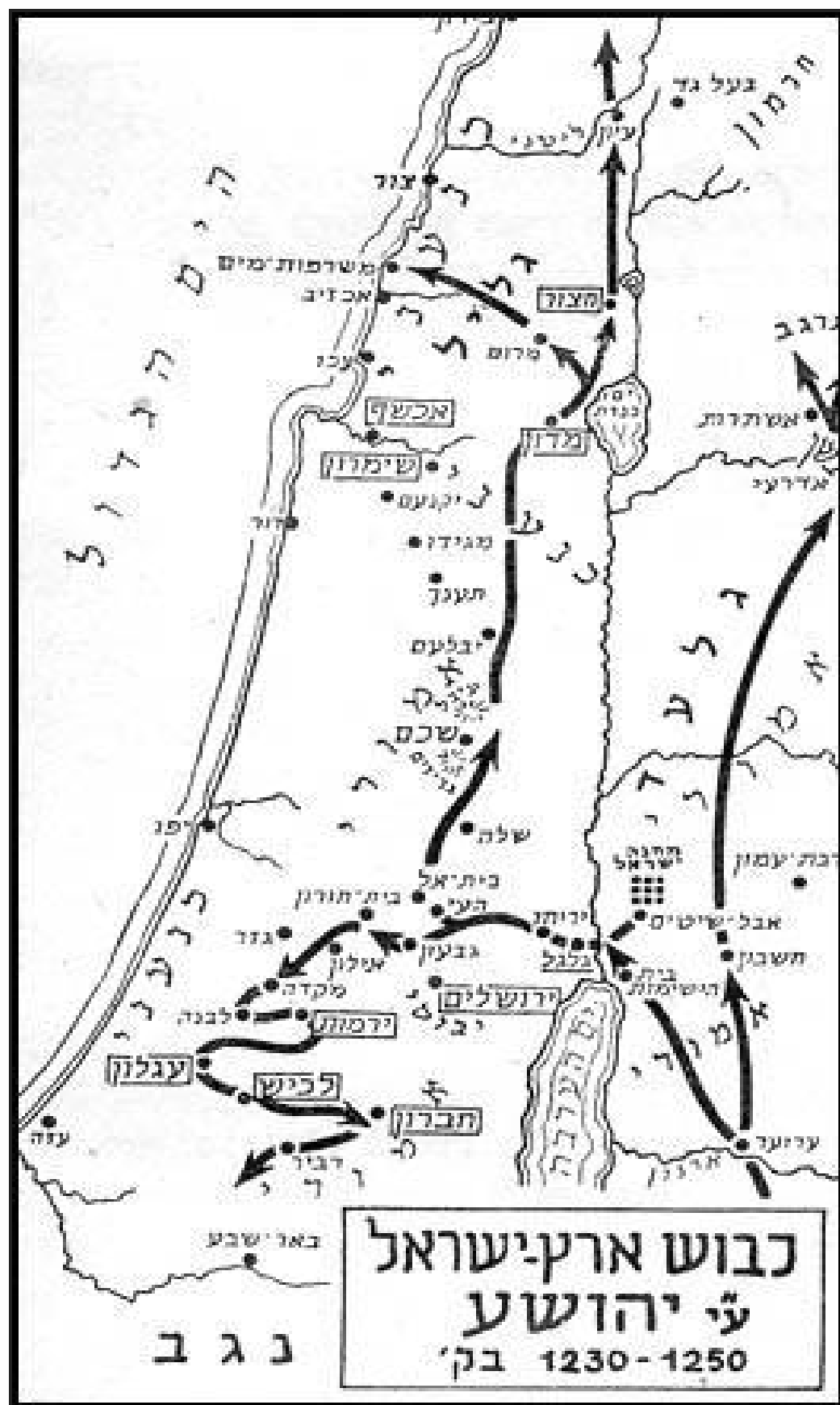
התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' - כי אתם לא תעשו מלחמה רק תראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום. יש לתמוה איך יירא מחנה גדול של שש מאות אלף איש מהרודפים אחריהם? ולמה לא ילחמו על נפשם ועל בניהם? התשובה: כי המצרים היו אדונים לישראל וזה הדור היוצא ממצרים למד מנעוריו לסבול עול מצרים ונפשו שפלה. ואיך יוכל עתה להלחם עם אדוניו? והיו ישראל נרפים ואינם מלומדים למלחמה. הלא תראה כי עמלק בא בעם מועט ולולי תפלת משה היה חולש את ישראל. והשם לבדו שהוא עושה גדולות. ולו נתכנו עלילות. סבב שמתו כל העם היוצא ממצרים הזכרים. כי אין כח בהם להלחם בכנענים, עד שקם דור אחר דור המדבר שלא ראו

גלות. והיתה להם נפש גבוהה כאשר הזכרתי בדברי משה בפרשת ואלה שמות.

Rambam – Guide to the Perplexed 3:32

...There occurs in the Torah a passage that contains exactly the same idea; it is the following: "God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near, for God said: Lest the people have a change of heart when they see war and return to Egypt. God led the people round about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea"... (Exod. 13:17). Here God led the people about, away from the direct road that He originally intended, because He feared that they might meet on that way with hardships too great for their ordinary strength; He took them by another road in order to obtain His original goal. In the same manner God refrained from prescribing what the people by their natural disposition would be incapable of obeying, and gave the above-mentioned commandments as a means of securing His chief objective – to spread a knowledge of Him [among the people], and to cause them to reject idolatry. It is contrary to man's nature that he should suddenly abandon all the different kinds of Divine service and the different customs in which he has been brought up, and which have been so general, that they were considered as a matter of course; **it would be just as if a person trained to work as a slave with mortar and bricks, or similar things, should interrupt his work, clean his hands, and at once fight with real giants.**

It was the result of God's wisdom that the Israelites were led about in the wilderness until they acquired courage. For it is a well-known fact that travelling in the wilderness and privation of bodily enjoyments such as bathing, produce courage, while the reverse is the source of faint-heartedness: besides, another generation rose during the wanderings that had not been accustomed to degradation and slavery. All the travelling in the wilderness was regulated by Divine commands through Moses...



ג'3

וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּבְקָר וַיֵּסְעוּ מִהַשְּׁטִים וַיֵּבְאוּ עַד־הַיַּרְדֵּן הוּא וְכָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֵּלְנוּ שָׁם טָרָם יַעֲבְרוּ:	Early next morning, Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and marched to the Jordan. They did not cross immediately, but spent the night there.
וַיְהִי מִקְצֵה שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים וַיַּעֲבְרוּ הַשָּׂטְרִים בְּקֶרֶב הַמַּחֲנֶה:	Three days later, the officials went through the camp
וַיִּצְוֶה אֶת־הָעָם לֵאמֹר כִּרְאוּתְכֶם אֶת אָרוֹן בְּרִית־ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם נֹשְׂאִים אוֹתוֹ וְאַתֶּם תִּסָּעוּ מִמְּקוֹמְכֶם וְהִלַּכְתֶּם אַחֲרָיו:	and charged the people as follows: "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God being borne by the levitical priests, you shall move forward. Follow it—
אָךְ אֶרְחֹק יִהְיֶה בֵּינֵיכֶם וּבֵינו [וּבֵינָיו] כְּאַלְפִּים אַמָּה בַּמַּדָּה אֶל־תִּקְרְבוּ אֵלָיו לִמְעַן אֲשֶׁר־תֵּדְעוּ אֶת־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכוּ־בָהּ כִּי לֹא עֲבַרְתֶּם בַּדֶּרֶךְ מִתְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם: (o)	but keep a distance of some two thousand cubits from it, never coming any closer to it—so that you may know by what route to march, since it is a road you have not traveled before."
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־הָעָם הַתִּקְדְּשׁוּ כִּי מָחָר יַעֲשֶׂה ה' בְּקִרְבְּכֶם נִפְלְאוֹת:	And Joshua said to the people, "Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will perform wonders in your midst."
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים לֵאמֹר שָׂאוּ אֶת־אָרוֹן הַבְּרִית וְעֲבְרוּ לִפְנֵי	Then Joshua ordered the priests, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant and advance to

הָעָם וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֶת־אֲרוֹן הַבְּרִית וַיֵּלְכוּ לִפְנֵי הָעָם: (ו)	the head of the people.” And they took up the Ark of the Covenant and marched at the head of the people.
וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחָל גְּדֹלְךָ בְּעֵינַי כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר יֵדְעוּן כִּי כֹאֲשֶׁר הָיִיתִי עִם־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ:	The LORD 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.
וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן־הַבְּרִית לֵאמֹר כְּבֹאֲכֶם עַד־קֶצֶה מִי הַיַּרְדֵּן בַּיַּרְדֵּן תַּעֲמִדוּ: (ז)	For your part, command the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant as follows: When you reach the edge of the waters of the Jordan, make a halt in the Jordan.”
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל גָּשׁוּ הִנֵּה וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:	And Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come closer and listen to the words of the LORD your God.
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּזֹאת תֵּדְעוּן כִּי קַל חַי בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהוֹרֵשׁ יוֹרֵשׁ מִפְּנֵיכֶם אֶת־הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת־הַחִתִּי וְאֶת־הַחִוִּי וְאֶת־הַפְּרִזִּי 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:
הִנֵּה אֲרוֹן הַבְּרִית אָדוֹן כָּל־הָאָרֶץ עֹבֵר לִפְנֵיכֶם בַּיַּרְדֵּן:	the Ark of the Covenant of the Sovereign of all the earth is advancing before you into the Jordan.

<p>וַעֲתָה קָחוּ לָכֶם שְׁנֵי עָשָׂר אִישׁ מִשִּׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ-אֶחָד אִישׁ-אֶחָד לְשִׁבְטוֹ:</p>	<p>Now select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from each tribe.</p>
<p>וְהָיָה כִּנּוּחַ כַּפּוֹת רַגְלֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹן יְהוָה אֲדוֹן כָּל-הָאָרֶץ בְּמֵי הַיַּרְדֵּן מִי הַיַּרְדֵּן יִכָּרְתוּן הַמַּיִם הַיַּרְדִּים מִלְּמַעְלָה וַיַּעֲמְדוּ גֵד אֶחָד:</p>	<p>When the feet of the priests bearing the Ark of the LORD, the Sovereign of all the earth, come to rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan—the water coming from upstream—will be cut off and will stand in a single heap.”</p>
<p>וַיְהִי בִּנְסֹעַ הָעָם מֵאֶהְלֵיהֶם לַעֲבֹר אֶת-הַיַּרְדֵּן וְהַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי הָאָרוֹן הַבְּרִית לִפְנֵי הָעָם:</p>	<p>When the people set out from their encampment to cross the Jordan, the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant were at the head of the people.</p>
<p>וּכְבֹּא נֹשְׂאֵי הָאָרוֹן עַד-הַיַּרְדֵּן וְרַגְלֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי הָאָרוֹן נִטְבְּלוּ בַּקִּצָּה הַמַּיִם וְהַיַּרְדֵּן מָלֵא עַל-כָּל-גְּדוּתָיו כֹּל יְמֵי קִצְרֵהּ:</p>	<p>Now the Jordan keeps flowing over its entire bed throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the bearers of the Ark reached the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the Ark dipped into the water at its edge,</p>
<p>וַיַּעֲמְדוּ הַמַּיִם הַיַּרְדִּים מִלְּמַעְלָה קָמוּ גֵד-אֶחָד הַרְחֵק מְאֹד בְּאֵדָם [מֵאֲדָם] הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר מֵצֵד צָרְתָן וְהַיַּרְדִּים עַל יַם הָעַרְבָּה יַם-הַמֶּלַח תָּמוּ נִכְרְתוּ וְהָעָם עָבְרוּ נָגַד יְרִיחוֹ:</p>	<p>the waters coming down from upstream piled up in a single heap a great way off, at Adam, the town next to Zarethan; and those flowing away downstream to the Sea</p>

	of the Arabah (the Dead Sea) ran out completely. So the people crossed near Jericho.
<p>וַיַּעֲמְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים נֹשְׂאֵי הָאָרוֹן בְּרִית־ה' בַּחֲרֹבָה בְּתוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן הַכֵּן וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָבְרִים בַּחֲרֹבָה עַד אֲשֶׁר־תָּמֹךְ כָּל־הַגּוֹי לַעֲבֹר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן:</p>	<p>The priests who bore the Ark of the LORD's Covenant stood on dry land exactly in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed over on dry land, until the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan.</p>

The Sea of Reeds versus the Jordan River

Exodus 14 – 15 vs. Joshua 3

Hasty and unanticipated exodus vs. plodding and planned crossing

Unexpectedly diverted route vs. dependable guidance to destination

Enemy pursuit and Israelite outcry vs. embrace of destiny and Israelite calm

Moshe's spontaneous reaction vs. Yehoshua's deliberateness

Eastern wind vs. feet of Kohanim

Tunnel-like passage vs. riverbed expanse

Emergence into wilderness of Shur vs. entry into Promised Land

PANICKED OBJECTS VS. CONFIDENT SUBJECTS

Psalms 114

When Israel went forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange speech,

Judah became His holy one, Israel, His dominion.

The sea saw them and fled, Jordan ran backward,

mountains skipped like rams, hills like sheep.

What alarmed you, O sea, that you fled, Jordan, that you ran backward,

mountains, that you skipped like rams, hills, like sheep?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,

who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flinty rock into a fountain.

Trajectory of Exodus from Egypt: Ex. 12 – 13

- Circumcision
- Pesach sacrifice
- Exodus from Egypt
- Crossing of Sea of Reeds
- Entry into wilderness
- Manna begins to fall

Trajectory of Entry into Land: Josh. 3 – 5

- Leaving wilderness behind
- Crossing of Jordan River
- Arrival in new land
- Circumcision
- Pesach sacrifice
- Manna ceases to fall