



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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OHR

Parashat Beshalach

HAMELECH

Daily Allowance

In our *parashah*, we are told how the Jewish People were sustained during their sojourn through the desert. Every day, food fell from the Heavens. At first, they did not know what it was. They call it "*mann*," which means "prepared portion."

Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai was asked a question by his students: Why did the *mann* not descend just once a year?

Rabbi Shimon responded with a parable. A king had a son. He gave him an allowance which would last for a year of expenses. How often did he see him? Once a year! He wanted to see him more often, so he gave him only enough for that day!

So, too, Yisrael in the *midbar* (desert). A man had a number of children to feed. He would be concerned what will they have to eat tomorrow. It's nerve-wracking to go to sleep with an empty cupboard. This way, they always *davened* with *kavana*. Realizing that they had nowhere to turn but to Hashem for their basic necessities and continued sustenance, they put their hearts into their prayers.

No Extras

The gift of *mann* was not meant to be only a one-time miracle in order to enable desert survival for an entire nation. It was meant to be a lesson for history. We, generations later, are meant to study and internalize that Hashem alone provides our needs.

Each head of household in the *midbar* was given the task of gathering *mann* each morning. He was to bring home a certain designated amount of *mann* per members of his household, regardless of their age, weight or gender: Precisely one *omer* (a bit more than a kilo and a half) per person.

Once outdoors, some picked up a bit more, some – a bit less. But when they measured it, they discovered an amazing thing: the one who picked up more, had no extra, and the one who picked up less, still had enough.

Hashem performed this miracle for them back then so that we would realize, for all generations, that we are given *parnasah* from Heaven, exactly what we need. Our efforts to increase revenues will not help. A person who takes more than is allotted to him will only lose it somewhere else.

Success Guaranteed?

Some people have written books and presented presentations on how to succeed in business, how to "make it big" in the financial world. Such things are mostly nonsense.

What did the wisest of men write in his book of wisdom? Shlomo Hamelech writes in Kohelet (9:11): I contemplated and saw the goings-on under the sun: I came to the conclusion that the swift ones do not necessarily win the marathon, nor are the mighty ones always victorious in battle; the wise men do not necessarily have the bread, nor do the geniuses amass wealth, nor do those in the "know" always find favor in the eyes



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of others; for folly and setback are the lot of everyone.

The Midrash brings historic examples for each of the five qualities mentioned.

In the times of Dovid Hamelech, there was a man named Asa'el (brother of Yoav ben Sruya). He could run as fast as a deer (Shmuel II 2). He was so light on his feet that he could run across a wheat-strewn field without breaking a single stalk. Nonetheless, when his time came, Avner was able to kill him with the back of a spear (ibid.)

Avner was a very strong man. Rabbi Yochanan declared: It was easier to move a ten-foot thick wall than to move one of Avner's two feet! Nonetheless, when it was his time to go, he died by an unsuspected sword. (ibid. 3)

King Shlomo was the wisest of men. When he was king, lavish feasts were prepared for him daily, by each of his many wives, just in case he would eat by her. But when the tables turned and he wandered around as a beggar, he did not know from where his next meal would come.

Iyov was a rich man. He had 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 1,000 cows, 500 donkeys and many servants. Nonetheless, he lost it all in a very short span of time.

The Wrong Answer

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra explains the above verse: one would have thought that wise men would assume positions of authority and have their finances worked out, while the intellectually ungifted would have to wander around, looking

for bread. Nonetheless for the most part, the opposite is true.

The ibn Ezra is speaking here from firsthand experience. He said of himself that he must have been born with a *mazal* for poverty. Any trade he tried met with absolute failure. He went so far as to say, "If I would start selling candles, the sun would never set; if I would sell burial shrouds, people would stop dying!"

He was not keen on earning a living as a town Rav. But he did not really have other options for *parnasah*, so when he heard of a town in search of a Rav, he offered his services. The townspeople took a look at him, in his worn out clothing, and rejected him.

He said, "Fine, I'll find you the type of Rav you want."

Realizing that for this crowd, outer trappings made a difference, he went and found a large, towering figure with a big, thick beard, who barely knew an *Alef* from a *Bet*.

Rabbi Avraham asked him, "What do you think about being a town Rav?"

"Who? Me?!" he asked. "I don't know the first thing about *paskening sheilot*."

The Ibn Ezra assured him, "Don't worry. I'll be your '*gabbai*'. All questions will come through me. I'll 'bring' them to you, and 'together' we'll answer them."

"Sounds great," the tall man said.

So the two went to the town. The Ibn Ezra told the residents, "I found you a Rav."



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Sure enough, they were impressed by his looks, and accepted him.

The system worked as planned. All *sheilot* came through the "*shamash*" (a.k.a. the Ibn Ezra) and he returned with a coherent and appropriate answer.

One day, the Ibn Ezra had something to take care of out of town. The "Rav" said, "What will I do without you?!"

The Ibn Ezra responded, "Let me teach you a few basics, so you'll know what to say.

Here are three rules: If someone cooked on Shabbat, say not to use it until an hour after Shabbat. If the question is in Hilchot *Aveilut*, be *meikel* (lenient). If it's *issur v'heter (kashrut)*, it depends if there's 60 times as much."

With that, the Ibn Ezra took off. The "Rav" tried his best to review the rules over and over, in case questions would arise. Sure enough, people came to ask, in all areas of *halachah*.

One person asked, "Hot meat fell into my cold cup of milk. May I drink it?"

"No problem," said the Rav. "The rule is to be lenient in these types of situations."

Someone else asked, "My mother passed away last week. Can I attend my son's Bar Mitzva celebration?"

The Rav responded, confidently, "Wait until an hour after Shabbat, then go."

A third person asked, "Can I pick an apple off the tree on Shabbat?"

The Rav answered, "Only if there are sixty apples on the tree."

Word of the Rav's all-new "*piskei halachah*" spread through the town, and the people, as ignorant as they were, thought that something was askew.

When the *shamash* returned, the townspeople told him that the Rav seemed to have forgotten his learning and was mixing up *dinim*.

The Ibn Ezra now let them know that all along, this "Rav" hadn't known a thing, and that he, the "*shamash*," had been issuing the correct rulings.

The story is brought here just to illustrate the point that wisdom does not always bring wealth or even basic *parnasah*.

The Ibn Ezra was not the only one. Yerushalmi Bikurim relates how Rabbi Shimon bar Vah was a very wise man and also an expert at assessing the accurate value of pearls. Nonetheless, he was so poor that he had nothing to eat, not even bread.

How to Get Rich

Now, we just got finished saying that wisdom does not necessarily bring bread. But the Gemara in Sanhedrin (92a) says that anyone who has knowledge gets rich. The Maharsha reconciles this apparent contradiction with the Gemara (Nidah 70b) which concludes that the recipe for amassing wealth is to be honest in business and to pray to Hashem.

The Maharsha explains that the "knowledge" mentioned in Sanhedrin is knowing the right address; i.e. knowing that the secret to financial success lies in *tefillah*!



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Who Feeds the Animals?

In Kidushin (82a), Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar points out that animals do not have occupations nor professions, yet they have food to eat. Why should we be any different? Additionally, animals were created to help man in his mission to serve Hashem, so if animals get food with relative ease, shouldn't we as well? Yes, we should; but due to Adam Harishon's sins and the sins of the generations which followed, sustenance comes with difficulty. "By the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread," Adam was told.

The Gemara (ibid.) further illustrates: Did you ever see a deer drying out figs or a lion *shlepping* heavy articles or a fox behind the counter in a store? No, animals receive sustenance with minimal effort... but people have to work for a living due to their sins.

Chazal are telling us that Hashem provides for all creatures, great and small. We cannot begin to fathom the amount of food Hashem makes available each day for all of His creatures in His worldwide zoo, safari, jungle, aquarium, farm, etc. Not many animals die of starvation. They usually get their food without much effort on their part. Why is man different? Only because he sinned. Therefore he must work before he is given his handout. But his work is not the cause of his sustenance. His work is punishment in the form of labor. And his stipend is given once he carries out his punishment. Extra work will not get him any more than was intended for him. But prayer could get him a few more morsels.

The Right Amount

Hashem sent down plenty of *mann*, more than enough. Whatever was not gathered would simply melt. But it did not help any to gather more than one *omer*. You would only end up with an *omer* anyway. It also did not help to save today for tomorrow. It would spoil before tomorrow came.

Some people took more than they were meant to take. It did not help them any.

So, too, it doesn't help to work and work and work. That's not how to get more money. If it was not decreed for a certain person to earn more than a certain amount, whatever extra he earns, he will lose some way or another.

It goes the other way, too. If someone took less than he was supposed to get, Hashem will find a way to give him what he is meant to receive.

So, whoever writes books and delivers lectures on "How to Get Rich in 3 Easy Steps" is just fooling himself and his audience. Everything is decreed from Heaven. If you feel you need more than you have, go straight to the Source.

Of Wood and Wine

Two brothers were partners in the lumber business. They used to buy out a forest and chop and sell the wood. One time, they had bought a forest and were halfway through cutting it when another forest went up for sale. Now a disagreement erupted. One brother felt that it was opportunity knocking on their door and they should make the purchase. The other brother thought that they should take one thing at a time; first finish this forest which they are in the middle of, and then see what is on the market.



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Unable to come to terms, they decided to consult with the Chofetz Chayim. At first, the Chofetz Chayim backed away. He said that he did not know enough about the lumber business to answer the question. The brothers insisted that they wanted to hear his opinion anyway.

The Chofetz Chayim answered with a story. There was a man who made a living from selling homemade wine. He would sit outside his house with a barrel and when customers would come, he would open the spigot and fill pitchers of wine.

A friend of his suggested, "Why not make an extra spigot? You'll double your revenues!"

The wineseller responded, "It's the same amount of wine in the barrel. It will just get used up faster."

The brothers understood the message. Why embark on a new enterprise before the current one is finished? Indeed, someone else purchased the forest and shortly thereafter, a fire broke out and not much was left of it. Sorry for the new owner, but they were happy to have been spared the misery, having taken counsel of a wise sage.

In Every Generation

So, there you have it. Put your hands out into some form of business or labor. But don't overdo it, certainly not at the expense of religious obligations, such as Torah and *tefillah*. Always keep in mind that any profession or business venture which demands compromise of Torah and *mitzvot* is inherently not a profitable one, even in the here and now. This is the deeper meaning of, "Torah was only given to those who

eat *mann*." What does that mean? *Mann* was only fed to that one generation and Torah is ours for eternity!

So the explanation is that those who learn the lesson from the *mann* and understand the workings of predestined, precise sustenance are in a position to upkeep the Torah in all generations.

Indeed, Moshe told Aharon to take a sample of the *mann* and place it in a jar as a reminder for all generations that Hashem can and does always provide for us and we may never use "*parnasah*" as an excuse not to learn Torah or keep *mitzvot*.

Learning from the *Mann*

Unfortunately, the topic of *parnasah* quite often creates friction in the home. Worrying about means of financial stability, husband and wife sometimes push each other to take on jobs which end up causing them to compromise upon Torah ideals. When there is lack in the home; they may come to blame each other on not trying hard enough to bring in more income.

Many a lesson ought to be learned from the *mann* in this week's *parashah* regarding Hashem's system of providing provisions for all generations. True, in the *midbar* we had the *mann* itself, all ready to eat, at our doorstep. In future generations, we pray for rainfall, and that *mayim* (water) from *Shomayim* (Heaven) is the source of all nourishment and perpetuation of life. That is why *mayim* bears the same numerical value (*gematria*) as *mann*, for it accomplishes a similar purpose, connecting Heaven and earth.



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When we were given the *mann* in the midbar, an amazing thing happened. Even though *mann* fell for everyone, each person only saw his own *mann*. He immediately knew that it was meant for him. He could pass by so many other portions of *mann* and not even notice them.

The same applies in all generations. Sometimes we notice, in retrospect, how we could have seized an opportunity at bringing in more income; and we allow sadness and feelings of frustration to overtake us. But, at the time, we had not even noticed that that option was available. That is because it was never meant for us, just like our neighbor's portion of *mann*. This is a very important point to internalize, as it will spare us from much anguish and guilt.

The Unwritten Story of Success

Many wise men have barely the minimum, while their unlearned counterparts seem to strike it rich. Here is such a case in point.

There was a man in Germany who had a large family. He had 17 mouths to feed. Understandably, he needed a job. He tried out being a *shamash* (custodian) in a shul. He got everything ready for Shabbat. He cleaned the floors, returned *siddurim* to the shelves, put out white tablecloths. After Shabbat, the *gabbai* asked him to record who had purchased *aliyot*. The *shamash* confessed, "I do not know how to write." At that he became unemployed. He received payment for what he had done, and was sent on his way.

He trudged along, turning his eyes Heavenward, beseeching help from Above. Just then, a non-Jewish nobleman appeared and told him, "Get

me 500 loaves of bread, and I will pay you for your services."

The man ran to the bakery, got the loaves, and got paid. A few days later, he received a similar order. Seeing that this Jew was reliable, the order became larger. The man saw this outlet of success, and decided to open his own bakery. He became very wealthy and decided to open a bank account. He sent one of his trustworthy workers to handle the bank business. The worker returned, saying that the bank manager insisted on meeting personally with the actual investor. The baker came to the bank and was asked to sign upon certain documents. He confessed, "I do not know how to write, not even to sign my own name."

The manager was surprised. "What?!" he exclaimed, "You have so much money to your name and you can't even sign it?!"

"If I would have known how to write," he replied, "I would still be a *shamash* in a *shul*."

Peace and Prosperity

These are lessons for life, and particularly applicable for those who wish to improve and maintain their *shalom bayit*. There is absolutely no room for complaining or blaming a spouse for the family's financial situation. On the contrary, Hashem will shower blessing upon a home where peace and unity reside.

May we merit to internalize these truths and live by them.

Fondly,
Mordechai Malka