



## BESHALACH

BECOME A JEWISH INFLUENCER

*It's Not Just for Rabbis, Scholars, and Activists*

# PARSHAH OVERVIEW

## *Beshalach*

Soon after allowing the Children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the sea. G-d tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians. Moses and the Children of Israel sing a song of praise and gratitude to G-d.

In the desert, the people suffer thirst and hunger. They repeatedly complain to Moses and Aaron. G-d miraculously sweetens the bitter waters of Marah and later has Moses bring forth water from a rock by striking it with his staff. G-d causes manna to rain down from the heavens before dawn each morning, and quails to appear in the Israelite camp each evening.

The Children of Israel are instructed to gather a double portion of manna

on Friday, as none will descend on Shabbat, the Divinely decreed day of rest. Some disobey and go to gather manna on the seventh day but find nothing. Aaron preserves a small quantity of manna in a jar as a testimony for future generations.

In Rephidim, the people are attacked by the Amalekites, who are defeated by Moses's prayers and an army raised by Joshua.



## QUESTION

Do ordinary individuals have a leadership role to play in addressing the challenges facing Judaism?

# TEXT 1

Exodus 17:8–13

ח. וַיָּבֹא עֲמֹלֵק וַיִּלָּחֶם עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרֶפְדִּים.

ט. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּחַר לָנוּ אַנְשִׁים וְצֵא הַלָּחֶם בְּעֲמֹלֵק מִחֶר אָנֹכִי נֹצֵב עַל רֹאשׁ הַגִּבְעָה וּמִטָּה הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָדִי.

י. וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר לוֹ מֹשֶׁה לְהִלָּחֵם בְּעֲמֹלֵק וּמֹשֶׁה אָהָרֹן וְחֹר עָלוּ רֹאשׁ הַגִּבְעָה.

יא. וְהָיָה כְּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכְאֲשֶׁר יִגְדֹּל יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבֵּר עֲמֹלֵק.

יב. וַיְדִי מֹשֶׁה כַּבֵּדִים וַיִּקְחוּ אָבֶן וַיִּשְׁימוּ תַּחְתָּיו וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלֶיהָ וְאַהֲרֹן וְחֹר תָּמְכוּ בְּיָדָיו מִזֶּה אֶחָד וּמִזֶּה אֶחָד וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה עַד בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ.

יג. וַיַּחֲלֵשׁ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת עֲמֹלֵק וְאֶת עַמּוֹ לִפְנֵי חָרֵב.

8. Amalek came and made war with Israel in Rephidim.

9. Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out and fight with Amalek; tomorrow, I will be standing on top of the hill, and the staff of G-d will be in my hand.”

10. Joshua did as Moses said to him and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur ascended to the top of the hill.

11. And it was that when Moses raised his hand, Israel prevailed, and when he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.

12. And Moses’s hands grew heavy, and they took a stone and placed it beneath him, and he sat on it, and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this side and the other on that side, and his hands were steady until the setting of the sun.

13. And Joshua defeated Amalek and its people by the sword.

## TEXT 2

*Mishnah, Rosh  
Hashanah 3:8*

וְהָיָה כִּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וַיִּגְבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְגֹ' (שמות יז), וְכִי יָדָיו נָשָׂא מֹשֶׁה  
עוֹשׂוֹת מִלְחָמָה אוֹ שׁוֹבְרוֹת מִלְחָמָה.

אֵלָּא לֹאמַר לָךְ, כָּל זְמַן נִשְׁהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל מְסַתְּכָלִים כָּלִפִּי מַעֲלָה וּמַשְׁעָבָדִין אֶת  
לִבָּם לְאַבְיָהֶם שְׂבִשְׁמִים הָיוּ מִתְּגַבְּרִים. וְאִם לֹא, הָיוּ נוֹכָלִין.

“And it was that when Moses raised his hand, Israel prevailed”  
(Exodus 17:11). Did Moses’s hands make the war or break the war?

Of course not! Rather, the entire time that the Jewish people gazed upward and bound their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they prevailed. And when they did not, they failed.

## TEXT 3A

*Rashi, Exodus 17:12*

"וידִי מֹשֶׁה כבִּדִּים". בְּשָׁבִיל שְׁנֵתֵעֵצֵל  
בַּמִּצְוָה וּמִנָּה אֲחֵר תִּחְפֹּתִיו, נִתְיָקְרוּ יָדָיו.

“And Moses’s hands grew heavy.” Because he shirked the mitzvah and appointed another to take his role, his hands became heavy.

# TEXT 3B

Mechilta DeRabbi  
Yishma'el 17:12

"וידוי משה כבדים". מכאן שלא ישהה אדם במצות, אלולי שאמר משה ליהושע "בחר לנו אנשים" לא היה מצטער כן. אמרו: יקרו ידיו של משה באותה שעה כאדם שתלויין לו שני כדין של מים.

“And Moses’s hands grew heavy.” Here we learn that one should never defer a mitzvah, for had Moses not told Joshua “choose men for us,” he would not have incurred this suffering. It is said, “At that moment, Moses’s hands were as heavy as if two jugs of water hung from them.”



When Amalek attacked the Jewish people, Moses stood atop a nearby hill, hands raised, while Joshua led the battle.

As punishment for neglecting the front lines, Moses's hands grew extraordinarily heavy.

# TEXT 4

*Numbers 27:15–17*

טו. וַיִּדְבֹּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל  
ה' לֵאמֹר.

טז. יִפְקֹד ה' אֱלֹקֵי הָרֹחֶת  
לְכָל בָּשָׂר אִישׁ עַל הָעֵדָה.

יז. אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא לִפְנֵיהֶם  
וְאֲשֶׁר יָבֹא לִפְנֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר  
יוֹצִיאֵם וְאֲשֶׁר יְבִיאֵם וְלֹא  
תִהְיֶה עֵדֹת ה' כְּצֹאן אֲשֶׁר  
אֵין לָהֶם רֹעֶה.

15. Moses spoke to G-d saying:

16. “May G-d of the spirit of all  
flesh appoint a man over the  
congregation

17. “who will go out before  
them, who will come before  
them, who will take them out  
and bring them in so that the  
congregation of G-d will not be  
like a flock that has no  
shepherd.”

## TEXT 5

*Rashi, ad loc.*

"אשר יצא לפניהם". לא כדרך מלכי האומות  
שיושבין בבתיהם ומשלחין חיילותיהם למלחמה,  
אלא כדרך שעשיתי אני שנלחמתי בסיחון ועוג.

“Who will go out before them”: Unlike those kings of the nations who sit in their palace and send their soldiers to war, [my successor ought to do] as I have done when I fought against Sihon and Og.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why did Moses choose the incorrect course of action and not personally lead the army into battle?
2. If Moses believed so strongly that a leader belongs on the front lines of battle, why didn't he follow through?
3. What message does the Torah seek to communicate by telling us about Moses's mistake?

# TEXT 6

*Exodus 7:7*

וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְאַהֲרֹן בֶּן שְׁלֹשׁ  
וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה בְּדִבְרָם אֶל פַּרְעֹה.

Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron was eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.



Throughout the forty years the Jewish people were in the desert, G-d operated their world miraculously.

## QUESTION

In a time of open miracles, Moses headed into battle at age 120.

Why then, at age 80, did Moses refrain from leading the Jews in the fight?

# TEXT 7

*Exodus 17:1-3*

א. וַיֵּסְעוּ כָּל עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
מִמִּדְבַּר סִין לְמַסְעֵיהֶם עַל פִּי ה'  
וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּרֶפְדִּים וְאֵין מַיִם לְשָׁתָה  
הָעָם.

ב. וַיָּרֹב הָעָם עִם מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָנוּ  
לָנוּ מַיִם וְנִשְׁתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם מֹשֶׁה  
מָה תִּרְיִבֹּן עִמָּדִי מָה תִּבְּסֹן אֶת ה'.

ג. וַיִּצְמָא שָׁם הָעָם לַמַּיִם וַיִּלֶּן הָעָם  
עַל מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה הָעֲלִיתָנוּ  
מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהָמִית אֹתִי וְאֶת בְּנֵי וְאֶת  
מִקְנִי בַצָּמָא.

1. The entire congregation of the Children of Israel traveled from the wilderness of Zin on their travels; at the word of G-d they encamped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.

2. The people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test G-d?"

3. The people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up from Egypt, to kill me and my children and my livestock with thirst?"

# TEXT 8

*Exodus 17:7*

וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מַסָּה וּמְרִיבָה עַל רִיב  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל נִסְתָּם אֶת ה' לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ  
יְהוָה בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם אֵין.

He called the place Masah (trial) and Merivah (quarrel) due to the quarrel of the Children of Israel, and due to their testing of G-d, saying, “Is G-d among us or not?”

# TEXT 9

*Midrash, Tanchuma,  
Yitro 3:3*

רבי לוי אמר: למה הדבר דומה? לבן שֶהָיָה רוכב על כתף של אביו, והֵיכָה רֹאֶה דָּבָר שֶׁל חֶפֶץ וְאוֹמֵר לוֹ קח לי והוא לֹקֵחַ לוֹ פֶּעַם ראשונה שְׂנֵיָהּ וּשְׁלִישִׁיתָּ. רֹאֶה אָדָם אֶחָד, אָמַר לוֹ: רְאִיתָ אָבִי. אָמַר לוֹ אָבִיו: אֵתָה רָכֹוב עַל כֶּתֶף וְכָל מֵה שֶׁתִּבְקֹשׁ אֲנִי לֹקֵחַ לָךְ, וְאַתָּה אוֹמֵר רְאִיתָ אָבִי. הִשְׁלִיכוּ מִכֶּתֶפוֹ וּבָא הַכֶּלֶב וּנְשָׁכוֹ.

כִּךְ הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל. כְּשִׁיֵּצְאוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הִקִּיפוּ בְּעֲנִי כְבוֹד. בִּקְשׁוּ לֶחֶם, הוֹרִיד לָהֶם אֶת הַמָּן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיִּמָּטֵר עֲלֵיהֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם (תהלים עח, כד). בִּקְשׁוּ בָשָׂר, נָתַן לָהֶם שָׁלוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: שָׂאֵל וַיָּבֵא שָׁלוֹ וְגו' (תהלים קה, מ). וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: וַתִּאֲנוּתֶם יָבֵא לָהֶם (תהלים עח, כט), הוּא נֹתֵן לָהֶם כָּל צְרִכֵיהֶם, וְהֵן אוֹמְרִים הִיֵּשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ. אָמַר לָהֶן הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: כִּךְ הִרְהַרְתֶּם, הִרִי הַכֶּלֶב נוֹשֵׁף אֶתְכֶם, לִכְךָ וַיָּבֵא עֲמָלֶק.

Rabbi Levi said, “What is this like? A son riding on his father’s shoulders. He saw something he desired and said, ‘Get it for me,’ and his father got it for him. This happened once, twice, and a third time. The son saw a man and said, ‘Have you seen my father?’ The father said, ‘You ride on my shoulders, I give you everything you ask for, and you say: Have you seen my father?’ The father let his son down, and a dog came and bit him.”

So it was with Israel when they left Egypt. The clouds of glory surrounded them. They asked for bread, and G-d brought down manna for them, as it says, “And G-d rained down manna for them to eat; grain from heaven He gave them” (Psalms 78:24). They asked for meat; He gave them quail, as it says, “They requested meat and He brought quail” (Psalms 105:40). So too it says, “He brought them their desire” (Psalms 78:29); He provided for all their needs. And they said, “Is G-d among us?” G-d said to them, “If this is what you think of Me, the dog may bite you.” Therefore, Amalek came.

# Doubting Miracles

Despite experiencing the greatest miracles, the Jewish people still doubted G-d's presence.

This misplaced doubt created an opening for Amalek to attack them.



## TEXT 10A

*Midrash, Yalkut  
Reuveni, Beshalach  
17:7*

יהושע היה בשעת מלחמת  
עמלק בן נ"ז שנים.

At the time of the war with  
Amalek, Joshua was fifty-  
seven years old.

# TEXT 10B

*Rabbi Yechiel  
Heilprin, Seder  
Hadorot, Year 2448*

יהושע היה אז בן מ"ב שנה כי נולד ב"א ת"ו,  
ורבינו אברהם בן עזרא פירוש (כי תשא לג' א')  
"ומשרתו יהושע בן נון נער כתב שהיה בן נ"ו."

Joshua was then forty-two years old, for he was born in the year 2406. On the verse, "And Moses's deputy Joshua was a lad" (Exodus 33:1), Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra comments that he was fifty-six years old.

## ANSWER

Sensing the nation's doubt of G-d, Moses planned for a world without miracles and sent Joshua, whose age met the proper criteria for going to war, to lead in his stead.

# TEXT 11

*Rabbi Tuviah ben  
Eliezer, Midrash,  
Lekach Tov, Shemot  
17:12*

"וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֱמוּנָה". שֶׁב' יָדָיו שׁוֹת  
כֹּאֶחֶת, עֹמְדוֹת וּמִתְאַמְצוֹת בְּתַפְלָה.

“And his hands were steady.” His two hands are referred to as one, standing firm in prayer. This is why the words *vayehi* and *emunah* are in the singular form.

Even while G-d is running the world in “natural mode,” we rely on prayer, especially the prayer from someone of high spiritual stature.





Moses's Mistake:

Moses should have taken immediate action when his people's lives were at stake.

# TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, p. 96*

בא דעם אויבערשטן אָבער האָט זיך דאָס גערעכנט אַלס אַן ענין פון "נתעצל במצוה",  
וואַרום ווען גוים קומען מלחמה האָבן מיט אידן, איז דאָס (אפילו פאַר מתן תורה) אַ  
מצוה - און אַ מצוה הכי גדולה - צו אַרויסגיין במלחמה להגן על ישראל - און עס  
דאַרף געטאָן ווערן אן קיין איבערטראַכטונגען און אויסרעכענוגען (הגם בנדו"ד איז  
ניט געווען דערויף אַ ציווי פון אויבערשטן).

G-d, however, counted this as some sort of “shirking the mitzvah.” When foreign nations attack the Jewish people (and this was true even prior to the Giving of the Torah), there is a mitzvah—indeed, a genuinely great mitzvah—to go out to battle and protect the Jewish people. This must be done without overthinking or great calculation (even in a scenario such as this, where there was no explicit command from G-d to do so).

# Amalek = Doubt

Moses's mistake teaches us that we too must take immediate action in the battle against indifference.



# TEXT 13

*Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak  
Schneersohn, Igrot  
Kodesh Admur Rayatz  
3, p. 279*

עמלק איז בגימט' ספק, און ספק איז בגימט' ר"מ און  
ר"מ איז מ"ר... דאָס הייסט עמלק וואָס וואָרפט אַריין  
ספיקות אין אמונת ה' אין דער הייליקייט פון תורה.

Amalek's numerical value is equal to that of the word *safek* (doubt), which in turn is equal to the word *mar* (bitter). The meaning here is that Amalek instigates doubts concerning belief in G-d and the sanctity of the Torah.



It is every person's duty  
to help other Jews  
reconnect to their faith.

- Our capabilities make  
us cut out for the job.

...

# TEXT 14A

*Deuteronomy 25:17–18*

יז. זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָּךְ עַמְּלֵק בְּדֶרֶךְ  
בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם.

יח. אֲשֶׁר קָרָךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיִּזְנֹב בָּךְ כָּל הַנִּחְשָׁלִים  
אֲחֵרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עֵיף וַיַּגֵּעַ וְלֹא יָרָא אֱלֹקִים.

17. Remember what Amalek did to you on the way,  
upon your Exodus from Egypt.

18. He encountered you on the way, and he attacked,  
from behind you, all the stragglers behind you when  
you were faint and weary, and he did not fear G-d.

## TEXT 14B

*Rashi, ad loc.*

"כל הנחשלים אחריך". חסירי כח  
מחמת חטאם, שהיה הענן פולטם.

“All the stragglers behind you”: Those lacking strength due to their sins, for the protective cloud left them.



It is every person's duty to help other Jews reconnect to their faith.

- Our capabilities make us cut out for the job.
- 
- Even the most righteous isn't above helping another Jew.

# TEXT 15

*Rabbi David Halevi  
Segal, Turei Zahav,  
Orach Chayim 228:5*

מצוה לעשות על ידי גדולי ישראל . . .  
יעשו דוקא גדולי ישראל כדי להורות  
הלכה למעשה לרבים.

It is a mitzvah for the giants of Israel to take action . . . specifically them, the greatest of Israel, so that their actions may teach the public the proper course of action.

Leaving personal  
quests for growth  
to help another  
Jew inspires  
those around us.

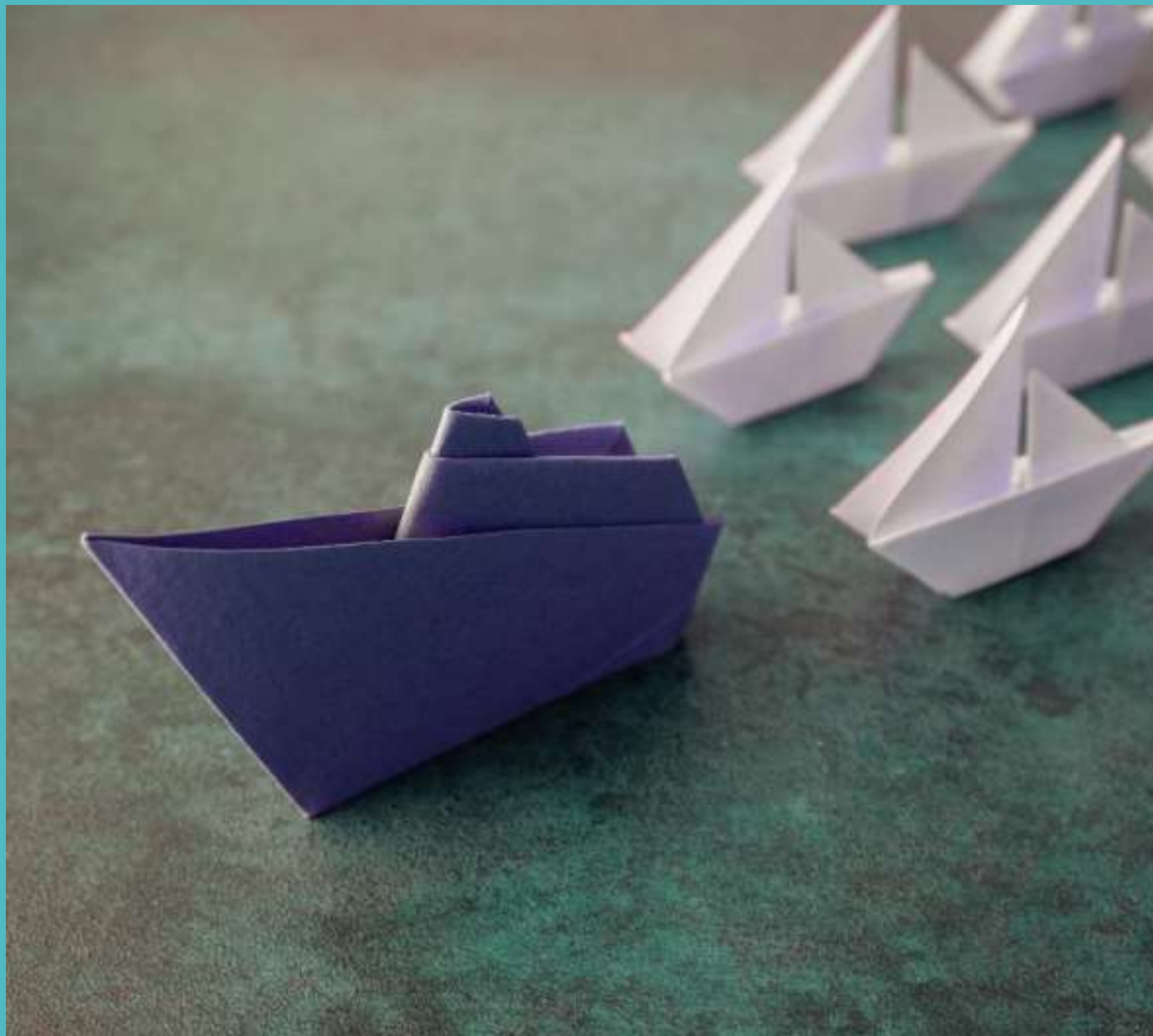


# TEXT 16

*The Rebbe, Rabbi  
Menachem Mendel  
Schneerson, Likutei  
Sichot 21, p. 99*

עס איז ניט גענוג השתתפות רוחנית אין דער מלחמה בעמלק בכל דור; ער קען זיך ניט  
מסתפק זיין מיט דעם וואס ער וועט זאגן א קאפיטל תהלים אז די אידן זאלן זיך  
אומקערן צו אידישקייט, אע"פ וואָס דאָס איז אַ הכרח און גבוה על גבוה וכו' און  
ס'איז אויך ניט מספיק ער זאָל שיקן זיינע שלוחים אויף דעם – נאר ער דארף אליין  
ארויסגיין און טאָן וואָס ס'איז נויטיק צו מגין זיין אויף אידן.

It is not enough to participate spiritually in every generation's war against Amalek. We cannot satisfy ourselves by reciting a chapter of Psalms as a prayer that others come closer to Judaism, even though this is necessary and important. It is also insufficient to send messengers to reach our fellow Jews. Instead, we must personally go out and do whatever is necessary to protect our fellow Jews.



## QUESTION

Do ordinary individuals have a leadership role to play in addressing the challenges facing Judaism?

## ANSWER

Every Jew has a critical leadership role to play in the fight for our brothers' and sisters' spiritual wellbeing.

## KEY POINTS

1. Moses didn't personally lead the battle against Amalek, in contrast to how he behaved in other wars. He was punished for this decision.
2. Typically, G-d Himself respects the laws of nature and expects us to do the same. However, the Jewish people in the desert didn't operate on that level.
3. Alas, the Jewish people subjected themselves to nature even in the desert by complaining and losing faith.
4. Moses's reasoning not to personally go out to battle and defy nature was based on the Jews' behavior.
5. His mistake was that when lives are at stake, there's no place for calculations, however justified they may seem.

