

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT BESHALACH

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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

TORAH POWER!

Maimonides was the court physician for the Sultan Saladin in medieval Egypt. Reportedly the Sultan was hardly ever ill. Once he called Maimonides, and demanded of him proof that he was a good doctor. "I am never ill," said Saladin, "so how am I to know whether you in fact deserve the reputation that you have for being a great physician?"

Maimonides answered: "The greatest of all physicians is the Lord, of Whom it is said 'I am the Lord thy physician'. As proof of this, it is written 'I will not place upon you the illnesses which I have placed upon ancient Egypt'. Who is truly the good doctor? Not the person who heals the sick from their diseases, but rather the one who helps the person from becoming sick and sees to it that he maintains his health."

As Maimonides writes in one of his medical works, Essay on Human Conduct, "Most of the illnesses which befall man are his own fault, resulting from his ignorance of how to preserve his health – like a blind man who stumbles and hurts himself and even injures others in the process due to not having of a sense of vision."

Prevention is better than cure – so how can we ensure prevention?

In this weeks Parasha the Bnei Yisrael take their first steps on a long journey out of Egypt. They are finally free to go and make their way to the Yam Suf. There Hashem performs even greater miracles than the ten plagues, and the Egyptian army is miraculously entirely wiped out.

Consequently the Bnei Yisrael let out a song of praise sung till today. Imagine the euphoria! The entire people had witnessed miracle after miracle culminating with the splitting of the sea. Now they were to head for their next event – the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. If we pause here, what would we expect next? Perhaps another miracle to bring the Bnei Yisrael closer to Mount Sinai, some more wonders?

The Torah relates otherwise; And Moshe made Israel journey from the Sea of Reeds and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went for three days in the wilderness and they did not find water. And they came to Marah [bitter] and they were not able to drink water from Marah, because they were bitter; therefore its name was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moshe, saying "What shall we drink?" (Shemot 15:22-24).

What a rude awakening! From the highs of the splitting of the sea to no drinking water? Surely that's the basics, why was Hashem not supplying them with drinking water?

Moshe cries out to Hashem and; "Hashem instructed him about a tree which he cast into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He established for it [the nation] law and justice, and there He tested it. And He said: "If you will surely hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, and will do that which is right in His eyes, and you will give ear to His commandments and you will keep all His laws, then all the maladies which I have put upon the Egyptians I will not put upon you, for I am Hashem your Healer" (25-26).

The waters of freedom are bitter! Freedom, it seems, is not the magical, trouble-free

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existence they may have once imagined. It is demanding, and fraught with disappointments.

As a servant, they were provided their daily rations, they were to do the set job and finish the day. They then entered a new phase, one of freedom and euphoria in the midst of great miracles. But now they were entering the real world one in which freedom is demanding as well as pleasing. They will have to fend for themselves in the real world.

Now is the time to teach them two essential lessons that will aid them manoeuvre through their new existence.

The first is that Hashem has the power to transform something bitter (water) using something bitter (tree), into something sweet.

Up to now the Bnei Yisrael had witnessed how Hashem can destroy the enemy, but what about using something bad to transform an object to good?

The Ibn Ezra notes the symmetry of

comparing this miracle with the first of the Ten Plagues: then, Hashem changed sweet water into blood; now, Hashem shows that He can also turn bitter water sweet. Of course, this demonstrates Hashem's mastery over the forces of nature. The Midrash (Mechilta Beshalach) says that the tree itself was bitter, and only Hashem can use a bitter agent to turn the bitter sweet.

The people personally witnessed Hashem's Providence:

Hashem is the same One Who not only punishes, but rewards;

He brings illness, but He also is the Healer; and He is the same One Who creates the bitter and then can make it sweet.

The second lesson being taught at Marah was the power of Torah.

At Marah the Bnei Yisrael are taught some laws of Torah. (Sham Sam Loh Chok Umishpat...)

What is the connection between the sweetened water and Torah?

Our Sages explain that it is this Torah

that gives power to make the bitter water sweet.

They must learn that it is only through the Torah – its commandments and laws – that their freedom will have meaning.

Learning Torah isn't easy. As a beginner we look at the book with uncertainty and it requires much effort at first to help us get on the right path.

The Torah at first is viewed with all its laws as bitter. Its tough keeping all the Mitzvot, its tough learning. Yet once we start and attach ourselves to them, they become part of us, they help guide us in life and act as sweetener.

The soul contains elements of bitterness in the form of destructive passions, but the Torah, whose strictures often begin as bitter themselves, sweetens the waters of life. It provides a framework in which freedom can flourish responsibly, creatively and purposefully. When the Jewish people observe the Torah, Hashem enters into a partnership with them preventing troubles and showers them with healing blessings.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

ספירת העומר - עומר לגולגולת

Regarding one's thoughts, it is known that it is not possible for a person to remove a thought from their mind by desiring not to think about that particular thought. Meaning. If a person tells you 'Don't think about elephants', it will be impossible for you not to think of them. The way to eliminate any undesirable thought, due to it not being pure or a trigger for anger, sadness and other negative emotions, will be the way of עֹמֵר לְגִלְגֵּלֶת 'an omer to a person head'. The

hint at these words is that 'עֹמֵר' is one measurement, and 'לְגִלְגֵּלֶת' is the brain. It comes to tell us that our brain can only contain one omer, one measure, one thought.

Therefore, when a person wants to clear their mind of negative thoughts, they should remember that the only way to do so is by bringing a positive thought to eliminate the negative thought.

It is known that the world works in the way of thought, speech and action. That is, everything that is done in the world is preceded by a thought first, then a speech and only after the speech comes the

action. Therefore, a person should be very careful not to say any bad thoughts so that he does not bring that thought into action. And this is what King David said אֲנִי שָׁמַרְתִּי אֶת אֲפֻדַי מִכָּל דְּבַר רָע לִפְתֹּחַ פִּי. I kept myself from acting in ways that are not good by בִּלְיַעְבֶּר־פִּי putting a barrier to my mouth to which I would not utter that bad thought which would mean it won't get closer to becoming an action.

It is very worthwhile to speak as many good thoughts, words of truth and peace as possible and thus do good deeds that will please our Father in heaven.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Beracha of Asher Yasar after Using the Bathroom

The Shulhan Aruch, in Siman 6, deline-

ates the Halachot of "Asher Yasar"-the Beracha recited after using the

facilities. The Shulhan Aruch, which as a rule is a code of law, makes a rare

exception and not only presents the Halachot of the Beracha, but also offers interpretations of its text as well. This indicates that the Beracha is of supreme importance, and Maran wanted to ensure that the reader would also recite it with proper Kavana.

Maran offers three interpretations of the first phrase of the Beracha: "Asher Yasar Et Ha'Adam B'Hochma-Who created humans with wisdom."

First, "B'Hochma-With Wisdom" connotes that Hashem made the human body in a wondrous way, which he explains with the analogy of a balloon, which only holds the air inside if it remains whole. If punctured, the balloon loses its air. Yet the human body contains air in the lungs, despite the many holes in the body. This is the magical wisdom and the wonder of Hashem's creation, which we see every day, but rarely pay attention to.

The second interpretation is that

"wisdom" refers to wise sequence in which Hashem created man. First he created the world, with the vegetation and animal to serve as a food chain for humans, and only once the "table was set" did he create man, at the end of the sixth day.

The third interpretation of the Shulhan Aruch is that the wisdom in the creation of man refers to the amazing human biology. From the respiratory system to the neurological system to the digestive system-they are all so intricate and detailed. Professors of biology can devote their entire lives just to studying one specific system. One doctor of pediatric neurology once said that he had studied the brain for over fifty years, and science has only barely scratched the surface of the unknown potential of the brain. This is the praise of the Asher Yasar.

There is additional interpretation brought by Rabbi Mordechai HaCohen of Tsfat, one of the Arizal's disciples.

One of the greatest spiritual and moral challenges of the human being is overcoming his ego. When untamed, the ego leads to arrogance and promotes the Yesser HaRah. On the other hand, humility leads to the greatest accomplishments, for example, Moshe Rabbenu, was the humblest of all men. Moshe said about himself, "Va'Anachnu Mah? -What are we worth, when compared to God?" The Beracha of "Asher Yasar" enables one to humble himself, because it forces him to contemplate his lowly nature as demonstrated by the fact that he can't go more than a few hours without having to relieve himself. When considering that he has all these wastes in his body that must be expelled, how arrogant can he become, knowing his limitations? Thus, the Hochmah-wisdom is to be humble, as conveyed by the word "Hochmah" whose letters can be rearranged to spell "Koach Mah"-meaning, "What power do I have?" just as Moshe said "Va'Anachnu Mah"- "what are worth?"



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Beshalach

Pharaoh finally sends the Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt. With pillars of cloud and fire, G-d leads them toward Eretz Yisrael on a circuitous route, avoiding the Pelishtim (Philistines). Pharaoh regrets the loss of so many slaves, and chases after the Jews with his army. The Jews are very afraid as the Egyptians draw close, but G-d protects them. Moshe raises his staff, and G-d splits the sea, enabling the Jews to cross safely. Pharaoh, his heart hardened by G-d, commands his army to pursue, whereupon the waters crash down upon the

Egyptian army. Moshe and Miriam lead the men and women, respectively, in a song of thanks.

After three days' travel, only to find bitter waters at Marah, the people complain. Moshe miraculously produces potable water. In Marah they receive certain mitzvahs. The people complain that they ate better food in Egypt. Hashem sends quail for meat and provides manna, miraculous bread that falls from the sky every day except Shabbat. On Friday, a double portion descends to supply the Shabbat needs. No one is able to obtain more

than his daily portion, but manna collected on Friday suffices for two days so the Jews can rest on Shabbat. Some manna is set aside as a memorial for future generations.

When the Jews again complain about a lack of water, Moshe miraculously produces water from a rock. Then Amalek attacks. Joshua leads the Jews in battle, and Moshe prays for their welfare.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. What percentage of the Jewish People died during the plague of darkness?
2. Why did the oath that Yosef administered to his brothers apply to Moshe's generation?
3. Why did the Egyptians want to pursue the Jewish People?
4. Where did the Egyptians get animals to pull their chariots?
5. What does it mean that the Jewish People "took hold of their fathers' craft" (tafsu umnut avotam)?

A

1. 13:18 - Eighty percent (four-fifths).
2. 13:19 - Yosef made his brothers swear that they would make their children swear.
3. 14:5 - To regain their wealth.
4. 14:7 - From those Egyptians who feared the word of G-d and kept their animals inside during the plagues.
5. 14:10 - They cried out to G-d.



"... This is my God and I will beautify him." (Shmos 15:2)

Beautify yourself before Him with mitzvos ... a beautiful succah, a beautiful lulav, beautiful Torah scroll ... (Tractate Shabbos 133b)

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