

מאת מו"ה ברוך הירשפלד שליט"א
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הלכה למעשה

A SERIES IN HALACHAH
LIVING A "TORAH" DAY

Tu B'Shvat: Nature of the Day

This year, *Tu B'Shvat* falls out on *Shabbos*. *Tu B'Shvat* (15th day of *Shvat*) is the New Year for trees in the sense that they begin to grow anew from this day on, due to the nourishment that they receive from the ground. It is not the "Day of Judgment" for trees since that takes place on *Shavuot* (1). Nevertheless, there is a widespread *minhag* to *daven* on this day for a beautiful *esrog* for the following *Sukkos*, (2) and although one is not allowed to ask for private requests on *Shabbos*, one is permitted to *daven* for a beautiful *esrog* this year on *Tu B'Shvat*. This is because the prohibition against private requests on *Shabbos* applies to issues which might dampen one's mood on *Shabbos*, such as healing a sickness, or *parnassah*, etc. However, this is a request for a *mitzvah* item and is not forbidden. Also, when an opportune time arises (עת רצון) on *Shabbos*, and will be gone after *Shabbos*, some *poskim* are lenient with regard to personal requests.

Eating Fruit on Tu B'Shvat

It is customary to eat many different types of fruit on this day (especially fruit which *Eretz Yisroel* is praised with, i.e. grapes, olives, etc.). When one makes a *beracha* on these fruit to thank *Hashem* for the product of the previous year's rain and growth, he is thereby activating the new cycle of

(1) ראש השנה טו. (2) בני יששכר - שבט (3) אורח ר"א

growth, that begins all over again on *Tu B'Shvat*.

If one has a number of "בורא פרי העץ" items, and among them he has fruit from the species that *Eretz Yisroel* is praised with, one should make the *beracha* on those special items. If a person has more than one of these species in front of him, the order of importance (and the one to make the blessing on) is as follows: Olives, dates, grapes (raisins), figs and pomegranates (3).

Checking Fruit and Vegetables for Bugs

On *Tu B'Shvat*, when we eat extra amounts of fruit, one must be especially vigilant in checking for bugs. A knowledgeable person in this field should be consulted regarding which fruits need to be checked and which do not. For example, *carobs* (carobs) that some people eat, must be split open down the length, and then the cavities must be checked for bugs and eggs.

WEEKLY CHIZUK # 16

On *Tu B'Shvat*, one should ponder the incredible and unlimited kindness of *Hashem* and the fact that He is constantly providing us with so many species of luscious and nutritious fruit. The *berachah* that acknowledges all the sunlight, rain, wind, soil growth, etc., is what actually activates all these gifts from Heaven, so that they continuously reoccur time after time. One should exert himself daily to recite these *berachos* with proper concentration and an overwhelming feeling of gratitude.

הוא היה אומר...

R' Itzeleh of Volozhin ZT"l (Peh Kadosh) would say:

"A person who is careful with his health; eats properly, sleeps properly, exercises like he should, his body is healthy and strong. But one whose entire life is devoted to learning *Torah*, who deprives himself of food and sleep so as not to miss a second from learning, his body should become weak. However, states the *posuk*: 'If you will listen to the voice of Hashem and do what is right in His eyes' - the constant study of *Torah* - 'Every sickness that I put on Egypt, I will not put on you' - you will remain healthy and strong."

R' Eliyohu Meir Bloch ZT"l would say:

"I realize that I make myself appear foolish in the eyes of my students when I insist that they stand up for me when I pass them by or walk into a room. But what shall I do? That is the *halachah* and I have no choice but to teach them to follow the *halachah*!"

A Respected *Mechanech* would say:

"If you ask a question, you might be considered a fool for five minutes. But if you don't ask a question, you will remain a fool for the rest of your life!"

MAZEL TOV TO HORAV & REB. SHERER ON THEIR SIMCHA - BY AN ANONYMOUS ADMIRER

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בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו

תורה תבלין

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שבת קודש פרשת בשלח - שבת שירה

Shabbos Parshas Beshalach - Shabbos Shirah

ט"ו שבט תשס"ז - February 3, 2007

הדלקת נרות שבת - 4:56 (Monsey, NY) מנחה גדולה / שבת - 12:40

זמן קריאת שמע/מ"א - 9:02 ~~~~~ שקיעה של יום השבת - 5:15

זמן קריאת שמע/הג"א - 9:38 ~~~~~ צאת הכוכבים / מעריב - 6:05

סוף זמן התפילה / להג"א - 10:29 ~~~~ צאתה"כ / לשיטת רבינו תם - 6:27

פתח לבי בתורתך

וישב הים לפנות בקר לאיתנו ומצרים נסים לקראתו
וינער ה' את מצרים בתוך הים וגו' (יד-כו)

איתא במדרש: אמר רבי יוחנן, תנאי התנה הקב"ה עם הים שיהא נקרע לפני ישראל, הה"ד "וישב הים ... לאיתנו" - לתנאי שהתנה עמו עכ"ל ותמנהו המפרשים, הלא היה צריך להזכיר התנאי שהתנה הקב"ה בשעת הבקיעה, כדכת' "וישם את הים לחריבה ויבקעו המים", ולא עתה לאחר ששב הים לאיתנו?

אלא מיישב האדמו"ר מסוכטשוב, הרה"ק מו"ה שמואל בורנשטיין זצ"ל, בס' שם משמאל, שכל ענין התנאי הוא שאם לא יקיים התנאי, יהיה המעשה בטל. וא"כ אם לא היה הים מקבל ומקיים התנאי להקרע לפני בני ישראל בעת שיצאו ממצרים, היה בטל תיכף המאמר שיהיה כאן ים, והיה שוב חוזר להיות יבשה לעולם.

אולם בזה שיקבל הים את התנאי ונקרע באמת לפני בני ישראל, לכן נתקיים המעשה ונשאר ים. וממילא, בזה שחזר הים לאיתנו, על כרחך שקיים ה"תנאי". אבל בבקיעה אין הכרח שזה מצד קיום התנאי, כי אפילו אם לא היה רוצה לקיים התנאי, היה נעשה ליבשה.

ובזה יש לפרש גם את דברי הגמ' (חולין ז). שאמר ר' פנחס בן יאיר לנהר גינאי לחלוק לו ואם לאו אני גוזר שלא יעברו בך מים לעולם. דכיון שלא יקיים ה"תנאי" - להיות משועבד לכל צדיק, אז יהיה המעשה בטל לגמרי ולא יעברו בו מים לעולם.

ולא נחם אלקים דרך ארץ פלשתים כי קרוב הוא (יג-יז)

הנה מבואר בקרא, דלולא חשש מלחמה עם הפלשתים, היה הקב"ה מכניס את בני ישראל לארץ ישראל בדרך קצרה, שהוא דרך ארץ פלשתים, ורק מפני החשש הסיים הקב"ה אל דרך אחרת, שהוא דרך המדבר ים סוף. ולכאורה טעם זה אינה מובן, שהרי אפילו בלא זה הוצרך בני ישראל לעבור דרך המדבר, כדי לקבל את התורה בהר סיני, שזה כבר היה נקבע אפי' מקודם ליציאת מצרים כמקום מתן תורה, וכמו שמצינו כי אמר הקב"ה למשה אצל הסנה "תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה" (שמות ג-יז). וא"כ מפני מה תלתה התורה את הליכתם של בני ישראל בדרך המדבר בטעם אחר של חשש מלחמה?

אלא מתוך מרן הגמ"ר אברהם ישעיה קרליץ זצ"ל, בעל החזון איש, דאפשר שטעם מלחמת פלשתים קדם אפי' לבחירת הר סיני כמקום מתן תורה, ומפני טעם זה עצמו אמר הקב"ה למשה שיעבדו את האלקים על ההר הזה. אמנם לולא זאת, אפשר והיתה התורה ניתנת בארץ ישראל ממש. נמצא כי מטעם זה סיבב הקב"ה את העם דרך המדבר ים סוף ומש"ה נבחר הר סיני כמקום נתינת התורה.

ועוד אפ"ל, שהר סיני קבוע ועומד כמקום מתן תורה. אלא שלולי טעם זה היו בני' נכנסים קודם לארץ ישראל ומתיישבים בה, ורק אח"כ היו באים להר סיני לקבל את התורה. אולם עתה, הוצרכו ללכת דרך המדבר לקבל התורה טרם שנכנסו לא"י.

The *Gaon* worked all his life to discredit the *Haskalah* and prove the folly of their ways. Even their leaders, who claimed to be wise and understanding of the *Torah*, would attempt to twist the holy words to their own benefit and purpose. The following story gives one a sense of how people of the time understood the conflict between the *Gaon* and the *Maskilim*.

The curators of a prominent Russian museum owned a small stone that was reputed to possess remarkable powers. Many scientists came to experiment on the stone, but no one could discover its abilities. The museum committee decided to ship the stone to Germany, the cultural and scientific center of the world. But the German scientists could not discover the properties of the stone either. They decided to return the stone.

At that point, Moses Mendelssohn, a leader of the *Haskalah* and a scientist on the committee, stood up. “Gentlemen! There is a certain Rabbi Eliyohu of Vilna who is renowned for his wisdom and attainments. Before we return the stone to Russia, let us send it to him and see if he can unveil its mysterious powers.”

A delegation of two German professors made their way to Vilna. Soon they were standing before the *Gaon* in rapt silence as he examined the stone, rolling it about in his fingers. At last, the *Gaon* looked up and motioned to his attendant. “Reb Hirsch,” he said to his *gabbai*, “please bring in a glass of water.” When the water was brought in, the *Gaon* took the stone and dropped it into the glass. There was a fizzing noise, a cloud of steam and then an amazing thing occurred: The water in the glass disappeared!

One of the professors picked up the glass, looked at it from all sides and handed it to his colleague. This was wonderful. The glass was stone dry! But where had the water gone? The two professors looked back at the *Gaon*. “Please, honored Rabbi, you must explain!”

The *Gaon* said, “This stone is a sapphire. When placed in water, it immediately breaks the water down to its chemical elements: the gases of hydrogen and oxygen.” The two professors were astounded at the scientific genius of this rabbi living in a remote Lithuanian town, and they took their leave with great respect.

When the scientists returned to Germany, they reported on the *Gaon’s* incredible insight. Moses Mendelssohn was present at the meeting, and he stood up and exclaimed excitedly, “If so, we have discovered a naturalistic explanation for the splitting of the Red Sea! The sages of the Talmud relate that the staff of Moshe was made of sapphire. Obviously, when he raised the staff over the sea, the water dissolved for purely natural reasons, settling into its basic elements of hydrogen and oxygen.”

When the *Gaon* heard of Moses Mendelssohn’s statement, he was outraged. “Heretic!” he proclaimed. “*Hashem* told *Moshe Rabbeinu*, ‘*Lift your staff and stretch out your hands.*’ The *Medrash* explains that the word ‘הרים’ - ‘*Lift*,’ means set aside. In other words, rather than use his staff to cause the water to part, *Moshe Rabbeinu* set it aside and only lifted his hands above the water. This was done so that heretics shouldn’t claim that the water split naturally. This was indeed the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea!”

משל למח הדבר דומה

אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה' אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה וגו' (טו-א)

משל: At the engagement party of their children, the two happy *mechutanim* were joined at the head table by the *shadchan*, and they began arguing over who truly felt the greatest amount of *simcha* and joy.

“She is my only daughter, the apple of my eye, so naturally I feel as if this is the happiness moment of my life,” said the father of the bride. But the father of the groom cut in. “My son has been waiting for a long time for the perfect *shidduch* and now that he’s found her, I feel as if I’m ready to burst from joy!”

While they parried back and forth, the *shadchan* smiled inwardly. “There is no question that I am the happiest,” he thought. “Who knows what will be with

the groom and bride? In the end, ה"ו, it might not work out. But I’ve got my *shadchanus gelt* (matchmaker’s fee) already in hand and no matter what, I end up ahead. So of course, I am the happiest right now!”

במשל: The **Dubner Maggid ZT”L** observes that after all the tremendous miracles that *Hashem* did for *Bnei Yisroel* in Egypt and at the ים סוף, their song of praise should have gone on and on for quite some time, thanking *Hashem* for every act. Instead, they glorified His Name and praised *Hashem* for His Greatness, because in the grand scheme, things can change and miracles today might not be there tomorrow. But one thing is for sure: the Glory of *Hashem* remains forever!

TORAH GEMS

הגני ממסדר לכם לחם מן השמים...
למען אנסטו וילך בתורתו אם לא (טז-ד)

יחק שש מאות בחור וכל רכב
מצרים ושלשים על כולו וגו' (ד-ו)

When Pharaoh chased after *Bnei Yisroel* in an attempt to quell their flight to freedom, he understood that he would need extraordinary powers of impurity - *impurity*, to counteract the *kedusha*. Says the **Chiddushei Harim, R’ Yitzchok Meir Alter ZT”L**, he took with him 600 chariots, plus 7 מצות בני 7 - *Noachide Laws*, that he turned into *Tumah*, "ושלשים" - 3 times 2, an extra 6.The total equalled 613 powers of *Tumah*, which Pharaoh used to fight against the 613 מצות - תרי"ג מצות of the *Torah*!

Another explanation is based on *Tosfos* (פסחים זד.) who writes that the world is comprised of three unequal parts: one part water, one part wilderness and one part civilization. Obviously, water covers the greatest portion of the earth, while deserts, forests and wastelands make up the second largest area. Inhabited areas, such as cities, towns and other sites where people live, comprise the smallest section.

Thus, writes **R’ Yosef Patzanovsky ZT”L**, when *Hashem* was in the process of revealing His Glory through the miracles מופתים that He brought upon the world, He demonstrated his complete dominance over these three areas: כיבוש הארץ - *conquering the Land (of Israel)*, displayed *Hashem’s* control over the inhabited land and the people within it. The באר מרים, ועניי הכבוד (Mann, Well of Miriam and the Clouds of Glory) were the miracles that exemplified the Divine authority over the wilderness. קריעת ים סוף - *Splitting of the Sea*, was the manner in which *Hashem* portrayed His dominion over the water. And of all three, "ושלשים על כולו" - the third of water (שליש ים) and the miracles at the sea, were far greater than all the rest (עולה על כולו)!

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ואתה הרים את מטך וגטה את ידך על הים ובקעוהו ויבאו בני ישראל בתוך הים ביבשה וגו' (יד-טז)

Rashi comments: “If they will observe the *mitzvos connected with the mann*; not to leave over from it and not to go out on *Shabbos* to collect it.” The *mann* was a “test” that *Bnei Yisroel* needed to pass in order to prove to *Hashem* that they were worthy to be His Chosen Nation. What was the nature of this test?

The **Kli Yokor, R’ Shlomo Ephraim Luntzitz ZT”L**, explains that there are two kinds of מונעים - *hindrances*, that stand in the way of a person involving himself with *Torah* study. One is מבפנים - *internal*, the other מבחוץ - *external*. The internal hindrance is nourishment, which, due to its physical character, blocks the mind, and prevents it from absorbing *Torah*, which is totally spiritual. That is why after the Heavenly Cloud purified Moshe from the food that he had previously eaten, he refrained from eating for the next forty days that he was on *Har Sinai*, enabling him to learn the entire *Torah* during that short period. The external hindrance is one's constant quest to earn a livelihood, which does not allow a person to relinquish his mundane thoughts and immerse himself in the sea of *Torah*.

For this reason, *Hashem* fed the *mann* to the generation that received the *Torah*. Here was a food that was purely spiritual - the same food that sustains the angels - and would not interfere with the *Torah* that they would learn. At the same time, here was a food that came to them effortlessly, leaving them free to study *Torah* diligently without interference. For forty years they received spiritual food, without a worry in the world. Now, they really had no excuse not to study *Torah* constantly and to grow in it. This was the test that *Bnei Yisroel* faced in the desert.