



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



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Parashat Beshalach

May the Merciful One Enable us to Earn Our Livelihood in a Permitted Way

The *parasha* begins (13:17-18), "And when Pharaoh sent out the Nation, Hashem did not lead them by way of the land of the *Plishtim*, for it was close. For Hashem said, 'Perhaps the people will reconsider when they see a war, and they will return to Egypt'; So Hashem turned the Nation towards the way of the desert to *Yam Suf*. And the Jewish people were armed when they went up from the land of Egypt."

Questions:

- 1- The *Chafetz Chayim* asks why Hashem did not shorten the way for the Jews and lead them through the land of the *Plishtim*, which was an inhabited land. If He would have done so, there would not have been a need to provide sustenance for 600,000 Jews in the desolate desert.
- 2- Furthermore, the *parasha* (15:22) later states, "And they went three days in the desert, and they did not find water ..." The Jews complained about the lack of water. Afterwards it states (16:2), "And the entire congregation of Israel complained ..." This time, they complained about the lack of bread." Perhaps they would have been better off not having been tested?
- 3- Additionally, after Hashem wrought such miracles and wonders in Egypt and on the *Yam Suf*, how were such complaints possible?
- 4- It is furthermore difficult: Our Sages teach that when the Jews sang, "This is my G-d and I will exalt Him," they pointed with their fingers at the *Shechina*. They state that a maidservant saw more by the sea than Yechezkel ben Buzi. In other words, they reached the highest level of prophesy. Therefore, how could they have issued such complaints afterwards?
- 5- R' Chayim of Brisk asked why our Sages state that "a **maidservant** saw ...?" It would seemingly have been more fitting to write that even a young girl became a **prophet**?

The Supermarket Bill

We will begin by saying that recently, *Chareidi* activists have acted for the sake of Heaven and expended effort in establishing a law that will ensure Shabbat observance in public; it is called the Supermarket Bill. In truth, the fact that such a terrible predicament has arisen in our times and in our Holy Land is something to cry over. This is something which did exist in previous times; in earlier generations, everyone knew that Shabbat was a day that was sanctified to Hashem, and anyone who desecrated Shabbat, did not dare do so publicly. For the *halacha* relates to one who desecrates Shabbat in public with particular severity, equating him to a gentile regarding the laws of *yayin nesech* [wine touched by an idol worshipper] and additional *halachot*. Furthermore, Shabbat is an amazing gift that Hashem has given only to the Jewish Nation, and one who has not tasted the sweetness of Shabbat observance has never experienced true enjoyment in his life. Besides, the entire world understands that there must be a day of rest once a week; people will eventually collapse if they constantly work and never rest. However, in our Holy Land, the goal to earn the highest rating come election time justifies any means, exciting the multitudes and causing dissent amongst them as well. Furthermore, supermarket owners are making a big mistake thinking that they can profit by violating Shabbat. They think that since Shabbat is sadly a time when people are involved in various activities and taking trips, it is a good opportunity to make a sale and profit. This clearly stems from a lack of faith, erroneously thinking that success depends on man's efforts and not on Hashem's involvement. As such, blessing does not reside upon their efforts, and all of the profit they earn will go to waste. This has already been experienced by



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a number of well-known Israeli companies, such as El-Al and others, which collapsed as a result of violating Shabbat. There are more than enough examples to show that ultimately, Shabbat desecrators only lose, because blessing resides only upon those who observe the holy Shabbat. Therefore, on the contrary, everyone should have rejoiced over the passing of this bill, for by guarding Shabbat observance, storeowners will merit having their efforts blessed and met with success, as we will explain from our *parasha*.

One Who Cause Another to Sin is Worse than Having Killed Him

With this, we can answer the question posed by the Chafetz Chayim above. Hashem wants to teach us a lesson for life and guide us along the correct path. Before Hashem stood two paths upon which to take the Jewish Nation to *Eretz Yisrael*: the first path was short and settled, upon which one would have been able to obtain food and other provisions. On the other hand, though, it presented a risk, lest the Jews intermingle with the inhabitants of the area and be led to stumble to immoral behavior and their lustful urges. Perhaps they would even come to eat forbidden foods and be influenced by the paths of the area's inhabitants. However, the other path would lead them through the desert. The desert was desolate and extended for countless miles. But it was unsettled, so there was no fear lest the Jews learn improper conduct or see forbidden things and the like. On the other hand, though, the desert showcased no food or potential sustenance. On the contrary, the desert lacks water and vegetation, and there would be a necessity to worry about sustaining the millions of Jews who left Egypt by way of a miracle. The question is which was preferable? Hashem said that He would not take the Jews through the land of the *Plishtim*, even though it was a shorter path en route to *Eretz Yisrael*. Why not? Because, Hashem said, they would see the war and return to Egypt – this meant that the moment they would encounter a spiritual trial, they would stumble, being easily influenced by the surroundings and the society of the *Plishtim*. They would then return to the evil practices that they had grown accustomed to in their Egyptian exile. Therefore, whenever there is a possibility of either bodily damage or damaging the soul, it is better to endanger the body and not to endanger the soul, for to make a person sin is worse than having killed him. It is preferable to perform miracles and wonders to sustain the Jewish Nation than to place them in a situation where they would be tested spiritually and endanger their souls. How much more so does this apply to an individual who faces a spiritual trial when it comes to earning a livelihood. Whether he is in danger of damaging his soul by missing *tefilah* or Torah study, or whether he is tempted to act immodestly or without integrity, he should know that this is not the livelihood that he should choose to support himself with. For there are many ways by which Hashem can provide him with a livelihood, and this is merely a test. He should trust in Hashem and not be afraid, for Hashem will perform miracles for him, and he will earn his livelihood in a permitted fashion and not a forbidden one, for this is the Will of Hashem.

It is an Error to Think that One's Success and Livelihood Depends on his Own Efforts

Furthermore, to understand the Jews' complaints in this week's *parasha*, one must understand that earning a livelihood is a difficult test for an individual. He mistakenly thinks that his livelihood depends upon his intelligence and efforts, and lacks faith that everything is from Hashem. He does not believe that Hashem grants sustenance to every living creature, as the *parasha* teaches us in the section that describes how Hashem provided the Jews with *maan* [incidentally, reading this *parasha* is a well-known *segula* for earning a livelihood.] Hashem commanded Moshe to tell the Jewish people that He was going to send them *maan*. However, they were to gather only one *omer* for each member of his household



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[this is the equivalent to the amount of dough which obligates a person to separate *challa*.] Furthermore, each day they were to gather only the amount needed for that day and not for the next day as well. Sadly, however, there were those who were weak in faith, who gathered more than this amount, thinking that perhaps they would want to eat more. There were also those who saved *maan* for the following day, fearing that there might be a "strike," and *maan* would not descend from Heaven, leaving them with nothing to eat. There were others who miscalculated and gathered less than the required amount. **And much to our sorrow, there were those who desecrated the very first Shabbat in the desert by collecting *maan*. They were similar to the individuals who protest the Supermarket Bill in our times. This is as is taught in our *parasha* (16:28), "And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Until when will you refuse to observe My mitzvot and My teachings?' (29) See that Hashem has given you the Shabbat. Therefore, on Shabbat eve, He gives you two days-worth of bread. Let each man remain in his place; no one should leave his place on the seventh day."** The Torah teaches us that the result was that even if one gathered more, he did not end up with more; similarly, one who gathered less, did not end up with less. Any *maan* that remained until the following day became wormy, and those who desecrated Shabbat did not benefit at all. In other words, the Torah teaches us how Hashem controls the world. Man mistakenly thinks that if he works harder and adds on work hours, he will increase his salary, even though it is at the expense of his Torah study and prayer. However, the Torah reveals to us that this is not so; rather, any amount of *maan* that exceeded the permitted amount melted, and upon returning home, the individual saw that he only had what he absolutely needed. So too, man sees that he has earned more money at the expense of his mitzvot and thinks that he will grow rich because of it. However, Hashem causes him to be struck by damages and suffering, and takes away his money in a variety of different ways. The only amount he remains with is the amount that he truly needed. On the other hand, if he works less, Hashem will bless his efforts and give him what he lacks. Every item he buys will be blessed and will endure. Therefore, Hashem led the Jews by way of the desert, so that they would acquire faith and trust in Hashem. However, if they would have taken the shorter path, they would have remained on the same level that they were on in Egypt. This is as Rav Chayim said, that despite the fact that the maidservant experienced prophesy, nevertheless, she remained a maidservant. This was due to the fact that while she was struck with a sudden revelation and burst of excitement, nevertheless, it did not become permanently imbedded in her. Only after having grown accustomed to continuously trusting in Hashem in the desert did it become a permanent acquisition. Similarly, our Sages state in *Masechet Yoma* (76a) that R' Shimon bar Yochai's students asked him why the *maan* did not descend to the Jews but once a year. He said to them, "I will draw a parable for you; to what can this be compared? To a mortal king, who had one son. He provided him with his food once a year, but therefore only saw him once a year. He therefore provided him with his sustenance every day, and his son visited him every day. The same thing applies to the Jewish people. A father who had four or five sons would worry and say that perhaps *maan* will not fall tomorrow, and they would all die of starvation. As a result, they all focused their hearts on their Father in Heaven." The *Alshich Hakadosh*, in his *sefer Torat Moshe* (16:31), writes similarly, drawing ethical teachings from the episode of the *maan*.

Story About the *Ben Ish Chai*

The *Ben Ish Chai* once spoke about the *segula* of giving a tenth of one's earnings to charity, that by doing so, one merits becoming wealthy. One of the listeners was very inspired, tithed his earnings, and saw great success in his business. A different time, the *Ben Ish Chai* spoke about the *segula* of honoring one's



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wife, and how by buying her jewelry, he will grow wealthy. Once again, one of the listeners was very inspired and took upon himself to honor his wife; he too, grew extremely wealthy. Sometime later, the two men met up with one another. The one who tithed said that in the merit of the *Ben Ish Chai's derasha*, he became wealthy, because he began to give a tenth of his earnings to charity. His friend as well, said that in the merit of the *Ben Ish Chai's derasha* he also merited wealth, but for a different reason. The *Ben Ish Chai* had said to respect one's wife and buy her jewelry; he had done so and grown successful. The one who tithed approached the *Ben Ish Chai* and asked, "Honorable Rabbi, why did you not tell me about the same *segula* that you told him? For his *segula* is better than mine; *ma'aser* must be given to others, but one who purchases things for his wife, still retains possession of everything he bought!" The Rav responded, "David HaMelech already answered this question in *Tehillim*. He stated, 'Do not fear when a man grows rich, that he increases the honor of his home [ירבה כבוד ביתו]. For when he dies, he will not take everything with him.' David's intention was that a person should not be envious of someone who grows wealthy by honoring his wife [*kevod beito* can also mean 'honoring his wife,' as *beito*, home, is synonymous with the wife.] For this he does not take with him to *Olam Haba*. This is as opposed to the one who tithes and merits wealth, even though he gave to others, what he gave will remain a merit for him in the World to Come."

Words of Mussar

We have learned that man is required to instill in himself the faith and trust in Hashem that He sustains everything, as the *pasuk* states, "You open your Hand and You satiate every living creature's desire." All of man's efforts are just that – *hishtadlut* that was placed upon us following the sin of Adam Harishon. However, in and of itself, in is useless. For just like with the *maan*, one who takes less will not lose out, and one who takes more will not have more. This is because everything is dependent on Hashem. All of the difficulties met in earning a livelihood are only tests to see if he will go in the way of Hashem or excuse himself from learning Torah, praying, or from mitzvot observance, in order to earn a living. For this shows that he doesn't truly believe that Hashem sustains everything – could he defy the Will of Hashem and then expect to succeed? Therefore, the Supermarket Bill should be accepted by the Jewish people with happiness and joy. Not like those who try to lure the people in the opposite way, for the sake of strengthening their political stance. I am sure that they will fall greatly because of their slight to the honor of the Shabbat. Everyone should therefore gird strength, because all those who take great care to carry out the Will of Hashem will have blessing and success rest on their endeavors. *Amen ve'amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka