

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation (Under same management for over 5779 years) SHABBAT SERVICE

January 19th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Study

"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.
Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 119



"B'shalach" "When he let go" -- Exodus 13:17 - 17:16

וַיְהִי בִשְׁלַח פְּרַעֲהַ אֶת־הָעָם וְלֹא־יָצְחָם אֱלֹהִים דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ

Va-y'hi b'shalach Par'oh et-ha'am v'lo-nacham Elohim derech erets

and it was when let go Pharaoh the people and not lead them God way of the land
And it was when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land

כִּלְשֵׁתִים כִּי קָרוֹב הוּא כִּי אָמַר

P'lishtim ki karov hu ki amar

of Philistines because (even though) near it (was), for said
of the Philistines, though it was near; for God thought

אָמַר אֱלֹהִים כִּד יִצְחָם הָעָם בְּרֹאֲתָם מִלְחָמָה וְשָׁבוּ מִצְרַיִמָּה:

Elohim pen-yinachem ha'am bir'otam mil'chamah v'shavu Mitsraimah.

God lest regret the people in seeing their war & return to Egypt.
that the people, upon seeing war would want to return to Egypt.

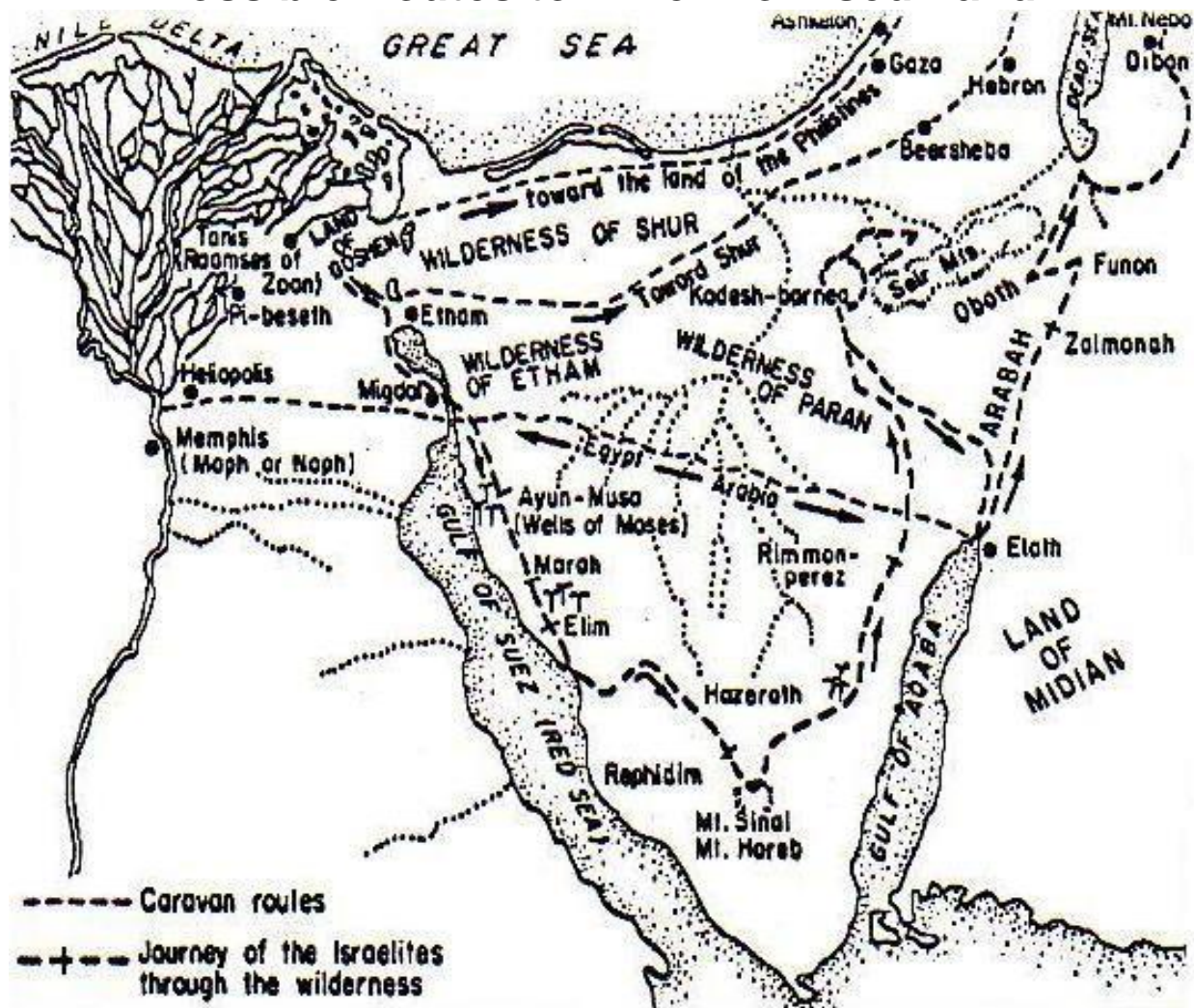
Exodus -- God's Redemption: A First-hand experience

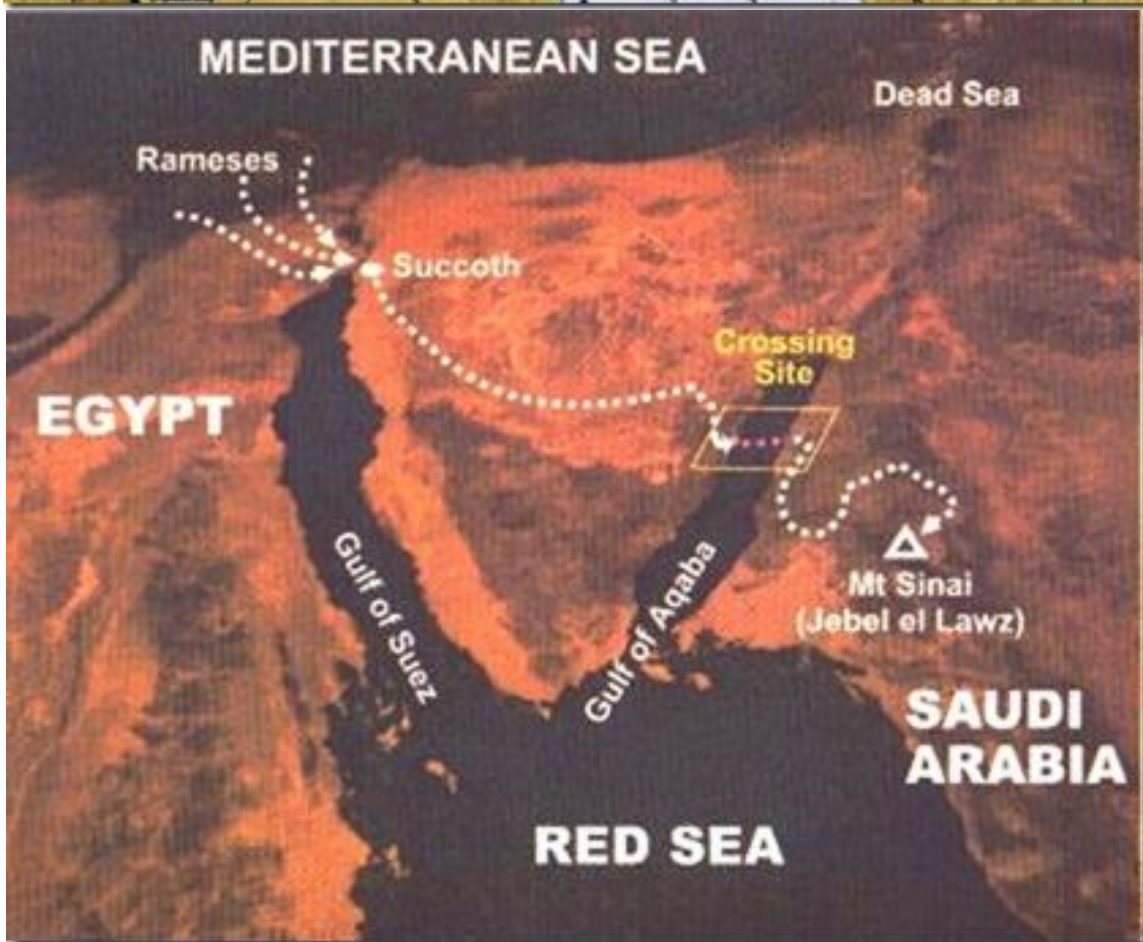
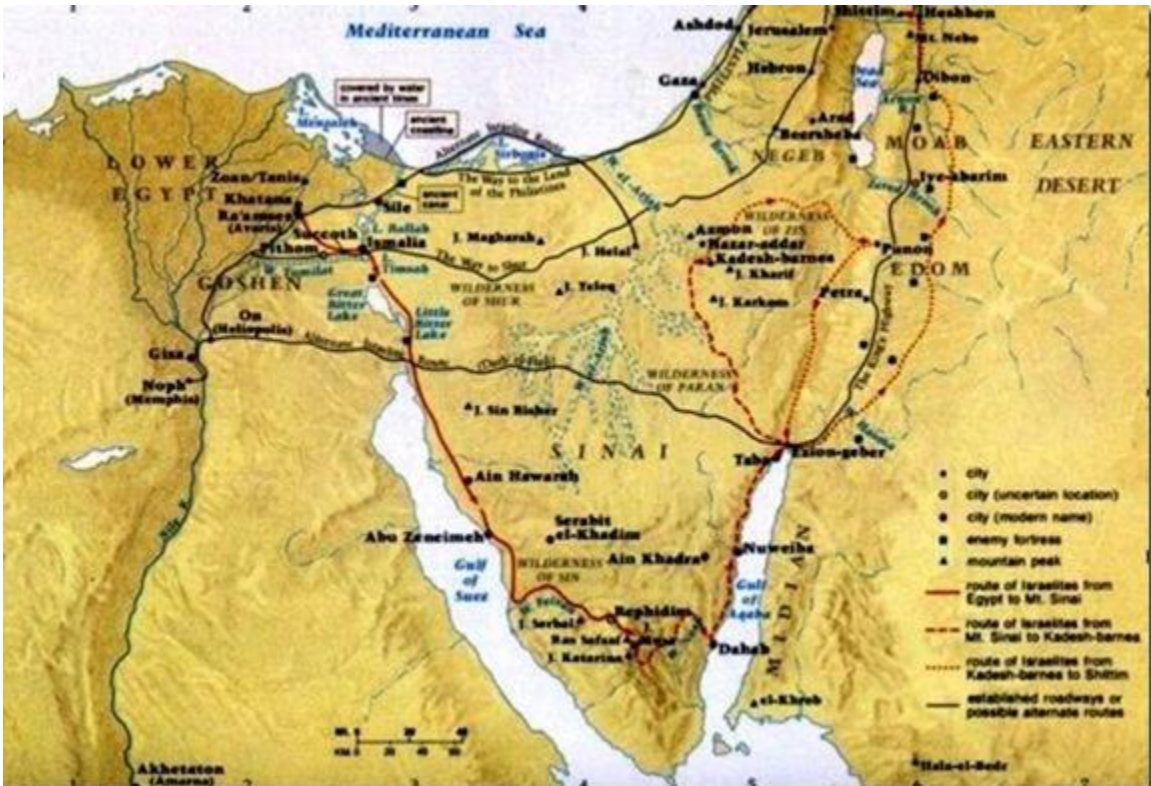
It's been said that if only God would come close to us, perhaps give us a sign, then we would believe. But is this statement really true? In the Torah portion for this week, God came very close to His people and gave them a first-hand experience of His redemption. Did the miracle of God against their enemy cause them to believe? Last week we mentioned that the miracle of Moses throwing down his staff, which turned into a snake, caused the people to believe that he had come to free them (4:30-31). Yet when Pharaoh increased their work-load, the people rebelled against Moses. Their

belief was shallow and short-lived. Their shallow belief could not withstand the circumstances of an increased workload. So which would you say is better about bringing a person to a deep and abiding belief in God: Miracles or faith?

Faith as a gift from God leading to belief, rather than miracles producing belief. As we have observed, the first-hand experience of God's redemption of His people, and their short-lived and shallow response to God's miracles, ask yourself whether you think that miracles or faith lead to belief. What was God's purpose for the miracles that produced the plagues and the splitting of the Red Sea? Remember what God said was the purpose of His miracles: ..."I will lay My hand on Egypt, and bring out Israel from the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst" (7:4-5). God's miracles show the world who He is, but it is our faith in Him and His provision for us (Messiah) that produces belief.

Possible Routes to "The Promised Land"





Although Moses led the people, it was God who chose the direction of travel. The most direct caravan route to the "promised land" along the coast would have brought them to the Gaza area in about 10 days. However, archeology has shown that the coast road was fortified by Egyptian military garrisons. Had they traveled the direct caravan route to the promised land, they would have had to

fight the Egyptians. God foresaw that the shallow belief of the people would have caused them to "...change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt" (13:17). Also, as a sign for Moses to encourage his faith in God's plan, God had previously made a date with Moses to have the people, after their release from Egyptian bondage, to worship Him at Mt. Sinai (3:12). So God's first miracle after the people left Egypt was to lead them toward Mt. Sinai **"going before them in a pillar of cloud by day...and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light" (13:22)**.



(The Pillar of Fire was present at the beginning of the Exodus from Egypt, even prior to the tabernacle being built)

Easy Believism

One might say that the people following God's leadership believed they were in His will.... until they saw the approach of the Egyptian army. Then their shallow belief in God caused them to again turn against Moses. "...it would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (14:12). So when God led them to change direction and camp next to the sea, where they would be at risk from attack by the approaching Egyptian army, they might have collectively exclaimed, **"God, what are you doing!"** Many of us, who believe we are in God's will, struggle when circumstances come into our lives that seem to be in contradiction with the direction we think God is leading us. Like God's people with their backs to the sea, we, too, say, "God, what are you doing!" We, too, must learn to trust God, when our life circumstances don't seem to make sense.



Fishing for a Pharaoh

In this Torah portion, we find that God had a very good reason for leading His people into a seemingly risky situation. **God was fishing for a Pharaoh**. God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, so that Pharaoh would chase after His people. Doesn't it seem contradictory that God would free His people from Egyptian slavery by a series of mighty miracles and then lure Pharaoh and his army to attack them? **Just like waving a tempting lure in front of the nose of a trout, causing a reflex strike**, God had His people "turn back," so that to Pharaoh it appeared that the sons of Israel "had fled" and were "wandering aimlessly" (14:2,3). With their backs to the sea, Pharaoh thought they were cornered and had no place to run. As contradictory as this might have seemed to the people, it was God's plan to let Pharaoh, the Egyptian army, and all of the Egyptian people know...that I am the

Lord" (14:4). While humanly speaking it would have appeared that God's people were cornered with no place to run, actually it would be Pharaoh and his mighty army that would be cornered with no place to run. God's seemingly contradictory plan would later have ramifications in the preparation for His people entering into their land via Jericho. Even the Canaanites occupying Jericho had heard about God's defeat of the Egyptian army (Joshua 2:10-11). The lesson for us today is that when circumstances seem contradictory to our plans for living a Godly life, we should remain steadfast in our faith and watch God work out the circumstances for our benefit and His glory. Moses told the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today..." (14:13). The same holds true for believers today! **We watch God work**, and while He is working His will, **we take action to become involved in His plan for us.**

The Final Point of No Return For the Egyptians

As Pharaoh's "six hundred select chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers...and his army..." (14:7,9) overtook God's people, camping at Pi-hahiroth with the water behind them, leaving no escape, God's people became frantic. "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness, they cried to Moses." Moses replied that they should **be quiet and watch God fight for them.** Please note the difference in demeanor between those who want to do "something" on their own to get themselves out of their circumstances and Moses, whose faith allows him to wait on God's deliverance. In this case **Moses' plan of action was to be silent and wait on God.** **This "action" required more faith than pursuing his own plans!** This solid assurance of Moses showed his trust in God for his salvation.



God moved to insert Himself between His people and His enemy, paralyzing his enemy with darkness, so that they could not attack, while providing light for His people to see His miracle of separating the waters of the sea and drying the land beneath the waters.



Moses stretched his hand over the sea...

Please note that the Israelites also took physical action by faith to accomplish God's will and their salvation.

First, God told Moses to tell the people to **go forward into the sea.**

Then He told Moses to raise up his staff to part the sea.

First, the people moved forward into the sea...*by faith*...then God parted the sea.





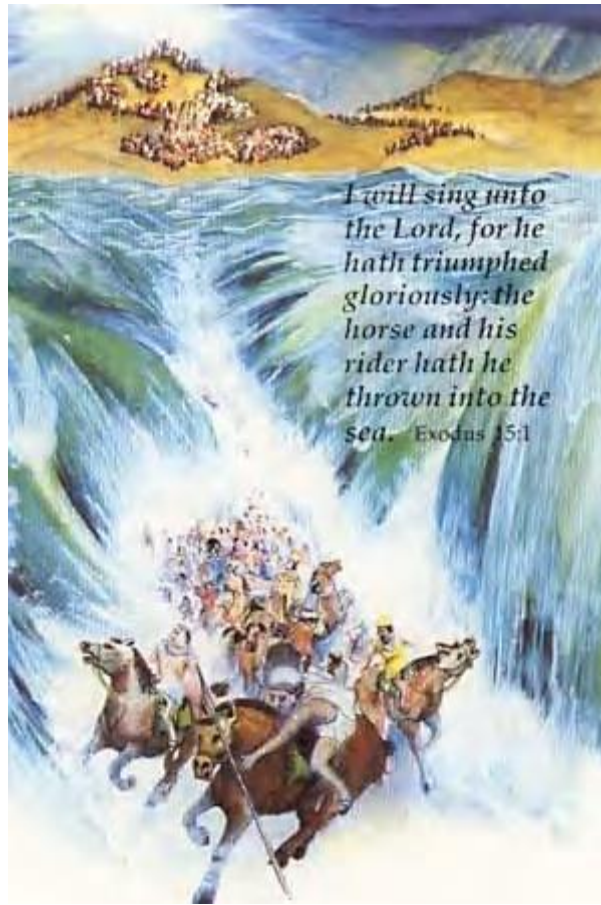
When the Pharaoh became aware that the Israelites were escaping on dry land through a huge column of water, he irrationally decided to pursue them. Even today we can observe hard-hearted people acting against their own best interests. Pharaoh had become so hardened against God's people that he had passed his final point of no return. He was incapable of seeing how precarious was his position, if he pursued the Israelites. Bull-headedly he charged ahead with all his chariots....to his doom. There are those today who have repeatedly made choices to reject the sacrificial atonement only Messiah can provide. At some point they may become totally hardened to God's voice, incapable of acting in their own best interest. They will have passed a point of no return, and "their blood will be on their own heads" (Joshua 2:19; Ezekiel 33:4). This is the picture we have of Pharaoh and explains why he made such a rash decision.

Jew Wins Olympics – Modern Day Miracle



Is Seeing Believing?

As Moses again raised his hand over the sea, causing the sea to return to its normal state enveloping the entire Egyptian army, it was apparent to all the people that the Lord had saved Israel from the hand of the Egyptians. "...the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses" (14:31). **But is seeing really believing, or does seeing the miracles of God produce only a shallow, short-lived belief?**



*I will sing unto
the Lord, for he
hath triumphed
gloriously: the
horse and his
rider hath he
thrown into the
sea. Exodus 15:1*

Gratitude to God - in song and dance

The overwhelming gratitude of the people to God for His deliverance from the Egyptians was expressed in Chapter 15 by their song and the dance led by Miriam.



Song at the Sea

This song is called "**Shirat haYam**," "**Song at the Sea**." By Jewish tradition this song of gratitude holds such an important place in Jewish history that it is one of only two places in scripture where congregants stand at its reading. The fact that singing and dancing takes place as an expression of gratitude to God illustrates the importance of emotion in worship. Worship involves more than cold intellect. Of course it is most important to have an intellectual understanding of who God is, and what He requires from us to have a relationship with Him. But our expression of gratitude to God for all He has done for us comes from our heart, and even today we express it emotionally in worshipful song and dance. It is the practice of Jewish congregations to read aloud and with emotion the Song of Moses.

Verse 1: "I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted; the horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea."

Verse 2: "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation."

This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will extol Him."

Verse 11: "Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord?"

Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?"

Verse 13: "In Thy loving-kindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed.

In Thy strength Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation."

Verses 17-18: " Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance;

the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling.

The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

Complaining, complaining, always with the complaining

Complaining is an expression not of gratitude to God but of dissatisfaction for the circumstances in which we find ourselves. While we may weep and cry out to God to ask why He has allowed our circumstances, we do so to seek God's mind. Our faith and trust in His leadership remains steadfast no matter what happens. We seek understanding of what God wants from us within the circumstances, acknowledging that it is His prerogative whether to change our circumstances. By faith, we accept our place to do His will in all circumstances! Therefore, we should not find ourselves coming before God with complaints, demanding Him to elevate our will above His will for us. Complaints with attached demands come from a heart of disobedience; from belief that is short-lived and shallow. Experiencing the miracles of God first-hand did not produce a deep and abiding belief in God's people. Instead, the shallowness of their belief is illustrated by their complaints and demands in times of testing. Three days into their wilderness journey, God's people complained about their lack of water (15:24). God tested them, making bitter water sweet for them to drink, only asking them to listen to the voice of the Lord and do what was right in His sight. Only days later, the people grumbled, "Why have you brought us up from Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" "you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink" (17:6).



Moses Strikes the Rock

"And the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness....

"Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (16:2-3).

God heard their grumblings against Him and responded to Moses that He would provide quail for them that evening and bread for them then next morning.



Gathering of Manna

"In the morning there was a fine, flake-like thing as frost on the ground."

"When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it?..and the house of Israel named it manna."

While God did provide sustenance for His people, Moses let the people know that their complaints were not directed against him and Aaron but were directed against God.

Eventually, hardening their hearts towards God's will for them through complaining would lead to open rebellion against Him.

The people would soon learn that obedience to God would produce God's blessing, while disobedience would lead to God's judgment.

Let us today remember that it is better to trust in the Lord with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding.

In all our ways, we should acknowledge God, and allow Him to make our paths straight, according to His will.



Moses' Uplifted Hands Towards God Guaranteed Victory

The first taste of battle for God's people came when they were attacked by the Amalekites (17:8-16). The Israelites had only been slaves and therefore had no training in the art of warfare. The Amalekites, descendants of Esau who lived South of Canaan, attempted to keep the Israelites from passing through their territory. Without warning, they attacked the most weak, the stragglers that were at the rear of the company (Deuteronomy 25:18). Moses' personal servant, Joshua, lead the fight against the Amalekites. However, the battle was won by the supernatural intervention of God, so that all Israel would know that God had given them the victory. Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed a hill that overlooked the battle. Moses raised his hands towards God, and Israel prevailed. But when his hands became heavy, he sat on a rock, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands until the Amalekites were defeated. In thanksgiving, Moses erected an altar to worship God. He called the altar "**Adonai Nissi**," "The Lord is My Banner."



is our

SHABBAT SHALOM

Only God can make a way where there seems to be no way. Keep trusting Him.

