

**TorahFax: Beshalach**  
**Rabbi Zalmen Marazov**

Monday, Shevat 12, 5784 / January 22, 2024

In Parshat B'Shalach, which we will read this Shabbat, the Torah relates that after expelling the Jewish people from Egypt Pharaoh had a change of heart and chased after them in order to force them to return. When the Jewish people saw Pharaoh and his army chasing after them, they were extremely frightened and complained to Moshe, "Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us out to die in the wilderness? Why did you bring us out of Egypt? It is far better for us to continue serving the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

G-d said to Moshe, "Speak to the Children of Israel that they shall go forward. Lift up your staff and stretch it over the sea and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go on dry land through the midst of the sea." The people crossed through the sea, while the Egyptians, who chased after them, drowned.

"Were there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us out to die in the wilderness?" When G-d took the Jewish people out of Egypt, He had every intention to bring them into the Promised Land. However, a year later, after they sent spies to scout the land and then refused to go into the land, every man who was over twenty years old at the Exodus, ended up dying and being buried in the desert.

Lesson: The Midrash states that from this story we learn that a person must be very careful to use only positive expressions. Unfortunately, their words, "You took us out to die in the wilderness," were prophetically fulfilled, as mentioned before, and most of that generation died in the desert.

In this Parsha the Torah also relates how G-d provided the Jewish people with manna - bread from heaven. Exactly one month after they left Egypt, their food provisions which they took out with them ended. They had nothing to eat and complained. G-d told Moshe, "I will cause it to rain bread from heaven; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion each day, that I may test them to see whether they will follow my laws or not". The manna came down each morning and they were to gather a measurement of one omer per person. Should someone collect more or less, when they brought it home it was exactly one omer per person.

Lesson: Our sages tell us that our sustenance is determined from heaven. We have to do our part and our effort, but in the end, no matter how much a person will try, they cannot make more than has been ordained from heaven. Thus, say our sages, a person should make time to pray and study Torah each day. The time spent on prayer and study will not diminish anything from one's designated income.

Each Friday they received a double portion of manna, one for Friday and one for Shabbat. The two Challot we use on Shabbat, commemorate the double portion of manna in honor of Shabbat.

Q. Why was the bread from heaven called “mann” (manna)?

A. When they first saw the bread from heaven, they said to each other, “What is this?” They couldn’t identify it. So, they called it “mann” (manna) – which translates in Hebrew as, “what is it.”

Tuesday, Shevat 13, 5784 / January 23, 2024

Shabbat we will read Parshat B'Shalach. In this Parsha the Torah tells us about the miracle of the splitting of The Sea: How the Jewish nation crossed The Sea on dry land. The waters stood like a wall on both sides of them while they were crossing. As soon as the last one crossed, the waters returned to its natural state and the Egyptians who were chasing after them all drowned.

The faith of the Jewish people was strengthened after they crossed The Sea. The Torah states, "And Israel saw the great hand which G-d brought upon the Egyptians and the people feared G-d, and they believed in G-d and in Moshe His servant.

Moshe and the Children of Israel sang a song praising G-d for His great miracle. The song which Moshe and the Jewish people sang after crossing The Sea begins with the words, "Az Yashir." Our sages incorporated the "Az Yashir" into the daily morning prayers.

Q. Why do we recite the Az Yashir daily?

A. The daily recitation of the "Az Yashir" teaches us an important lesson. The miracle of the splitting of The Sea occurred when Jews didn't see any way out of their grave situation. Their only salvation was to rely totally on G-d. When they attained this level of faith, to actually go into The Sea, it split, and they were saved.

Similarly, by reciting the Az Yashir we are reminded each day that no matter how difficult things may seem or how many obstacles and challenges we may face, we must not give up. We should have complete faith that G-d's salvation can and will occur at any moment.

In the Parsha we also read that G-d told the people of Israel, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the L-rd your G-d and hearken to His commandments and will keep all His statutes, all the diseases which I have put upon the Egyptians I will not put upon you; for I am the G-d that heals you."

Q. What is the reason that for an Aliya (call up to the Torah), we mention one's name and father's name. Yet, for the Mi Shebeirach (prayer for the sick), we mention their mother's name?

A. The Jewish people are divided into three categories: Kohen, Levi and Israel. When one is called up to the Torah it goes according to whether he is a Kohen, Levi or Israel. These are passed on by paternal lineage. As a result, the father's name is mentioned.

However, in Psalms (86) King David prays to G-d, "My L-rd, you are merciful and compassionate... Turn to me and show me favor, give Your strength to Your servant, and save the son of Your maid-servant." The Talmudic sage Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that this teaches us, "When one prays to G-d for help and healing they should mention their mother's name."

May all the sick and wounded in Israel be blessed with a complete and speedy recovery. Amen.

Thursday, Shevat 15, 5784 / January 25, 2024

Today is the 15th day of the Hebrew month Shevat, also known as Tu B'Shevat. It is also called, Rosh Hashana L'ilanot – New Year for Trees. The 15th of Shevat is when the earliest-blooming trees, in the Land of Israel, emerge from their winter sleep and begin their new fruit bearing cycle. It is a special day.

Q. Why is it important to have a Rosh Hashana L'ilanot – a New Year for Trees?

A. There are various tithes that have to be separated from the produce which grow in Israel. The tithes differ from year to year in each seven-year shemittah cycle. One cannot give tithes from the new produce for past year's crop. From the 15th of Shevat, the fruits are considered to belong to the new year.

Q. How do we mark the day of Tu B'Shvat?

A. One of the ways is by eating fruit, especially the ones which the Torah singles out in praise of the Holy Land. They are, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

Q. Is there a lesson we can learn from Rosh Hashana L'ilanot – New Year for Trees?

A. The Torah declares, "Ki Ha'adam Eitz Ha'sadeh" - "Man is compared to a tree." Based on this, our sages have found similarities between trees and people and the lessons we can learn from a tree.

To ensure that a tree grows to be healthy, tall, strong and bearing good fruits, one must begin caring for the tree while it is still in its infancy and even earlier, from the time of planting. For if the tree is not given the proper care from the very beginning, then even a small blemish and defect on the young tree may turn into a large scar and affect its fruits, when the tree is fully developed.

The same principle applies to people. To ensure that our children grow up to be spiritually and morally strong, we must teach them right from wrong while they are still young. A small negative impression, left unattended on a young child, may in time become magnified and have a lasting effect.

It is never too early to begin educating and exposing our children to the ways of the Torah and mitzvot. We must give our children a proper Torah education and moral training from when they are very young.

In Pirkei Avot our sages teach us the following lesson based on the tree: Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds is likened to a tree whose branches are many, but whose roots are few. The wind can uproot such a tree and turn it upside down. But one whose good deeds exceed his wisdom is likened to a tree whose branches are few and whose roots are many. This tree, even when all the winds of the world blow at it, will always stand firm.

On Tu B'Shevat - New Year for Trees - we are reminded of the importance of being connected to our roots and making every effort that our children, through proper Jewish education, are firmly connected to their roots and spiritual heritage. This way, no negative forces will be able to pull them away from our/their beautiful and moral Jewish heritage of over three thousand years.

Friday, Shevat 16, 5784 / January 26, 2024

In this week's Parsha, B'Shalach, the Torah relates how G-d provided the Jewish people with Manna - Bread from heaven.

G-d told Moshe, "I will cause it to rain bread from heaven; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion each day, that I may test them to see whether they will follow my laws or not."

The manna came down each morning covered with a layer of dew. No matter how much manna a person collected, or how little one collected, when they brought it home it amounted to exactly "one Omer" per person in the household. Each day, they went out and gathered their daily portion of manna. Anything left over to the next day became spoiled.

The manna did not come on Shabbat. Instead, each Friday, they received a double portion of manna.

The two Challot we place on the Shabbat table each Shabbat are to commemorate the double portion of manna which came down in honor of Shabbat.

G-d supplied the Manna during the entire 40 years in which the Jewish people traveled in the desert.

Q. The disciples of the Talmudic sage, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, asked him, "Why didn't G-d give them a year's supply of manna all at once? Why did they have to go out and collect the Manna each day?"

A. Rabbi Shimon replied with the following parable: A king had a son whom he loved very much, and he provided him with all his sustenance. In the beginning of the year, the king would give his son all that he would need for the entire year. As a result, the son would visit his father only once a year.

The king wasn't happy with his son's lack of visitations, and he decided to provide food for his son, one day at a time. From that day on, the son appeared before his father each day!

"The same was with Israel," explained Rabbi Shimon. "By having to depend upon G-d for their sustenance each day, the people of Israel were compelled to direct their hearts to their Father in heaven on a daily basis!"

There is a wonderful lesson in this for us. The fact that G-d doesn't give us our needs all at once and sometimes they come with effort, is actually a sign of His great love toward us. Hashem wants our communication. He desires that we pray and connect to him. When we pray each day for His help, we appear before G-d each day and reinforce our relationship with Him daily.