



Parshas Beha'aloscha

June 18, 2022

A Taste of Torah

A Model for Change

by Rabbi Yosef Ephrathi

“He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.” - Harold Wilson, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

“My father didn’t teach me how to live. He lived and let me watch him” - Anonymous quote

In this week’s parsha, Moshe pleads with his father-in-law Yisro to accompany the Jews on their journey to Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel). Moshe says, “Please do not forsake us, inasmuch as you know our encampments in the Wilderness and you will enlighten our eyes” (Behaaloscha 10:31). The simple understanding of Moshe’s request is that Yisro’s knowledge of the Wilderness and surrounding areas would make him an invaluable guide in navigating the desert. However, this cannot be Moshe’s intent, since the Torah clearly states that a Cloud of G-d led the Jews through the desert, guiding them in their travels. The Medrash elaborates that, in fact, Hashem provided the Jews with seven Clouds of Glory. Four clouds surrounded the camp on all sides. One cloud served as a roof above, protecting them from the scorching desert sun during the day and the piercing cold at night, and one cloud below smoothed their path and eliminated snakes and scorpions. The seventh cloud traveled in front of the camp to lead the way. Clearly, the Jews were well taken care of.

The Ramban states that Moshe was telling his father-in-law that with his

familiarity of the region of the Land of Canaan, he could advise the Jewish People how best to conquer the Canaanites and what paths would be ideal as they would invade the Land. Rashi offers several approaches to understand Moshe’s words, including that Yisro would enlighten the eyes of the Jewish People when they would have questions.

Rabbi Tanchum Gershon Bilitzky (1858-1941) in his Sefer Ginas Chemed offers a different approach to understanding Moshe’s plea, one which contains a valuable lesson. We know how hard it is for us humans to break bad habits. Ask any recovered addict about his journey to becoming alcohol- or substance-free. You will probably hear about the many setbacks and struggles until he finally overcame his temptations. Studies show that relapse rates amongst substance abuse users are 40-60%. Clearly, changing one’s habits and set ways is a lot easier said than done!

The Jews lived in Egypt for over two centuries. They worshiped idols and got used to the depravities of the Egyptians. Rashi (elsewhere in this week’s parsha) states that when the Jewish People complained that they missed Egypt, it was because they had no obligation to perform mitzvos when they were in Egypt. They found it challenging to adjust to their new identity as G-d’s nation. They felt their new lives had too many new responsibilities, and they missed their mitzvah-free lifestyle back in Egypt. Many a time, they questioned the wisdom of leaving Egypt.

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Stories for the Soul

A Real Nobody

It is told that a fellow once walked into the Beis Medrash of the Kotzker Chassidim, who, in accordance with the teachings of their Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk (1787-1859), placed a great emphasis on humility. Upon entering, he found the chassidim admiring what appeared to be an ordinary beggar.

Upon inquiring as to the cause of their adulation, the visitor was informed, “This man is a truly humble person!” The visitor was now very confused. “Why shouldn’t he be humble? He’s nothing but a beggar! He hasn’t got anything to be haughty about!”

“Ah,” replied the chassidim, “but it is precisely for that reason that we are in awe of him. For the haughtiest people are those who have nothing to brag about. And here we have a nobody who is not boastful!”

In this week’s parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu is referred to as the humblest of all men, despite his great leadership and enormous accomplishments. Humility is not defined as one who thinks nothing of himself. On the contrary, a humble person is the one who recognizes his talents and abilities, and uses them to their fullest - but does not become boastful.

Kollel Happenings

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION LIVE & LEARN LEARNING PROGRAM AT THE WEST DENVER KOLLEL TORAH CENTER

The Live & Learn Learning Program for seniors is held Tuesdays at the West Denver Kollel Torah Center. Coffee and pastries at 10:30 am, two classes of 45 minutes each from 10:40-12:15 (including 5 minute break between classes), and lunch (including take-home option) at 12:15. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

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A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights on zoom, 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: A person was obligated to recite both *Birkas Hamazon* and *Shemone Esrei* and did so under identical circumstances (within the appropriate halachic time frame required for each), yet he fulfills one but not the other. What circumstance causes this discrepancy?

Answer: If one is inebriated, he may not recite *Shemone Esrei*. If he is so drunk that he cannot speak without slurring his words but nonetheless proceeds to recite *Shemone Esrei*, he has not fulfilled his obligation (Shulchan

Aruch 99:1). However, one may recite *Birkas Hamazon* even though he is inebriated to the point that he slurs his words (ibid. 185:4; see also ibid.:5 with Mishna Berura 6).

(Another possible answer is failure to recite *Ya'ale Viyavo*, which, depending upon the holiday and which of the daily prayers one is reciting, may require repetition of *Shemone Esrei* but not of *Birkas Hamazon*.)

This week's question: When would one wash his hands with orange juice?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part LI

There was extensive debate within Lodz regarding Rabbi Shapiro's potential appointment as the Chief Rabbi, as many Lodz residents wished to appoint Rabbi Mendel Alter of Kalish, brother of the Gerrer Rebbe Rabbi Avrohom Mordechai Alter (1865-1948) and youngest son of the great Sfas Emes of Ger (Rabbi Yehuda Leib Alter; 1847-1905). Eventually, the Lodz community agreed to Rabbi Shapiro's conditions and hired him as its new Chief Rabbi. Things seemed to be looking up, with

some degree of financial stability on the horizon. Tragically, however, it was not be.

In 1933, Rabbi Shapiro contracted what seemed to be a cold, but it soon worsened. There are varying accounts as to whether the disease he contracted was typhus, diphtheria, or pneumonia; the truth is impossible to ascertain. However, it is clear that he had some sort of malady that affected his throat and ability to speak and breathe.

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This is the reason Moshe wanted Yisro to journey with the Jewish People. Yisro had previously been the minister of Midian. He was very prestigious and fabulously wealthy. Still, upon hearing of the Splitting of the Sea and the various miracles G-d performed for the Jews, he converted and joined the Jewish Nation. Yisro chose to join the Jews in the desert, a desolate area with no access to the many materialistic trappings he was used to. Although Yisro was previously an avid idol worshipper, he left his set ways to solely

serve G-d. Moshe reasoned that Yisro would be a great role model for the Jewish Nation. He was a prime example of someone who had it all yet still saw G-d and chose to leave his previous lifestyle and habits and to follow in G-d's ways.

Change is not easy. Changing oneself and adapting to a new life is even more difficult. Finding a role model whom one can look to and emulate can go a long way toward inspiring a person to make keep working on changing himself for the better.

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