

From the Rabbi's Desk
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Stories with a Twist [45]

Did I Leave You for Even a Moment and Go to Another Place?

Insights into Babylonian Talmud, Temurah 16a



Background to Our Story

Joshua



<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

Joshua, or Yehoshua, born in Egypt, was a biblical Israelite leader who succeeded Moses. His story is told in the Hebrew Bible, chiefly in the books Exodus, Numbers and Joshua. He was one of the twelve spies sent on by Moses to explore the land of Canaan who would later lead the conquest of that land, the Bible's Promised Land.

Exodus 33:8-11

⁷ Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. ⁸ And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. ⁹ As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. ¹⁰ Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. ¹¹ The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.

The Text: Babylonian Talmud, Temurah 16a

אמר רב יהודה, אמר רב: בשעה שגפטר משה רבינו לגן עדן, אמר לו ליהושע: שאל ממני כל ספיקות שיש לך! אמר לו: רבי, כלום הנחתיה שעה אחת והלכתי למקום אחר? לא כך כתבת בי "ומשרתו יהושע בן נון נער לא ימיש מתוך האהל?"

מִיָּד תִּשָּׂא כַח וְשָׁל יְהוָה וְשָׁע , וְנִשְׁתַּכְּחַ וּמִמֶּנּוּ שָׁל שׁ מֵאוֹת הַלְכוֹת, וְנִלְדוּ לוֹ שִׁבְעַ מֵאוֹת סְפִיקוֹת, וְעָמְדוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהִרְגוֹ.
אָמַר לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: לוֹמַר לָךְ – אֵי אֶפְשָׁר, לָךְ וְטוֹרְדָן בְּמִלְחָמָה. שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד ה' וַיֹּאמֶר ה' וְגו' .

Just before **the time when Moses, our teacher, left** this world and went **to the Garden of Eden, he said to Joshua: Ask from me all** the cases of **uncertainty** in matters of *halakha* **that you have**, so that I can clarify them for you.

Joshua **said to him: My teacher, did I ever leave you** for even **one moment and go to another place? Didn't you write this about me** in the Torah: **"But his minister, Joshua, son of Nun, a young man, did not depart out of the tent"** (Exodus 33:11)?

Immediately, his strength weakened, and three hundred halakhot were forgotten by him, and seven hundred cases of **uncertainty emerged before him, and the entire Jewish people arose to kill him.**

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Joshua: It is **impossible to tell you** these *halakhot*. But **go and exhaust them in war**, so that they will leave you alone. **As it is stated: "Now it came to pass after the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, that the Lord spoke** to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying: Moses My servant is dead, now therefore arise, go over this Jordan" (Joshua 1:1–2). This shows that immediately after the death of Moses, God commanded Joshua to lead the nation into battle.



Explaining the Story

What's going on in our story? (The sequence of events)

Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? At the center of our story we read: "Immediately, his strength weakened," Why did Joshua's strength weaken?

? Why were all of Israel prepared to kill Joshua?

? Why do you think God told Joshua: “It is impossible to tell you these *halakhot*”?

? Why do you think God saved Joshua by offering a “practical piece of advice”?

? If Moses knew that Joshua was such a loyal servant, who never departed out of the tent, why did he offer to clarify any uncertainties that Joshua might have regarding Torah law?

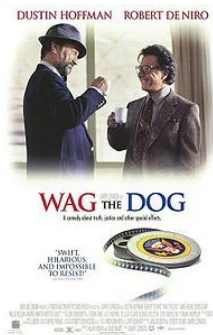
Extra Credit ? What can we learn from God’s practical advice to Joshua in our story about the role that wars played -and play- in societies throughout history?

? How would you describe Joshua’s state of mind facing Moses’ death and his imminent new role as the leader of the Children of Israel?

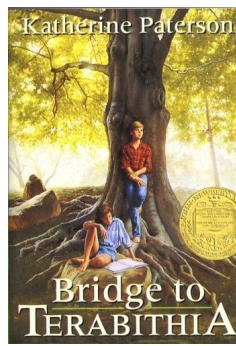
“The Twist” – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text

! Remember: Arrogance is the external face of insecurity and low self esteem!

Bibliography



Wag the Dog is a brilliant satire of the American political system with enough realism to make it plausible. It speaks the strongest to people who already have a visceral loathing of the American democratic process (not how it was in 1789 but how it is now). They see a degraded and ignorant public easily duped by politicians who are no more than habitual liars who will say anything to get elected but lack any idealism whatsoever. Intelligent, funny, but also very depressing,



Bridge to Terabithia is a work of [children's literature](#) about two lonely children who create a magical forest kingdom. Written by [Katherine Paterson](#), [HarperCollins](#) published the book in 1977. In 1978, Bridge to Terabithia won the [Newbery Medal](#).

Bridge to Terabithia is the story of fifth grader [Jesse Aarons](#), who befriends his new neighbor [Leslie Burke](#) when he loses a footrace to her at school. Leslie is a smart, talented, outgoing tomboy. Jesse thinks highly of her. Jesse is an artistic boy who, in the beginning of the novel, is fearful, angry, and depressed. After meeting, and then ultimately losing Leslie, Jesse is transformed. He becomes courageous and lets go of his anger and frustration.

The novel's content has been the frequent target of censors and appears at number nine on the [American Library Association](#) list of the 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books for the decade 1990–2000. The book is studied in English studies classes in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the United States. [PBS](#) made a TV movie in 1985. [Disney](#) and [Walden Media](#) made a theatrical film version in 2007.