

PARASHAT HASHAVUA

PARASHAT BESHALACH

This shiur is dedicated in memory of
Miriam Heller z"l
whose yearzeit falls on the seventh of Shvat,
by her niece, Vivian Singer.

**"By the way of the land of Pelishtim" vs.
"By the way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf"
The Source and Meaning of the Prohibition to Return to
Egypt**

By Rav Yoel Bin Nun*

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go,
that God led them not
by the way of the land of the Pelishtim,
because that was near;
for God said:
Lest the people repent
when they see war,
and they return to Egypt.
But God led the people about, by the way of the
wilderness by the Yam Suf;
and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land
of Egypt.
(*Shemot* 13:17-18)

These verses are very difficult to explain. Indeed, much has been written about them, but the various interpretations still seem lacking.¹ The following are three less-serious difficulties, which have been resolved in a variety of ways:

1. What is the meaning of the words, "because (*ki*) that was near," and what is the nature of this clause?
2. To which war do the words, "when they see war," refer?
3. Why is the fact that "the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt" mentioned here?

The three more serious difficulties are:

1. Why in these verses is only the name *Elokim* mentioned? These are the only such verses in the entire story of the exodus from Egypt, beginning with the story of the burning bush!²

* Taken from "Nes Kibbutz Galuyot," by R. Yoel Bin-Nun.

¹ See a summary of the main positions in Nechama Leibowitz, *Iyumin Chadashim Be-Sefer Shemot*, pp. 170-182.

² In the first two chapters of the book of *Shemot*, the Tetragrammaton does not appear, but only the name *Elokim*. This is striking at the end of chapter 2: "And *Elokim* heard their groaning, and *Elokim* remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov. And *Elokim* saw the children of Israel, and *Elokim* took cognizance of them" (vv. 23-25). This is followed by the story of the burning bush, where God appears to Moshe using the Tetragrammaton. At the beginning of *Parashat Va'era* (6:2), this becomes the norm: From now on, revelations and commandments are by virtue of "I am the Lord," and similarly all the

2. It is explicitly stated to Moshe at the revelation at the burning bush:

When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt,
you shall serve God upon this mountain. (3:12)

And then later:

And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. And now let us go, we pray you, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." (3:18)

That is, in fact, what Moshe and Aharon said to Pharaoh (5:3). It was about permission to go to offer sacrifices in the wilderness that they conducted tough negotiations with Pharaoh in the name of God, and in the end they received permission to do so:

"Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said." (12:31)

How, then, could God have possibly ignored all this apparent intent by leading the people by way of the land of the Pelishtim, which, it seems, does not pass through Chorev – as if the revelation at Mount Sinai had not at all been on the agenda? Why, then, does the Torah indicate that He would have done so were it not for the concern of "lest the people repent"?³

These two points are among the key questions that led biblical scholars to the Documentary Hypothesis – that is, the idea that the Torah reflects a combination of traditions that are not familiar with each other, nor do they take each other into account. These scholars speak of two traditions concerning the exodus from Egypt, or primarily of two waves of leaving Egypt (the house of Yosef and the house of Yehuda), one of which did not pass by way of Mount Sinai. The reader will perhaps be surprised to learn that *Chazal* also speak of two waves of leaving Egypt – the children of Efrayim and the children of Israel, specifically in this context of the way of the land of the Pelishtim. They interpret the verse as teaching that God did not lead the children of Israel by the way that the children of Efrayim had gone.⁴ However, according to *Chazal*, this early exodus failed;⁵ everyone who left at that time was killed.⁶

_____ passages dealing with the exodus from Egypt, with the exception of the first three verses in *Beshalach*.

The three verses at the end of chapter 2 can be explained as emphasizing the situation of the people of Israel in Egypt before God reveals Himself to Moshe at the burning bush. At this point, God hides His face from His people, so that there is no place for the Tetragrammaton. Indeed, the Tetragrammaton is not found at the end of the book of *Bereishit* or at the beginning of the book of *Shemot* until God's revelation to Moshe. But this explanation, of course, cannot be applied to our verses, which deal with the period of the exodus itself.

³ Unless we assume that the true reason for the roundabout route is not written; see *Mekhilta*, ad loc., which states that had they gone by the way of the land of the Pelishtim, they would not have received the Torah.

⁴ See *Mekhilta* on the words, "because that was near."

⁵ This took place over the course of thirty years, based on a comparison between *Bereishit* 15:13 and *Shemot* 12:40.

⁶ Based on *I Divrei Ha-Yamim* 7:21.

The gap between these interpretations and the plain sense of the text only strengthens the question.

3. The various interpretations of the verse share one common idea – namely, that God wanted to prevent the people from going to war, at least in the immediate aftermath of the exodus from Egypt, out of concern that they would regret everything and return to Egypt. If so, this may be likened to one who flees from a lion and then encounters a bear. For what did the people of Israel encounter at the Yam Suf if not war?! And what did they want to do if not to return to Egypt, were that only possible?

And when Pharaoh drew near,
the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the
Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore
afraid;
and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord.
And they said to Moshe,
"Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken
us away to die in the wilderness?
Why have you dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of
Egypt?
Is not this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt,
saying,
Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?
For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that
we should die in the wilderness!"
And Moshe said to the people, "Fear you not.
Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He
will work for you today;
for as you have seen the Egyptians today,
you shall see them again no more forever.
The Lord will fight for you,
and you shall hold your peace." (*Shemot* 14:10-14)

Furthermore, given that the Israelites were rescued by God with the splitting of the sea, what would have prevented God from doing the same thing for them had they gone by way of the land of the Pelishtim? And in the continuation of the long journey, did the children of Israel not encounter war, and did they not wish to return to Egypt?

It is clear, then, that if the objective was to avoid war, this objective was not achieved. How can one attribute to the Torah such an understanding, according to which God wanted to avoid Israel's encounter with war, while at the same He brought war upon them while taking them along a longer route? The greatest of our commentators (Rashi, following the *Mekhilta*, Rashbam, Rambam, and Ramban) all sensed this difficulty, and each tried to resolve it with a variety of forced explanations.

Certain modern scholars understand this passage in a slightly different way (although close to the understanding of the Ramban).⁷ Pharaoh Seti I, who ruled at the beginning of the 19th dynasty, is dated to the 13th century B.C.E, close to the time of the exodus from Egypt or the conquest of the land of Canaan. Reliefs of Seti I found in an Egyptian temple at Karnak, as well as traditions concerning Egyptian conquests and military campaigns in Canaan primarily from the days of the New Kingdom (from the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. onwards, according to conventional chronology), indicate that the coastal road of the

⁷ See A.H. Gardiner, "The Ancient Military Road Between Egypt and Palestine," *Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 6 (1920), pp. 99-116. See also a description of the road between Egypt and Palestine at the end of Papyrus Anastasi I. For details and translation, see J. Wilson, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 475-479. See also Eliezer Ozran, "Metzuda Mitzrit Be-Derekh Ha-Tzeva'it Mi-Mitzrayim Le-Cana'an," *Kadmoniyot* 6, pp. 101-103; idem, "Metzudat Migdol Be-Tzefon Ma'arav Sinai," *Kadmoniyot* 10, pp. 71-76.

northern Sinai – from Tjaru (identified with Kantara) until Rafah – was a military road under Egyptian state control, with fortified Egyptian fortresses alongside it.⁸ The Pelishtim were not found there; the Sea Peoples hailing from Crete had not yet arrived in the region during the period in question (according to the conventional dating). Instead, there were Egyptian military fortresses. These scholars conclude from this that this road could have been a military trap for the tribes of Israel, especially with Pharaoh in hot pursuit, and they therefore bypassed this road entirely. According to this view, instead of Israel falling into a military trap, this bypass created a military trap for Egypt at the Yam Suf crossing.

This is a fine explanation that resolves the difficulty (according to the Ramban and according to the findings of modern research). However, its deficiency lies in the fact that none of this is explicitly stated. Scripture speaks of a concern that the people will "return to Egypt," not of a military trap. According to this approach, we must say that the true reason for the detour is not explicitly written – namely, the desire to bring about the miracle of the splitting of the sea or the giving of the Torah.⁹

I wish to propose an explanation of these verses based on the words of the prophets and on the words of *Chazal* (as I understand them).

God did not take the Israelites on the way of the land of Pelishtim, "ki that was near" – although that was near, and it would have been right to take them the shorter way. Why? "Lest the people repent when they see war" – any war, whether with the conquest of the land or in any generation; "and they return to Egypt" – **to seek Pharaoh's help and patronage**. "But God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf" – so that Pharaoh would pursue them and a war would take place at the sea; "and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt."

The verse does not mean that God wished to prevent war, to spare Israel and to prevent their fear; God did not fear war, neither with the Pelishtim, nor the Canaanites, nor the Amalekites. On the contrary, He led Israel to war so that they would go out to full independence at the sea, and leave not only their physical and legal bondage behind, but also their deep and explicit sense of slavery:

⁸ "The way of the land of the Pelishtim" is the shortest route along the Egyptian coast to the land of Canaan, and it is part of an international road leading from Egypt to Aram Naharayim. In Egyptian documents from the time of the exodus, this road is called "the way of Hor" – that is, the way of the god Hor (Horus) – because the Pharaohs of Egypt passed through it with their armies on their military campaigns in Palestine and Syria. The Egyptians erected fortresses and stations not far from each other along the entire desert section of the road to ensure travel on the road and the provision of supplies for the army and convoys.

A series of reliefs, sort of a military map, has been preserved in the Temple of Pharaoh Seti I in Karnak, from about 1300 B.C.E., approximately the period of the exodus from Egypt, which portrays the road from Sila (near Kantara in the area of today's Suez Canal) to Rafah. At the right side of the picture is Sila, which is described as a border fortress near the Nile Delta. The fortress in the upper left corner might symbolize Rafah. A chain of fortresses and fortified wells (about twenty in number) surround the chariots of Pharaoh, who is returning to Egypt. A literary document from the days of Ramses II (the first half of the 13th century) describes a section of these very stations (Papyrus Anastasi I). This fortified road could have become a military trap for the tribes of Israel who left Egypt, and for this reason they bypassed the road of the land of the Pelishtim.

⁹ See, for example, Abravanel in his second question, as well as *Mekhilta* on the verse, "By the way of the land of the Pelishtim," who offer three reasons not stated explicitly in the text: in order to give the Torah, in order that the time of the oath to Avimelech should pass, and in order that the Canaanites should be misled and rebuild.

"...Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians. For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." (14:12)

This liberation will be achieved precisely through war - "The Lord will fight for you" – and through victory and song.

"And they return to Egypt" – to seek help. This is the simple meaning of the return to Egypt, as formulated by the prophet Yeshaya:

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help,
and rely on horses,
and trust in chariots, because they are many,
and in horsemen, because they are exceeding mighty;
but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
neither seek the Lord. (Yeshaya 31:1)

And as Yeshaya says elsewhere:

That walk to go down into Egypt,
and have not asked at My mouth;
to take refuge in the stronghold of Pharaoh
and to take shelter in the shadow of Egypt. (30:2)

And as he further states with a clear allusion to the battle at the splitting of the sea:

Now the Egyptians are men, and not God,
and their horses flesh, and not spirit;
so when the Lord shall stretch out His hand,
both he that helps shall stumble, and he that is helped
shall fall,
and they all shall perish together. (31:3)

Regarding this same issue of requesting the patronage and assistance of foreigners, the prophet Hoshea says, apparently referring to the delegation sent by the king Hoshea to So, the king of Egypt:¹⁰

And Efrayim is become like a silly dove, without understanding; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. (Hoshea 7:11; and see there v. 16)

And similarly:

Now will He remember their iniquity
and punish their sins;
they shall return to Egypt. (8:13)

And again there:

They shall not dwell in the Lord's land;
but Efrayim shall return to Egypt,
and they shall eat unclean food in Ashur. (9:3)

In his description of the exodus from Egypt, the prophet Hoshea says:

I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love...
He shall not return into the land of Egypt.

And in contrast:

But Ashur shall be his king,
because they refused to return [to God]. (11:4-5)

We find a similar message from Yirmeyahu:

...You shall be ashamed of Egypt also,
as you were ashamed of Ashur.
From him also shall you go forth
with your hands upon your head;
for the Lord has rejected them in whom you did trust,
and you shall not prosper in them. (Yirmiyahu 2:36-37)

It is clear from the words of the prophets that the "descent" or "return" to Egypt does not necessarily refer to the actual descent or return of all or part of the people. It suffices that the king of Israel or Yehuda sends to ask for Egyptian patronage and help, and his emissaries present themselves to Pharaoh and say in the name of the king of Israel, "I am your servant and your son"¹¹ or the like, for it to be a severe act of "returning to Egypt" in royal and official manner.

Indeed, this is explicitly stated not only in the Prophets, but even in the Torah itself in the passage dealing with the king, which includes the principle commandments regarding the character and ways of the monarchal regime in Israel:

Nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses... (Devarim 17:16)

This is a prohibition falling upon the king and the monarchy to seek patronage and assistance from Egypt through horses and chariots. It is clear that the intention there is not to return all of the king's men to Egypt; it is enough that a number of merchants go, as indeed happened with Shelomo.¹² The verse is not talking about the return of people to live in Egypt, but with a request for help and patronage on the part of the king living in Israel. This is "returning to Egypt," the opposite of the independence gained by leaving it, and this is the explicit reason for forbidding the king to multiply horses and horsemen.

This understanding emerges also from the verse with which the rebuke of calamity in *Devarim* concludes:

And the Lord shall bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way whereof I said to you, You shall see it no more again; and there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies for bondmen and for bondwoman, and no man shall buy you. (Devarim 28:68)

The objection has already been raised: Did the people of Israel leave Egypt by ship?¹³ Clearly Scripture is not speaking of a specific way of returning to Egypt. Rather, returning to Egypt is the opposite of freedom from bondage – in other words, it is renewed bondage. The common denominator between asking the king for patronage and assistance, on the one hand, and voluntarily returning to Egypt and being sold there as a slave after having been taken captive, on the other, is that in each case there is a loss of independence and re-enslavement. This is the essence of the prohibition as it was formulated by *Chazal*:

The ear that heard on Mount Sinai, "I am the Lord your God who took you out from the land of Egypt from the house of bondage," and yet this man procured another master for himself – let it be pierced. (Rashi, *Shemot* 21:6)¹⁴

¹¹ || *Melakhim* 16:7.

¹² | *Melakhim* 10:28-29.

¹³ See R. Y. Gershuni, *Kol Tzofayikh*, p. 422.

¹⁴ Based on the *Yerushalmi*, *Kiddushin* 1:2, and the *Sifra* on *Vayikra*.

¹⁰ See || *Melakhim* 17:4.

The meaning of the verse is, therefore, that God will once again enslave you in the way that He had forbidden you to return there – by way of subjugation.

Now we can return to the beginning of the prohibition to once again become subjugated to Egypt:

For the Lord has said to you, You shall henceforth return no more that way. (*Devarim* 17:16)

By the way whereof I said to you, You shall see it no more again. (*Devarim* 28:68)

Where did God say this to Moshe, and what exactly did He say? Is there a congruence between "You shall return no more" and "You shall see it no more"?

The repeated phrase "You shall no more" (*lo tosif*) leads us to *Parashat Beshalach* to Moshe's answer to the people before the splitting of the Yam Suf, after they cried out in their great fear that they would have preferred slavery. Moshe answers that God will fight for them. Then he adds:

"For as you have seen the Egyptians today, you shall see them again no more forever." (*Shemot* 14:13)

The meaning of this verse (in my opinion) is: "For as you have seen the Egyptians today" – **the way slaves eye the hands of their masters**; "you shall see them again no more forever" – **with such a look**, "forever." These three verses say essentially the same thing.

This is also the explicit understanding of *Chazal* in many places, and it is summarized by the Ramban in his commentary to these verses in *Parashat Beshalach*:

According to our Rabbis, this is a negative commandment for all generations. If so, the verse is saying: Fear you not. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will save you today from their hands, **and return not to serve them**; for as you have seen the Egyptians today, **the Holy One, blessed be He, commands you further that you shall see them no more of your own free will from now and forever**. This is a commandment from the mouth of Moshe to Israel, which was not mentioned earlier. And similarly: **"He shall not cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; for the Lord has said to you, You shall henceforth return no more that way"** (*Devarim* 17:16), which is **truly a commandment**, not a promise. (Ramban, *Shemot* 14:13)

This understanding of *Chazal*, according to which the prohibition to return to Egypt is a prohibition of voluntary subjugation, stems simply from the interpretation of the three verses as we have proposed. The prohibition relates not necessarily to a physical return to Egypt, but to a return to their subjugation. This includes a return of individuals to live in Egypt and fall under its authority, and no less to the king of Israel as the representative of the Jewish People asking Pharaoh for patronage and assistance.

Clear proof that this is the approach of *Chazal* both with regard to the interpretation of the verses and with regard to the *halakha* is found in this summarizing statement:

In three places, God forbids Israel to return to Egypt, as it is stated: "For as you have seen the Egyptians today,

you shall see them again no more forever"; and it is stated: "You shall henceforth return no more that way"; and it is stated: "And the Lord shall bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way whereof I said to you, You shall see it no more again." Three times they returned there and three times they fell. The first time in the days of Sancheriv, as it is stated: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses" (*Yeshaya* 31:1); the second time in the days of Yochanan ben Kare'ach; and the third time in the days of Turgenos.¹⁵ (*Mekhilta Beshalach, masekhta 2, parasha 2*)¹⁶

It is clear from here that the three times that they returned reflect three different types of return. The first refers to Chizkiyahu's request for patronage, in accordance with Yeshayahu's prophecy, and as we have explained it here. The second refers to the physical return of individuals to settle in Egypt out of fear of the Babylonians after the destruction of the Temple in the days of Yirmeyahu.¹⁷ And the third refers to the time during the period of the exile when the Alexandrian Diaspora numbered tens of thousands of Jews; generations relied on the patronage of Hellenistic and Roman rulers, from the time of Alexander the Great to the days of the Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian. The Roman patronage crumbled under the pressure of hatred and persecution in Alexandria, leading to the general revolt of the Diaspora communities against Trajan and the destruction of the Alexandrian community about sixty years after the destruction of the Second Temple.

These are thus three different situations of Egyptian/foreign patronage that turned into dust and destruction, which *Chazal* saw as a punishment for the sin of voluntary subjugation. This also follows from the words of the *Yerushalmi*:

You may not return to settle there, but you may return for business and merchandise and to conquer the land. (*Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin* 10, end)

In other words, there is no prohibition if there is no receiving patronage or subjugation, but rather return in the form of commercial representation, or when the king of Israel conquers the place.

Now we can return to the beginning of *Parashat Beshalach* and interpret it with precision. The first exodus from Egypt took place with Pharaoh's consent and approval. A reference to such an exodus that is still under the patronage of Pharaoh can only come in the name of *Elokim*. This is God's general, rather than personal name;¹⁸ it is therefore known and understood by the entire world, and the Torah often uses it when members of the people of Israel speak to outsiders.¹⁹

When the Torah speaks of the first exodus from Egypt, which was with Pharaoh's consent and patronage, this is not a revelation or the giving of Torah, but rather an international historical event in light of natural, historical considerations. Even when the Torah wants to convey that the exodus from Egypt did not occur this way, it speaks to us in the name of *Elokim*, which relates to the world of nature (see *Bereishit* 1). Only when the Torah returns to the journey of the Israelites in a fully independent

¹⁵ Apparently a reference to Trajan, the Roman emperor at the time of the Jewish Diaspora Revolt, 116 C.E.

¹⁶ See also *Yerushalmi, Sukka* 5:1 (end); and with a difference, Bavli, *Sukka* 51.

¹⁷ See *Yirmeyahu* 40-43.

¹⁸ See Ibn Ezra, *Shemot* 3:15, and *Kuzari* 4:3.

¹⁹ This emerges, for example, from *Bereishit* 20, regarding Avimelekh; from chap. 31, regarding Lavan; from chaps. 40-41, regarding Yosef and Pharaoh; and from a precise reading of the verses in *Shemot* 5:1-4.

manner, by way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf, which leads also to Mount Sinai, does it return to a revelation of the Tetragrammaton – "And the Lord went before them."

Translated by David Strauss

The way of the land of the Pelishtim was a royal military road controlled by Egypt like many parts of Canaan itself. Had the children of Israel gone by the way of the land of the Pelishtim, they would have demonstrated their good and friendly behavior toward Pharaoh and recognition of the continuation of his patronage over them. At the border-crossing, they would have presented Pharaoh's legal authorization, and similarly at every fortress along the way. The commanders of the Egyptian army would have saluted them and removed the border barrier for them, and then they would have reported back to Pharaoh that his subjects, the children of Israel, passed them with his permission.²⁰ The children of Israel would also have sent him appropriate letters of appreciation. Whenever they would encounter some obstacle, especially a war, they would have sent Pharaoh letters, just as the kings of Canaan sent him letters during that period. For example:

To my king, my lord, and my sun, saying: So says Biridia, the king's faithful servant – at the feet of my king, my lord and my sun, seven times seven times I prostrate myself [literally, "on my belly and on my back"]. (Letter of Complaint to Pharaoh from the king of Megiddo concerning Aviya the king of Shechem)²¹

Had Israel left Egypt in this way, Pharaoh would never have pursued them at all. He could have granted them the mountain region in the land of Canaan and turned them into his agents, bearing his sovereignty. In times of wars, the people would have regretted their independence and returned to Egypt to enjoy his patronage. This exodus would have been completely different than the one envisioned at the revelation to Moshe in the name of the Lord. A nation of slaves that moved from Goshen to Canaan, enjoying Pharaoh's patronage, would indeed have been saved from harsh slavery, but they would not have gone out at all to freedom. Such a nation could not have received the Torah, as it would not have been sovereign, and the *Shekhina* would not have rested upon them.

God's kingdom is possible only after the removal of the yoke of subjugation to the nations. From that: "I am the Lord your God who took you out from the land of Egypt from the house of bondage; you shall have no other gods before Me." All of Moshe's prophecy and leadership, including the giving of the Torah, came only by virtue of full independence from Pharaoh. It was therefore necessary to lead the children of Israel by way of the wilderness by the Yam Suf to the pursuit, the war, the rescue, and the song – to full independence: "You shall see them again no more forever [through the eyes of slaves]."²²

²⁰ There is historical testimony to the passage of individuals and groups and even an Edomite tribe through the official road, with the permission of Pharaoh's officials, who inform him about it. In a document known as Papyrus Anastasi 1, we find: "We have decided to transfer the Shasu tribes from Edom by way of the Merneptah fortress... so that they and their flocks may live." See J. Wilson, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 259.

²¹ From the Tel El-Amarna letters discovered in Egypt, dated to the 14th century B.C.E. For details, see W. F. Albright, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 483-490. Regarding the letter from Biridia, king of Megiddo, El-Amarna, 244. See there similar openings of other letters.

²² It would be impossible not to add a remark relevant to our own times. In Jewish history, from the exodus from Egypt until modern times, there was no great event of double independence, both with the agreement of the great powers of the world and according to their laws, as well as with pursuit, war, victory, and song – until the birth of the State of Israel. The State of Israel was born out of a United Nations agreement and in accordance with international law, and at the same time, through a war of survival against the Arab armies – primarily, the Egyptian army – and also against the British authorities who ruled the country. The National Home

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arose from the Balfour Declaration, but the British went back on it owing to Arab pressure; the British Empire removed its forces along the coast, but intended to return with Egyptian forces and the Arab Legion, which enjoyed its patronage. The Israeli War of Independence ended in a symbolic manner, with the downing of five British jets in the Negev, above Nitzana. We have not experienced such independence since the exodus from Egypt.