

PARSHAS BESHALACH

תשע"ט

Parshas Beshalach is a very pivotal parsha. Many rishonim believe that the mitzvah of zechiras yetzias mitzrayim that we must perform twice daily is not just to mention what happened on leil yetzias mitzrayim on the night of makkas Bechoros. The emphasis must also be on what happened at kriyas yam suf. This is why in our nusach hatefillah before shemoneh esrei in Shacharis and Maariv, we primarily describe the miracles of kriyas yam suf.

Why is this so?

Until Klal Yisroel went through yam suf and Pharaoh was totally defeated, they were still mentally enslaved to Egypt. Only after they saw their masters dead at the sea shore, was the spell broken and they became free to accept upon themselves malchus shomayim.

Three critical events occur after yam suf.

They came to Moroh and needed water but they couldn't drink it. Moshe did a miracle with the branch and the water became drinkable.

Hashem told Klal Yisroel that if you keep the Torah, there will be no sickness and disease.

Then the posuk says Klal Yisroel were given a chok and mishpot. Rashi explains they were given Shabbos, hilchos Poroh Adumoh, and dinim. Shabbos is obvious—this is what we will see in the story of the manna. Why were poroh adumoh and mishpotim given then? They needed to occupy themselves with Torah. Rashi doesn't say they needed to know the halachos for practical reasons of how to resolve financial disputes.

Moshe Rabbeinu made a takonoh right here at this juncture—we must have kriyas haTorah every Monday, Thursday and Shabbos Minchah. There is no such thing as a Jew going three days straight without learning Torah. Many rishonim learn that there is a chiyuv gomur on every yochid to hear kriyas haTorah on these days to not go three days without Torah. It is an obligation on each individual. It means no matter how busy you are and how far away you are from a minyan, you need to hear kriyas haTorah on Mondays, Thursdays and Shabbos.

Moshe Rabbeinu saw an absolute necessity to learn right away. Why?

Klal Yisroel had been witness to enormous miracles for a year straight—seeing gilui shechinoh in Egypt and at yam suf. They rose to the level of the greatest nevi'im! And this was just to prepare them for the next gilui shechinoh at Har Sinai!

How does one solidify such an inspiration and gilui shechinoh? One needs to immediately learn Torah.

Yitzchak Ovinu, immediately after the akeidah when he became an olah temimoh, the first thing he did was seclude himself in Yeshivas Shem Vo'ever. He needed to shut out all the distractions in the world to internalize the tremendous hisorerus he just experienced. We solidify every growth we experience in ruchniyus by learning Torah.

Hashem told Klal Yisroel how to stay healthy. He doesn't say if you take all the right supplements and vitamins and eat the right diet and get all your vaccinations, you won't get sick. No! Only if you listen to the mitzvos that I just gave you.

Listening is not enough. There are chukkim as well. One has to accept the obligation of the mitzvos—whether it makes sense to you or not. It can't depend on your understanding.

Kabboloh means you accept a higher authority over yourself and

subject your understanding to the higher authority. Even if you think the opposite is logical, you do it anyway. You try to understand, but we subject our mind to Hashem's mind. We subject our will to Hashem's will. Then Hashem guarantees our health and our well-being.

Klal Yisroel travelled further and ran out of supplies and needed food.

Man is an unbelievable food. People nowadays put up signs about the seguloh of saying Parshas HaMon. But what is it all about?

The way manna worked was through bitachon. It was a nisayon on a daily basis—you can't get more than one day's supply at a time. You get exactly what you need for that day alone. You can't be secure in any storage for the future. Moshe Rabbeinu instructed them to take an omer's volume of manna for each person. But this is strange—people have different bodies and different needs. How can each person be sustained on exactly the same amount? The answer is that the manna was a very mysterious food. Hashem provided for each individual exactly what he needed.

Some people took extra to save for the next day—they didn't listen to Moshe Rabbeinu and it turned wormy. But when they left the second portion overnight for Shabbos day, it didn't spoil.

This was the routine for forty years. Moshe and Aharon were instructed to take a container to preserve the manna; to show for all the future generations how Hashem sustained Klal Yisroel all those years supernaturally. What is this all about?

Klal Yisroel were slaves in Egypt. The life of a slave requires that his master provides for his basic needs: food, clothing and shelter. He needs his slave's stomach full so that he can have energy to work. He doesn't want him getting sick by being exposed to the elements. A master took care of him just like he took care of his farm animals and just like we take care of our cars and work machines today. We take care of them and provide basic maintenance to keep them in shape in order to get the most out of our investment. This was basically the relationship a master had with his slave.

The slave didn't have to worry about his basic needs. But now, when Klal Yisroel saw their former masters dead in front of them at yam suf, it was a shock. They are desperate to find security—who will take care of their needs in the Wilderness?

Now that they got rid of their old mentality, they need to be prepared for a new mentality. Hashem took care of them from now on. They need to understand that their health and their parnassah come from Hashem alone. They need to understand a concept called hashgocho protis and how it works with hishtadlus. Hashem is running everything in the Wilderness—there is no hishtadlus to do! But when they enter Eretz Yisroel and there will be something to do, you make hishtadlus but you need to be trained for forty years to understand that it is still Hashem who is running everything.

Jewish prayer is totally different than all other forms of prayer. A Jew starts by recognizing who Hashem is—He is the absolute power who provides everything. We ask everything from Him—even our intelligence, even our tzidkus—we need selichah and mechilah from Hashem. To fight our battles and take away our tzoros, to protect our health, and to bring the geuloh. And of course parnassah. Hashem is the address for all our needs—physical and spiritual, personal and national. Despite what the various nationalist Jewish movements believe—that they can take Jewish destiny into their own hands and

change its course without Hashem's involvement. Hashem has ways and means through human actions, but nothing happens without Hashem directing it hands-on.

Hashem takes Klal Yisroel into the Wilderness to show them that now Hashem is taking care of all their needs. Why? Because He wanted to give us Torah and give ourselves over to him completely—kabbolas ol malchus shomayim. To be medakdek in halacha—to care about the will of Hashem. When someone is audited by the tax authorities he makes sure to file every penny and account for every expenditure. That's what it means to take the will of Hashem seriously.

The posuk in one of the Shir Hamaalos tells us that you can try to build the most magnificent mansion and the most secure city, but if Hashem isn't on board, your efforts are all for naught. The house won't drop down from Heaven, you need to hire architects and builders. You need to train an army for protection. But without Hashem's hashgocho, it won't work. You need to relinquish your sense of control and let Hashem into your life.

There is no hocus-pocus in Yiddishkeit. Just reciting the parshas haMon as some kind of magical incantation this week isn't going to accomplish anything. What the Shelah Hakadosh meant was that this week has a potential for accessing Hashem's hashgocho over parnossoh—if you tap into the reality that Hashem is in control of your parnossoh and you aren't in control! That is the secret to our success.

Hashem makes a very simple request from us. When you make a business deal, you say to Hashem that you will try your best, but the outcome is not in your hands. When we go to doctors, we are expected to take medicines and cures. But He expects us to realize that our recovery depends on Him. It depends on our willingness to accept that we are not in charge.

The people who instituted saying parshas haMon daily—in the beginning of the day—wanted people to realize that when we engage in the day's activities for parnossoh, we need to remind ourselves that our success or failure is in Hashem's hands. This is the seguloh they were talking about. There is no hocus-pocus going on here. The degree of our success depends on how much we depend on Hashem for that success.

Bringing Hashem into our daily life and our daily decision-making process allows the hashgocho to do its work. He will take care of us. It is like a slave who knows that if he does the work the master wants, the master will be pleased and give him what he needs to keep working. A five-year-old doesn't understand where money comes from. He sees adults go into a bank and come out with money and he thinks free money comes from banks! Just ask the teller and you get it! But the truth is that we don't know where our parnossoh comes from either.

When we are free men, we become very busy. We think we make the money ourselves and we are responsible for making our success. But it's not true. We are only responsible for making hishtadlus—the success still comes from Hashem and our allowing Hashem's hashgocho into our lives.

Two things coalesced here at yam suf. They experienced an unbelievable gilui shechinoh and they lost their subjugation to their former masters. We needed both elements in order to realize that we are now free to subject ourselves to a new master. Hashem brought us into the Wilderness to free us from all distractions and just learn Torah, and to realize that we are totally dependent on Hashem for all our needs. We needed to learn Torah to internalize the gilui shechinoh we experienced, and we need to learn Torah every three days to maintain that realization that we are completely dependent on Hashem. This is what reciting parshas haMon is all about—it is not some magical seguloh.

There is a tefillah of the Chayei Odom that is printed in siddurim in the middle of Shema Koleinu for parnossoh. It is a request for parnossoh and concludes with the posuk "hashleich al Hashem yehovechoh". That encapsulates the idea—we have to feel totally dependent on Hashem.

The moment a person truly believes his parnossoh comes to him from Hashem, then if he has a question in geneivas daas or some other question, he will act differently. You will stop rationalizing and realize that it is counter-productive to cut corners in choshen mishpot. It makes no sense to try to avoid the will of Hashem in business when your whole parnossoh comes from recognizing that Hashem is providing for you so that you can do the will of Hashem! Do you think Hashem will reward you for geneivas daas or geneivas mommon?

If you deeply believe your parnossoh comes from Hashem, you have to hold strong in your convictions and do what's right. It means accepting it in your mind and in your actual business practices by staying within the confines of halacha. But if you think it's all about what you do then you will be willing to do whatever it takes. If you believe it's from Hashem, then you can let things go because ultimately it is counter-productive.

At the end of the parsha we were attacked by Amoliek. We were vulnerable to attack. Why? "Rofu yodeihem min haTorah." Hashem gave some parshiyos at Moroh right when we left yam suf and saw our former masters' bodies dead on the shore. Why? To be able to immerse ourselves in divrei Torah and realize that even though we are free men, we are really still subject completely to the will of Hashem.

Just like a master takes care of his slaves to maximize his investment, Hashem takes care of us when we realize that we are totally dependent on Him for everything.