

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 197

**Beshalach** | The Key to Livelihood - Faith and Positive Thoughts



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

פרשת בשלח | אנגלית

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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## **Parashat Beshalach**

### **The Promising Enterprise That Faltered**

The sign posted on the neighborhood bulletin board awakened fond memories for the local residents. The neighborhood grocery store was — sadly — up for sale. It was not just another convenience store or just a piece of property; it was their very own grocery store, where they had grown up and regularly met many of the local neighborhood characters.

Many of the neighborhood elders could not even recall when Chaim had first opened it; some claimed that it first opened in the very first days of the neighborhood, back when one could count all of the neighborhood's houses on the fingers of two hands.

What was certain — within the walls of the small grocery store, the broad cross-section of generations had found their weekly shopping needs: the elderly, the young couples, and even the tiny children.

As though he were a conductor guiding an orchestra, Chaim stood behind the counter, his face flashing smiles to brighten up the day for his customers. But Chaim, who had by now aged quite a bit, had ended this era. He published an ad in the local paper as well, announcing the sale of the grocery store.

One day in the following week, a taxi suddenly halted with squealing brakes, and from it, a driver named Avi emerged, his eyes wide with curiosity as he surveyed the sign.

Without delay, he called Chaim and declared: "Chaim, I want to buy your store."

On Avi's taxi there soon appeared a taped sign that read: "Taxi For Sale."

His friends politely inquired: "Avi, is everything ok? Did you not succeed at earning a good living from the taxi?" Avi explained with a confident smile:

## Parashat Beshalach - The Promising Enterprise That Faltered

"For many years now, I have noticed this grocery store and the turnover of money is enormous. I'm fairly confident that my purchase of it will grant me handsome profits, and I stand to greatly benefit from this purchase that I have been dreaming of for several years now."

Ultimately, Avi sold the taxi, took out loans, and held a grand opening of the grocery store under the new ownership. The first month was indeed quite profitable, just as he predicted. The earnings for the second month, however, were not nearly as heartening, and from the third month onward, the wheel of losses began to turn against him. As the months passed, the deficit grew and gathered a crushing momentum. Finally, on one cloudy day, Avi sat down on a chair in his small office, his hands holding up his aching head and wiping away his tears. "How could this be?" he wondered aloud. "I know," he continued to ponder, "people usually blame financial losses on improper and lousy financial management. They point to weaknesses such as selling too cheaply, or ordering more goods than the volume of sales, leaving

merchandise unused and undesired." "But I," he continued to reflect, "did my due diligence and invested my very best to operate everything in the most orderly and proper manner. Where did I go wrong?!" "If it was only my taxi business that I have now lost and cannot return to, well, I could get over that. But now I have got caught up in a cycle of debt that I will have a very hard time covering."

His heart pounded away, and strong feelings of anxiety overcame him. He hadn't felt this way in a long time; he barely knew that such a sense of despair even existed. Yet, despite the mental fog that threatened to rankle his sanity, a ray of light flickered in the distant recall. He remembered the verse: "Worry in a man's heart weighs it down" (Proverbs 12:25). This verse is also alternatively interpreted to mean that when something presses and burdens a person, and there exists "Worry in a man's heart, it must be expressed to another," for by doing so, one's feeling of well being will dramatically improve, and they will regain the strength to cope with this reality.

**Parashat Beshalach - The Promising Enterprise That Faltered**

Avi's mind began to race to recall someone trusted and wise with whom he could share his thoughts and worries.

He decided to call upon his good friend Yossi, who had a rare gift for empathetic

listening; he was able to sit patiently and listen with genuine interest to the travails of others.

It was as though simply through the power of his listening, he managed to heal people.<sup>1</sup>

—*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*—

1. Rabbi Asher Freund, of blessed memory, excelled greatly in the attribute of patience.

People were drawn to Rabbi Asher Freund like a magnet. He was a powerful and intent “listener.” He would listen attentively to another person allowing him to unburden all that weighed upon his heart. Essentially, this is what most people lack: listening ears that truly hear with a heart. Rabbi Asher provided this to a perfection. He gave each person the opportunity to unload from his heart all of his burdens, anger, disappointments, frustrations, bitterness, and failures; the same with all of the quarrels between one person and another, between a man and his wife.

He was attentive to anyone who wanted to pour out the anguish in his heart. Even those mentally unwell could talk to him for hours; he never lost patience. Rabbi Asher almost never spoke about himself. However, once, late in the evening, he opened his heart and said: “People do not understand how much I

go through in just one single day; they are not able to comprehend how it is possible to endure it all.”

He began to detail all that he had experienced that day:

“People came to me about severe cancer illness, marital harmony issues, all sorts of illnesses and poverty.

At the end of the day, as a finale for all of these heartbreaking tidings, someone came to me from the neighborhood of Meah She’arim with his young married son, who decided that the only thing that he wanted was to end his life.

It seemed nearly impossible to get the evil idea out of his head; I had to go through this feeling and experience it together with him, so that he would feel what it means to die, so that he would feel the taste of death, and afterward he thankfully lost this ill desire to die. These are matters of the soul, and are very difficult and burdensome” (“R’

Asher”, page 339).

## **Encouragement and Faith**

Yossi invited Avi, the new store owner, to visit him and have a talk together.

Yossi received him with a pleasant demeanor, and they both sat down on a bench in the yard, where Yossi carefully listened to

Avi recount his tale of woes from the beginning: his dream, his investments, and his financial downfall. Yossi listened attentively to all of the details, with deep interest and empathy, and even shed a tear of support.<sup>2</sup>

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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2. Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, regularly gave a Torah class every Shabbat for many long years.

Even during his illness when he had certain physical limitations, he did not give up, and despite the enormous effort it involved, he delivered the class to the public as usual. Each week after the class, the listeners would approach him and discuss with him the subjects he raised during the lesson, and he would offer clarifications and expand on the subject. Rabbi Ben Tzion, as always, would respond generously and joyfully, with patience and affection. On one particular Shabbat, he delivered the class with tremendous effort, and had exerted himself beyond his strength, and was in a state of absolute exhaustion.

He asked that this Shabbat, he not be burdened with questions, being that he had no strength left to answer them.

Instead, the crowd surrounded him with admiration, in silence and reverence.

A man suddenly made his way through the crowd and declared: “Rabbi! I have no question; I only request your blessing.” Rabbi Abba Shaul answered, in complete exhaustion:

“Believe me, I have no strength even to recite the regular blessing,” and instead wished him well with a brief blessing.

Then yet another person pushed through, mentioning the name of a sick individual in desperate need of healing. One of the students hurried to block him, but the man persisted and continued trying to push through the crowd. “Let him be,” the Rav whispered softly. The man blurted out lightheartedly: “May the honorable Rabbi bless me that my blessings be accepted on high, and I will offer blessings in your stead, and in this way the Rabbi will not be tired out.” Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul’s face grew serious, and he replied: “Love every Jew with all your heart and soul, and you too will be given the power to bless others.” In other words: If he would merit to have true love of his fellow Jew, his

Parashat Beshalach - Encouragement and Faith

After Avi finished sharing all that was on his heart, Yossi sighed in identification with Avi's predicament and began to impart from his wisdom:<sup>3</sup> "I very much do understand the deep pain and discomfort that you are enduring, day in and day out, almost incessantly. I have also noticed, and I have perceived, that the harsh thoughts and nightmares that you envision besiege you in an invisible prison, with no hope of release. But you must know that these negative thoughts are not based in truth, and they have no basis in reality.

They have been inserted into your heart by your cruel enemy — the evil inclination, the yetzer hara. Sometimes, a person may think that his situation is the worst it can possibly be, and he may feel as though his entire being is enveloped and sunken into complete oblivion. But one must

know that these feelings are purely the creation of the evil inclination.

The evil inclination stages this bleak future that the person envisions and instills fear and anxiety in his heart.

The person then imagines a terrible catastrophe; how, due to his debts, his house will be repossessed, and he will roam the streets a destitute and poor man. However, a person is instead required to serve G-d and obliterate and 'slaughter' the evil inclination as a sacrifice, as it is said: "He who sacrifices a thanksgiving-offering honors Me, I will show him the salvation of G-d" (Psalms 50:23), and this sacrifice of the evil inclination is accomplished through faith. The Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitch, of blessed memory, explained as follows:<sup>4</sup> "'Despair' is the bitter drop that hangs from the sword of the Evil Inclination, and which leads people astray from the paths of life, from fulfilling their

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

blessings would be guaranteed to have an effect, but if not, no such powers could be bestowed upon him, they wouldn't help  
(*'Rabbeinu Ha'Or L'Tzion,' Part II, page 270*).

**3.** The following is excerpted from 'Imrei Asher' (Letter 122) by Rabbi Asher Freund.

**4.** Igrot Kodesh of the Rebbe Rayatz (Part 5, page 116).

## Parashat Beshalach - Guaranteed Sustenance

mission in the service of the Master of the universe — to illuminate the world with the light of Torah, the pleasantness of the mitzvot, and good qualities. Despair is a downtrodden threshold for all types of evil, and it is the venomous counsel of the evil inclination.

There is no greater hero than one who overcomes this worm of despair that seeks to destroy the soul and ruin the mind. Faith, hope, and trust in ‘He who said and the world came into being’ are the healing remedies that sweeten the poisonous venom of despair and which establish the person firm upon a proper spiritual height, granting them the strength and courage to fulfill their rightful mission. This, then, is of primary

importance: to strengthen faith, hope, and trust in G-d, and at the same time, in practice, to do everything possible, not to sit idle with folded arms and weep over the glorious past, and to entirely avoid imagining a dark and gloomy future. A person must train and familiarize himself to adopt positive thoughts and to imagine with the power of trust that his livelihood is assured before him. Even if it is delayed for some time, G-d in his great goodness will ultimately repay him richly, and he will genuinely have every reason to be joyful.” “Do you hear, Avi?” Yossi completed his words of encouragement. “Yes, I do hear you. But I still don’t understand how I can instill this faith deep into my consciousness.”

### Guaranteed Sustenance

“You have a great point; that’s a good question. You know,” Yossi said, “I thought about it, and it seems to me that we would do best to contemplate what

happened to the Jewish people when they left Egypt.

When the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt, they were far removed from perfect faith in G-d.<sup>5</sup>

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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5. To quote the words of the Rambam (Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:3): “Before long, the

Jewish people in Egypt returned to learning the Egyptians’ ways and to worshipping idols



Parashat Beshalach - Guaranteed Sustenance

Moshe Rabbeinu revealed prophecies to them, and he began elevating them step after step, in a process that took some time and spanned various stages until he brought them — at the time of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai — to the loftiest level of prophecy.

If we were to examine the order of their ascent, we too might learn how to strengthen ourselves.” “We can indeed,” Yossi continued, “expand and study all of the aspects of the process of the redemption from Egypt, but since we are now discussing difficulties in livelihood, let us focus on the

most relevant portion of the tale of the redemption, namely, contemplation on ‘Parshat HaMan’, where the Torah details the giving of the manna. As the Tur writes:<sup>6</sup> ‘It is most worthwhile to say Parshat HaMan every day,’ which the Beit Yosef explains: ‘Parshat HaMan is said so that one will have faith that all of his sustenance comes to him by Divine providence,’ meaning, through contemplating Parshat HaMan, a person will succeed in instilling faith and trust in G-d into his consciousness.<sup>7</sup> But to properly contemplate and

~*~* Wellsprings of Wisdom *~*~

like them. Except for the tribe of Levi who stood firm by the commandments of the Patriarchs and never served foreign idols.

The great principle and truth that Avraham had planted was almost uprooted, and the Children of Yaakov would have returned to the world’s errors and its misguidedness.”

6. Orach Chayim – Chapter 1.

7. As with every Parsha in the Torah, Parshat HaMan too has infinite depths and insights.

To illustrate the depth of its holiness and meaning, Rabbi Menachem Mendel

Panet testified regarding his master, the holy Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov: “It is known to all that at the time when our master.. our teacher Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, would deliver Torah teachings on Parshat HaMan, he would draw forth blessings and influences, and an abundance of success for all of the Jewish people.

For the duration of twenty-two years, he expounded every single Shabbat on Parshat HaMan” (‘Mar’eh Yechezkel –

She’erit Tziyon’, page 13).

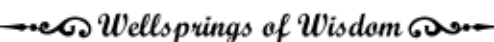
understand Parshat HaMan, we need some background, and let us start from the end of the previous Torah portion, Parshat Bo: The tenth plague, the Plague of the Firstborn, gave Pharaoh a tremendous shock.

This shock made him surrender, and with the remaining strength he had, he ran around the streets of Goshen shouting: “Moshe and Aharon, where are you?”

When he found them, he begged and beseeched:<sup>8</sup> “Gather all of the Jewish people and leave here at once. All of you, get out of Egypt and never return again.”

Moshe responded and retorted, “Are we thieves who run away in the middle of the night? We will leave, but only tomorrow, in broad daylight, in public, for all to see.” Indeed, on the next day,

the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, Moshe Rabbeinu announced: “Dear Jewish people, please assemble and come together to Raamses.” The roads leading to Raamses were swamped by the masses who filled them to capacity, and from every direction, one could see Jewish people carrying bundles of matzah and remnants of the Pesach offering on their shoulders. All of the Jewish people gathered and arrived at the predetermined location. Before them, Moshe Rabbeinu stood, his face aglow, illuminated with holy devotion, his appearance awe-inspiring like an angel of the celestial heights, and with the light of the Shechinah hovering over him, he announced: “People of Israel, the time of your redemption has arrived!” In the following moments that unfolded, the Jewish people left Egypt with a ‘raised and outstretched arm’.



**8.** As it says: “And he called for Moshe and Aharon at night and said: ‘Rise up, go out from among my people, both you and the Children of Israel, and go, serve

G-d, as you have said.” (Shemot 12:31). Rashi explains: “Everything is as you have said.. Even your flocks and herds take with you..”

## Pharaoh's Lie and Punishment

The Jewish people began the long march from Raamses toward the Land of Israel and marched for three days. Meanwhile, the Egyptian inhabitants who remained in Egypt were suddenly alarmed, "What have we done? How could we have freed the Children of Israel from our slavery?" Pharaoh assembled an emergency meeting and declared: Come all of you and I, let us go to war and recapture the Israelites as slaves: "He harnessed his chariot and took his people with him" (Exodus 14:6). Rashi explains: "'And took his people with him' — He persuaded them with words: 'We have been struck; they took our money; and then we sent them away.

Follow after me; I will not treat you as other kings do. Other kings have their servants go before them into battle, but I will go before you.' As it says: 'And Pharaoh drew near' (ibid.

Verse 10) — he advanced himself and hurried ahead of his troops. Other kings take their portion of the spoils first, choosing what they like. I will share with you all equally, as it says: 'I will divide the spoil' (Exodus 15:9)." The Egyptians were convinced and went with him out to war. It must have crossed Pharaoh's mind the fact that he had given Moshe his 'word' to release the Jewish people from bondage completely, but he most likely couldn't care less to fulfill his promise: "I gave 'my word,' but I never said I would keep it." Even if he had given his word to an ordinary person and then broke it, he would have deservedly gotten punished, but since he gave his word to the greatest of Torah scholars and violated it, he was severely punished.

Oh, how he suffered, as his end is known; Pharaoh lost everything: his money, his people, and ultimately his life.

### The Blinding Lust for Wealth

In a talk by Rabbi Shalom Shwadron, of blessed memory, he said the following:<sup>9</sup> Let us attempt to enter the innermost chambers of thought of the Egyptian nation.

They had been struck severely by many wondrous plagues, and according to the laws of nature, Pharaoh would have surrendered by the sixth plague were it not that G-d hardened his heart unnaturally. As for the Egyptians, we do not find that their hearts were hardened like their king. They felt the blow of the ten plagues intensely in all of their might and force, and they certainly wanted to surrender and send the people of Israel away but were forced otherwise by the king's decree.

Indeed, we find that their patience was exhausted, and they cried out to their king: "Do you not yet know that Egypt is lost?" (Exodus 10:7) — they said it well: "Egypt is lost," in the past tense, and that was during the 8<sup>th</sup>

plague of locusts. Surely after the 10<sup>th</sup> Plague of the Firstborn they were relieved and rejoiced when their king finally surrendered, and when the plagues subsided, they busied themselves with bandaging their wounds, as the verse states: "And the Egyptians were burying those whom G-d struck among them, every firstborn" (Numbers 33:4). Thus, logically, after their mourning for their firstborns, they should have conducted a penetrating soul-searching, convened a meeting of all their dignitaries, and considered carefully why their land was being destroyed and would soon may as well all be gone?

The first conclusion they would have certainly reached would be to depose their foolish and hardhearted king who led their nation to the brink of the abyss. But instead, what happened? Exactly the opposite.

**Parashat Beshalach - The Blinding Lust for Wealth**

While still in the midst of the throes of their mourning, after only three days to the plague of the firstborn, their hearts turned once again, and the Egyptians wrung their hands in regret for having freed the Israelites, saying: “What have we done to have sent away the people of Israel from serving us?” (Exodus 14:5). How do rational people behave this way? Did they not even have a shred of common sense and logic in their heads?!

Like we said, G-d did not harden their hearts. Rashi (ibid.) explains and clarifies this enigma: The Egyptians were rational people. Yet, despite that, they went out on a wild chase after their money that they had lent to the Jewish people. The greed for money that burned within them blinded their eyes and led them blindly into the depths, figuratively and also quite literally. Rabbi Shwadron continued: When we contemplate this, we see that a unique degree of madness and folly exists when it comes to the lust after money.

Although there may be greater pleasures in this lowly world than the desire for money, nonetheless, it is only regarding the lust for money that it says: “A bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and distorts the words of the righteous” (Exodus 23:8). The lust after money causes a blindness of the senses and a dizziness of the mind. It is as if there is some special drug that hits the brain and immediately turns the person into a stupefied drunkard who does not know what he is doing or saying. When it comes to financial gain, a person may justify his ways with various excuses and does not even realize how foolish he appears.

Rabbi Shwadron concluded:

The nation of Egypt teaches us the important lesson that if a person chases mindlessly after money — he will come to a point of utter absurdity and absolute destruction, just as all of the Egyptians with their king at their head marched proudly and with clear minds into certain death, all, merely for the sake of money. The lust for money is the root of all impurity.

## The Powerful Faith That Split the Sea

For seven days, starting from their exodus from Egypt until they crossed the Sea of Reeds, the Jewish people ascended spiritually, stage after stage, in faith and belief in G-d. They had left Egypt and traversed into the desolate desert. Then, deviating from the planned route, they stood before a raging sea poised to drown whoever entered it. There, on the shore of the sea, G-d turned to Moshe Rabbeinu in astonishment: ‘Why are you crying out?’ ‘Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them journey forth.’” (Exodus 14:15). The Children of Israel, with utmost simplicity, entered the sea at once. Our Sages explain that by standing firm in the test before them, they reached a wondrous pinnacle of trust in G-d,

and that itself brought salvation, and the sea was split before them miraculously.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, due to their extraordinary degree of faith, they merited to see the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore. We bring an excerpt on this theme from Rabbi Yoram Abargel, of blessed memory:<sup>11</sup>

“After the Jewish people came out of the Sea of Reeds and the sea closed back upon the Egyptians, drowning them to death, the Torah adds: “G-d delivered the people of Israel on that day from the hand of Egypt, and the people of Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. The people of Israel saw the great hand that G-d inflicted upon Egypt, and the people feared G-d, and they

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**10.** In the words of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (Nefesh HaChaim, Gate 1, Chapter 9): “At the splitting of the Red Sea, G-d said to Moshe: ‘Why do you cry out to Me? Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them journey forth.’ (Shemot 14:15).

That is to say, the matter depends on them. If they stand firm in faith and

trust, and move forward, continuing on into the sea, their hearts secure without fear; this depth of trust in Me will surely split it open before them.

Through this they will cause an awakening Above and He will perform the miracle and split it before them.”

**11.** ‘Imrei Noam’, Beshalach – Discourse 7.

Parashat Beshalach - The Powerful Faith That Split the Sea

believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant” (Exodus 14:30-31). The Gemara (Pesachim 118b) explains that after the Children of Israel emerged from the sea, there were still some who lacked faith and claimed: “Just as we have emerged from this side of the sea, perhaps the Egyptians have emerged from another side of the sea.” Therefore, G-d commanded the angel of the sea to cast the bodies of the Egyptians onto the dry land, so that the people of Israel would see with their own eyes that all the Egyptians were dead, as it says: “And the people of Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.” This removed from their hearts any fear that perhaps the Egyptians were still alive and might come once again to harm them.

The “Sfat Emet” offers another explanation:<sup>12</sup>

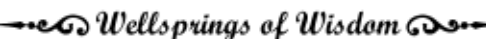
When G-d performs a miracle for a person and topples his enemies and opponents, if that

person is worthy of the miracle due to his many good deeds, G-d grants him the merit to witness the downfall of his enemies.

However, if he was not personally worthy of the miracle, and G-d toppled his enemies solely due to their wickedness, then G-d does not grant the person the merit to see their enemy's downfall. Based on this principle, the Sfat Emet interprets the words that King David said: “G-d is with me among those who assist me, and I will witness the downfall of my enemies” (Psalms 118:7).

This means that when G-d helps me and performs a miracle on my behalf due to my own merit (“with me among those who assist me”), consequently, I will also “witness the downfall of my enemies.”

Not so if G-d helps me and performs a miracle on my behalf solely due to my enemies' wickedness, without my being worthy. G-d commanded the angel of the sea to spit out the



12. Vayikra, Pesach – Year 5636.

**Parashat Beshalach - The Powerful Faith That Split the Sea**

corpses of the Egyptians onto dry land and to show them to the Children of Israel because G-d wanted to demonstrate before them that He performed this great miracle for them and toppled their enemies not only because of the enemies' wickedness but also, and mainly because they themselves were worthy of this miracle no less. Thus, they deserved to see with their own eyes the downfall of their enemies. Even though the Children of Israel had sunk in forty-nine levels of impurity when they were in Egypt, still, when they had left Egypt, they were worthy that G-d perform for them the great miracles of the splitting of the sea and the downfall of their enemies — all thanks to the enormous faith that they showed by agreeing to leave Egypt — they, their wives, their children, and all they possessed — following Moshe Rabbeinu into the great and terrible desert, without any doubts or questions as to where and why they were going and what would become of them and their children.

As it is said: “Thus said G-d: I remember the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, how you followed Me into the desert, into a land not sown” (Jeremiah 2:2). Similarly, they were worthy of these miracles due to their great faith when, after having left Egypt and distancing away from it and the menace it represented, Moshe Rabbeinu commanded them by G-d's word to turn back towards Egypt, which they complied with wholeheartedly.

As it says at the beginning of our Parsha: “Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them turn back and encamp before Pi-Hachiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-Tzefon; you shall encamp opposite it by the sea” (Exodus 14:2).

Even though this action seemed contrary to common sense, the Children of Israel carried it out without hesitation or doubt, with simple faith.

Our Sages said in the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 21:8): “G-d said: the Jewish people's faith in Me is a sufficient cause for Me to tear apart the sea before them — for they did



**Parashat Beshalach - Still a Distance to Go in Acquiring Faith**

not say to Moshe ‘How shall we turn back, let us not break the spirit of our children and women who are with us,’ but they rather believed in Me and followed Moshe.” Above all else, the Children of Israel were worthy of these miracles because of the tremendous faith they demonstrated when they stood before the stormy sea, as it is written: “G-d caused a strong east wind to blow all night” (Exodus 14:21).

There was no natural possibility of entering this stormy sea and emerging alive. Nonetheless, G-d commanded Moshe Rabbeinu: “Speak to the Children of Israel and let them journey forth” (Exodus 14:15), that is, instruct the Children of Israel to move forward into the stormy sea with complete faith that G-d would perform a miracle for them.

After Nachshon ben Aminadav leaped first into the water,

myriads of others of the people of Israel followed him, men, women, and children, into the stormy sea. They almost drowned, and they cried out to G-d: “Save me, G-d, for waters have come up to my soul” (Psalms 69:2), and only then did the miracle occur, and the sea was split (Shemot Rabbah 21:10). According to the commentators, even after the sea split, it did not do so all at once.

Each time the Children of Israel advanced a few more steps, the sea parted another few meters. Thus, even after it had begun splitting, they still needed to proceed step after step with pure and simple faith and resolve that it would continue to open up before them. This enormous faith that the Children of Israel displayed despite all of these challenging circumstances made them worthy of the great miracle of beholding and witnessing the downfall of their enemies.

**Still a Distance to Go in Acquiring Faith**

At the splitting of the sea, the Children of Israel attained a palpable faith in G-d, as it is said:

“This is my G-d and I will adorn Him, the G-d of my father and I will exalt Him” (Exodus 15:2).

**Parashat Beshalach - Still a Distance to Go in Acquiring Faith**

With the words “This is my G-d,” they expressed and revealed their lofty spiritual level.

As Rabbi Eliezer expounded:<sup>13</sup> “From where do we know that the divine vision that the maidservant saw at the sea was not beheld even by the great prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah? For it is said regarding later prophecies: ‘And through the prophets I will become imagined’ (Hosea 12:11). However, the Children of Israel merited to see the divine with their own eyes, so to speak, as if pointing and saying: ‘This — right here — is my G-d.’”

From this exalted yet palpable divine vision, the Children of Israel gained a deep faith

in G-d and in Moshe, His servant.

Yet they still had not attained complete faith;<sup>14</sup> they still needed to continue ascending the ladder of faith. The first step of this ladder of further advancement is the recognition of one's own level. As long as a person is unaware of his shortcomings, he will not and cannot strive to advance.

How can one advance if they do not even realize the need to progress further?

G-d would soon cause them to recognize their level and how much they still needed to progress: After 23 days, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar,

❧ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ❧

**13.** ‘Mechilta d’Rabbi Yishmael’ (Parshat Beshalach, Masechta d’Shira – Parsha 3).

**14.** To quote the Rambam (Yesodei HaTorah 8:1): “The Children of Israel did not believe in Moshe Rabbeinu because of the wondrous signs he performed, for one who believes solely because of signs has a flaw in his heart, for it is a possibility that the sign was done through magic or sorcery.

Rather, all of the signs that Moshe performed in the wilderness, he did out of

necessity, not to prove his prophecy. We know for certain that the revelation at Mount Sinai alone is the proof of his true prophecy without flaw, as it is said: ‘G-d said to Moshe: Behold, I come to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever’ (Shemot 19:9).

From here we infer that before this revelation, they did not have an everlasting belief free of any doubt, only a belief that still left room to be questioned.”

Parashat Beshalach - Still a Distance to Go in Acquiring Faith

the Children of Israel arrived in the Wilderness of Zin, and there, the food they had brought from Egypt ran out. The Jewish people became at once anxious and bitterly complained. It became quite clear to them all that they were still far from a perfect faith. We bring an excerpt from the commentary of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch on the Torah:<sup>15</sup>

“The memory of the miraculous deliverance and salvation in Egypt and at the sea, as well as the fascinating and instructive first test at Marah,<sup>16</sup> all vanished in the face of the threat of hunger that now endangered their wives and children.

Perhaps this is the intent of our Sages’ saying (Pesachim 118b): ‘A person’s livelihood is more difficult than the splitting of the Red Sea.’ A threat of hunger — real or imagined

— undermines all values and annuls all lofty resolutions.

As long as a person cannot disconnect himself — not G-d forbid from the firm responsibility for providing sustenance for his household, but — from the intense anxiety resulting from this responsibility, he cannot fully adhere to the Torah of G-d. And this freedom from intense anxiety comes only with the profound realization that the concern for livelihood, which stands at the forefront of human worries, is not squarely placed on man’s shoulders.

He must recognize that even for this goal, man can and must do his share — namely, what G-d demands of him in order to attain that goal. But as for the success of his efforts, he must leave it to G-d, who observes and cares for every household and for every individual and whose mercy

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*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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15. Exodus 16:2.

16. After the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, the Children of Israel continued their journey, “And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. They came to Marah, and they could not

drink the waters of Marah because they were bitter” (Shemot 15:22-23).

The Children of Israel then complained: “The people complained against Moshe, saying: What shall we drink?” (ibid.

Verse 24).

**Parashat Beshalach - Still a Distance to Go in Acquiring Faith**

extends over all His creatures. So long that this realization is not firmly rooted in the human heart, and as long as man feels that he alone is chained to the yoke of earning his livelihood and must rely solely upon his limited abilities, there is then no end to his worries. These worries can transform his entire inner world into a parched and barren desert, even if he finds his dwellings to be in the midst of a populous and wealthy region. His anxiety may lead him to believe that he must secure not only his tomorrow but his family's entire future financial well-being and even the future of his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

This belief can drive him to a relentless and merciless pursuit of ever-greater wealth, leaving him with no time to think of any other purpose or goal. For the reason outlined above, G-d led His people, destined to receive His Torah, into a real desert where there were no readily available means of livelihood.

Here, they would face the daily grinding worry of meeting their

basic needs that could not be self-fulfilled, as well as worry for a future that seemed inconceivable.

This dire situation caused them to realize — and their descendants after them to study from — how faithlessly and thoughtlessly a temporary uncomfortable situation like this could cause them to behave. As the next verse implies: ‘The Children of Israel said to them: If only had we died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots, when we ate bread to satiety; for you have brought us out into this desert to cause the entire assembly to die from hunger.’ (Exodus 16:3).”

They argued as follows: “When we were in Egypt, we would not worry to this degree about our livelihood.

When we were slaves, it was the masters' concern to keep us alive and strong, just as one cares for work animals. But now, it cannot be that G-d commanded you to bring us here, to the desert, with no food or drink, and where we surely will all die of hunger.”

## Lack of Faith - Asking for Food

In Psalms, chapter 78, we find the following verses describing this period following the Exodus from Egypt: “Yet they continued to sin against Him, rebelling in the wilderness against the Most High.

They tested G-d in their hearts by asking for food for their souls.

They spoke against G-d. They said: ‘Can G-d prepare a table of food in the desert ?

Indeed, He struck a rock and waters gushed forth, streams overflowed; can He also give bread? Can He supply meat for His people?’

Therefore G-d heard and was angry, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and also wrath rose against Israel.

Because they did not believe in G-d and did not trust in His salvation.” (Psalms 78:17-22).

The great halachic authority, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein of blessed

memory, once explained:<sup>17</sup> “It is clear from Psalms that the Children of Israel sinned by asking for food. Due to their deep and great trust in G-d, they should have been resolute with faith in G-d’s promise, and then they would not have needed to ask for bread at all. Instead, by a miracle, they would not need to eat at all.

But since they made themselves aware and caused themselves suffering by emphasizing that their bread had run out, and they did not stand firm in this test from G-d, they did not merit that greater miracle.

He, therefore, ‘made them hungry’ and needed to consume the manna.

Although manna itself was also an enormous miracle, it was nonetheless not as great of a miracle as not requiring to eat any food at all. Proof of this is from the verse in Parshat Ekev: ‘Your garment did not wear out

**Parashat Beshalach - Torah study — The ‘Connecting Mediator’**

upon you, and your foot did not swell these forty years’ (Deuteronomy 8:4). With regard to garments, they had never raised a complaint or concern. As a result, being that they did not rebel against trust in G-d

by requesting it, they indeed, miraculously did not need to ever change or renew their clothing. Thus, their true level of faith that was in lack was revealed to them, and G-d gave them the heavenly gift of manna.

**Torah study — The ‘Connecting Mediator’**

One of the most fundamental principles that a Jew must know is that G-d, the Torah, and the Jewish people are truly one. To explain this, we must preface: It arose in G-d’s will to create a creation structured in a manner of those that are “higher” and those “lower.”

The difference between them lies in the degree of the revelation of G-dliness within them.

The more G-dliness is revealed, the “higher” and loftier the creation is considered to be.

Conversely, the more the light of G-dliness is concealed and hidden, the “lower” the particular creation is considered. For such a structure to be created in the world and maintained, G-d created an entity that serves as a “mediator.”

As is known, at the beginning of Creation there was a certain limited level of revelation of G-dliness, and that which was consequently created directly from this revelation is considered “higher.” If the revelation were to have continued to shine openly, there would be no differences in levels between one and another. To create differentiation, G-d placed an intermediate level between each of the myriads of endless levels — something that would cause and create a distinction between each of them. The light that emanates from the higher level enters into the mediator, where its light becomes concealed, and when it emerges on the ‘other side,’ it is a lesser and more finite light and is considered “lower.” Such a mediator is called a “mediator that

**Parashat Beshalach - A Lesson Called 'Manna'**

interrupts” — it essentially separates between one level and another. However, there also exists a “mediator that connects,” a spiritual level whose role is to unite the higher and lower levels. In such a case, the same divine light that shines in the higher realm shines in the lower realm as well; it is adjusted to the lower level, but the light itself is not lessened or blemished; the mediator serves only as a ‘passageway’. Such a

“connecting mediator” is the Torah which G-d bestowed to the Jewish people. The Torah has the power to bring the light of G-dliness itself, as it is, and draw it down directly into the Jewish souls — the very same light. The purer and more refined a person makes his soul, the more he will merit that the light of Torah be revealed within him. Thus, the primary means by which a Jew connects to G-d is specifically through Torah study.

**A Lesson Called 'Manna'**

There are infinitely many levels on the ladder of personal refinement and ascension in holiness.

These levels are not only built one atop the other but also consist of a wide variety of forms and different levels.

Each individual is required to reach different levels in their divine service, and therefore, it is impossible to formulate general rules in this matter; no one person is exactly like his fellow.

However, despite all this, there is one general level that is

demanded of everyone, from each and every Jewish person, and that is - faith and trust in G-d (emunah and bitachon).

And G-d, in his infinite mercy, wished to give the Torah to the Children of Israel and decided to first put them through a preliminary course in faith and trust, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, their bread ran out. G-d then informed Moshe: “Behold, I shall rain down for you bread from heaven, and the people shall go out and gather each day’s portion on its day, so that I may test them

**Parashat Beshalach - A Lesson Called 'Manna'**

whether they will follow My Torah or not” (Shemot 16:4).

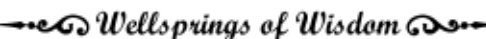
Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Pozen elaborated to explain the significance of this ‘test’:<sup>18</sup> In His great and tremendous love for the Children of Israel, G-d performed great miracles by raining down upon them ‘the bread of the mighty’ — the food of celestial angels — from heaven. The manna created no bodily waste; it was pure and absorbed into the limbs. Every person could experience and taste in the manna whatever taste of food he desired. Each time the manna fell from Heaven, it was covered and protected by two layers of dew, one layer beneath and one above. The Children of Israel were commanded to gather an omer per head, “And the Children of Israel did so, and gathered some more and some less. And they measured it by the measure of the omer, and he who gathered more had nothing extra, and he who gathered less lacked nothing from it; each man

gathered according to his eating.” (Shemot 16:17-18)

Rashi explains: “There were those who gathered much and those who gathered little. When they came home and measured with the omer measure what each had gathered, they found that he who had gathered more did not exceed one omer per head for those in his tent, and he who had gathered less was not missing from an omer per head. This was a great miracle that occurred with it.”

Many other miracles were involved in the manna, and they all expressed G-d’s great love for His people.

However, there was just one minor ‘drawback,’ so to speak, with the manna, as mentioned in the verse: “and the people shall go out and gather each day’s portion on its day” — each day’s portion of manna lasted and was meant only for that particular day per person; there was no possibility of leaving over or storing manna for





**Parashat Beshalach - A Lesson Called 'Manna'**

the following days (except for the eve of Shabbat, when double the amount fell for the needs of Shabbat as well).

Imagine what it must have felt like; The Children of Israel walked about in the wilderness. They had no wheat fields nor orchards of fruit trees. They had no fixed salary that entered their bank account on a set date.

There was nothing in their refrigerator or freezer; there were no stores around where one could buy bread and milk.

An ordinary person would be justified to feel great worry and tension — who knows if tomorrow there will again be food for his small children? Since all of the matters relating to the manna were accompanied by open love and great kindness, why did G-d not give the people of Israel enough manna to last them for a year, or at least a month, so that they would be more at ease and feel satiated and confident? Moreover, each day, a tremendous amount of manna fell, enough to last for many years.

The surplus manna melted and flowed into the streams, but for the Children of Israel, not even a kezayit (an olive-size piece) remained over for the next day; it simply wouldn't be edible any longer.

Rather, this was a manifestation of the great love and a great expression of G-d's kindness. G-d wanted the Children of Israel to be connected to Him, constantly embraced and attached to Him, and for this reason, he indeed gifted them with the Torah.

But for the Children of Israel to properly and completely connect to G-d through the Torah, they first needed to build their faith and trust in Him.

He, therefore, did not give them their food for a long period of time, but rather one day's rations at a time. By doing so, the Children of Israel became accustomed to lifting their eyes each day to the Creator, to He who would provide them with their sustenance. "Do you understand, Avi?!" Yossi concluded animatedly, "The Children of Israel attained and gained faith in G-d through the daily manna, and we

**Parashat Beshalach - A Lesson Called 'Manna'**

too, if we contemplate the Parshat  
HaMan each and every day, and  
consider its lesson and teachings to

us, we too can attain great faith in  
G-d, and have no room for worry or  
despair!"

**Shabbat Shalom!**



## Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. A worrisome thought may sometimes creep into a person's mind and convince them that their situation is beyond hope. One may think that their situation is the worst it could possibly be and that their entire life is at risk of crashing and falling into the deep abyss.

One must remain steadfast in their faith and know that these negative feelings and sensations are the handiwork of the evil inclination.

The evil inclination scripts a bleak and void future and may instill fear and dread.

It may portray to a person a financial nightmare that due to his mounting debts, his home will be repossessed, and he will lose his job and everything he possesses.

Man, however, is required to serve G-d with dedication and a deep sense of faith, and this will surely cause the evil inclination to perish and be eradicated.

2. Faith, hope, and trust in He who said and the world came into being are the healing remedies that sweeten the poisonous venom of despair and establish the person firm upon a proper spiritual height, granting them the strength and courage to fulfill their rightful mission. This is of primary importance: to strengthen faith, hope, and trust in G-d, and at the same time, in practice, to do everything possible, not to sit idle with folded arms and weep over the glorious past, and to entirely avoid imagining a dark and gloomy future. A person must train and familiarize himself to adopt positive thoughts and imagine with the power of trust that his livelihood is assured before him. Even if it is delayed for some time, G-d in his great goodness will ultimately repay him richly, and he will truly have every reason to be joyful.” 3. A person dominated and overcome by the lust for money enters a whirlpool of sensory blindness and mental dizziness.

## Parashat Beshalach - Summary and Practical Conclusions

Within the lust for money is contained a drug-like effect that rises to the brain and immediately turns the person into a drunkard who knows not what he is doing or saying.

4. If we contemplate, we can perceive that it is characteristic for acts of madness and folly to exist and follow the lust for money. While there may be greater desires in the world than the lust for money, only in the lust for money do we find such rampant distortions and falsehoods. When it comes to money, a person finds justifications for all of his crooked ways with all sorts of words and excuses, and he may not even feel how he had deceived himself. A person who chases after money may become truly foolish to the point of utter ruin, for the root of

all impurities is the lust for money.

5. It is recommended to recite Parshat HaMan every day because by reading it, one comes to believe that all of his sustenance is provided by the Divine Providence, and by contemplating Parshat HaMan, a person will merit to instill faith into his consciousness.

6. This is why the manna did not fall once a week or once a month but rather every day.

G-d wanted the Children of Israel to be connected, embraced, and attached to Him and to the holy Torah through their faith and trust that He feeds and sustains them daily.

Thus, the Children of Israel would become accustomed to lifting their eyes daily to the Creator, Who gives them their sustenance.

### Shabbat Shalom!



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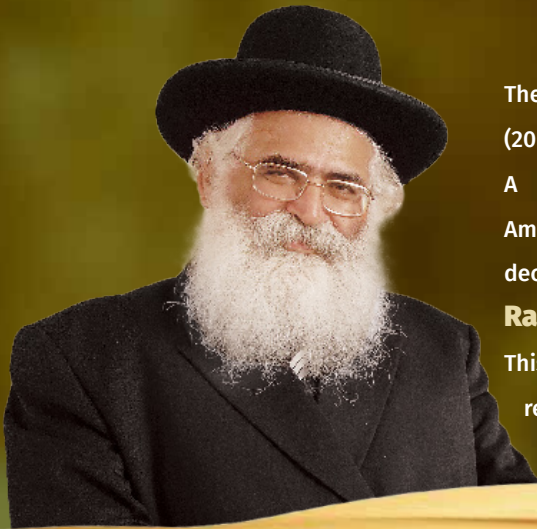
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Los Angeles	5:12 pm	6:10 pm	6:43 pm
Montreal	4:52 pm	5:57 pm	6:24 pm
Toronto	5:19 pm	6:23 pm	6:51 pm
London	4:43 pm	5:55 pm	6:15 pm
Jerusalem	5:03 pm	5:55 pm	6:31 pm
Tel Aviv	5:00 pm	5:52 pm	6:27 pm
Haifa	4:58 pm	5:53 pm	6:27 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:01 pm	5:55 pm	6:31 pm

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*One might mistakenly think that another's Torah study is as significant as their own.*

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