Sighing Towards The Source of Life
Parashat Beshalach (Exodus 13:17-17:16)

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This week we are treated to a thrilling journey from bondage to freedom, complete with a quick escape – oppressors at our heels, a trek on dry land between spectacularly split seas, a song of liberation on exultant lips, and, finally, jubilation on the shores of deliverance. The high drama, suspense, and intense joy make Parashat Beshalach undoubtedly among the great mythic moments of the Torah. Less appreciated is the fact that it’s followed by an epic comedown replete with grumbling, general dissatisfaction, and complaints. The turnaround time from miraculous salvation to deep discontent is both staggering and not completely surprising. Those whose lives were transformed in their trek from enslavement to freedom grew thirsty and, no matter how supreme your spiritual high might have just been, when you need water, you need water.

We are used to recalling the Exodus; the glory of our redemption from Mitzrayim is called to mind liturgically on a daily basis. Yet, this week we are more apt to focus, instead, on the role of our complaining. The midrash imagines this grumbling beginning even in the midst of the sea. One journeyer turns to another and says, “We had mud there and we have mud here.” For me, this feels like a top-notch complaint, completely ignoring the wonder of the moment and fixating on the petty discomfort. The Torah text itself provides ample examples of groaning and kvetching in the days after the people’s miraculous deliverance from slavery.
their predicament and they complain. The bitter waters of Marah are only the beginning. In Chapter 16, it is the people’s grumbling about a lack of food that precipitates the giving of manna. And then, only a chapter later, another situation unfolds in which fear spreads that there will not be enough to drink. In each case, Moses is confounded by the kvetching, while the Holy One seems to listen and respond in kind. A careful reader of parables could only come to one conclusion in reading these stories: complaining catches the attention of the Divine.

Read more
IN THE NEWS

Hebrew College President Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, and Rabbinical School Dean Rabbi Dan Judson were featured in a cover story in the January 31 issue of The Jewish Journal in an article entitled “After campus sale, Hebrew College awaits big changes.” “I would say Hebrew College is in an extraordinary moment of change and opportunity right now,” said President Anisfeld in the story.

The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College Dean Rabbi Dan Judson was a panelist at the February 5 Boston Athenaeum’s Community Conversations panel discussion centered around the question: “What qualifies as knowledge and how is it transmitted?”

Shoolman School Associate Dean Deborah Skolnick Einhorn, PhD, has has been appointed Head of School at Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School in Washington, D.C. We are grateful for all that Deb has done for Hebrew College over the past 18 years, as an educator, advisor, mentor, and Associate Dean of the Shoolman School. We will miss Deb’s creativity, her passion for Jewish education, and her dedication to the many Hebrew College students she has inspired, but we know that she will go on to make a meaningful difference for so many students and their families at Milton.

EVENTS

April 29, 2020
Save the Date for our Spring Event!

Leadership, Learning, and Love
An evening of music, conversation, and celebration

6:30 pm at Temple Israel, Boston
More details coming soon!

FEBRUARY

Taking it “Seriously”: Doubt, Trust and Halakhah with Rabbi Avivia Richman

In partnership with Hadar.

MARCH

Teens Take Action Open House
Learning Philanthropy to Make Change

Hebrew College's Jewish Teen Foundation of Greater Boston (JTFGB) hosts an evening of
Azamra: Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan

Join Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab ’18, for a morning service in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon. Supported by the Hebrew College Innovation Lab.

February 22 | 10 am - 12 pm
Hebrew College Beit Midrash
Learn more

February Yom Iyyun: Teen Mental Health

A Hebrew College Rabbinical School and School of Jewish Music Yom Iyyun on Teen Mental Health with Support from the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project – a partnership between the Ruderman Family Foundation and Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

February 26 | 9 am - 3:30 pm
Hebrew College
Learn more

Seeing Torah Gallery Opening

“Seeing Torah” is a visual diary documenting artist Anita Rabinoff-Goldman’s study and artistic response to each of the 54 portions of the Torah over the cycle of a single Jewish year. Refreshments will be served.

March 24 | 6 pm
Hebrew College
Learn more

Re-envisioning Jewish Inclusion in 2020 and Beyond: How Interfaith Couples & Families Belong

A one-day program including panel discussion, text study, and presentations. Supported by the Hebrew College Innovation Lab. Breakfast and lunch available.

March 26 | 8 am - 4 pm
Hebrew College
Learn more