

Do you know the *Midrash*...

Do you know the *Midrash* about Nachshon ben Aminadav? Just days after leaving Egypt, the Israelites found themselves trapped between a raging sea and the vengeful Egyptian army. Then God gave Moses a command that seemed impossible to fulfill: "Go forward, sea or no sea."

But who would make the first move? Each Israelite had the same thought: "*We do not want to be the first to jump in.*" Nachshon saw what was happening, and, full of faith, he jumped. He was the first one in. The rest of the Israelites followed and crossed into safety.

But do you know how the story ends?

As the sea split, and a passageway appeared for the Israelites to walk on, Nachshon paced back and forth. Sometimes he helped the elderly, and other times he lifted up a toddler who was getting tired.

In time, most of the group passed with song and gratitude on their lips. Then Moses said to Nachshon, "*You were the brave one who went in first. Let us pick another brave one to be the last soul to cross, before the waters close up the pathway.*"

Nachshon lifted up his eyes and saw the Egyptian army gaining speed and approaching the banks of the water. He knew that the last person in the long line crossing the Sea of Reeds would have to be brave, strong, and full of vigor.

Nachson closed his eyes and uttered a silent prayer: *My God and God of my ancestors, I was the first one who jumped into the waters and, with Moses, I led your people to safety. But who will be the last one to cross, the one who will finally end this period of captivity?*

Then God said, "*I have picked the very person for this task, his name is Ran Gvili, son of Itzik and Talik. He is a defender and a protector. He has watched all the others cross from danger to safety, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. He will be the last soul to cross.*

And when he does, the people of Israel will be able to breathe again, and be whole again."

Yellow Again

Empty chairs will be
saved for friends arriving late,
and tape will be
tape again,
and hostage necklaces
will be put away, forgotten in drawers,
and Saturday night will be
date night once again.

Signs for the missing will be
for dogs and cats,
(may they come home soon!)
and city squares will be filled
with grandparents pushing strollers
and lovers dreaming of futures,
walking hand in hand.

Tears will be for
mourning or joy,
but not again for anguish,
and monsters will go back to
hiding in closets or under the bed,
and when dusk settles over the land,
parents will know exactly where their children are.

And yellow will be
yellow again,
the color of fragrant etrogs,
and speckled autumn leaves,
and crown-tipped spring daffodils,
and rubber ducks, and sprinkles on a cake,
and *oh yes*, the color of the hopeful, rising sun.¹