

## DARCHAI NOAM

### Its ways are ways of pleasantness - דרכיה דרכי נעם

(Mishlei 3:17)

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How can the Parsha help us grow this week?

### **B'shalach – a segulah for parnassah**

In this week's Parsha of B'shalach, Bnei Yisrael are finally released from Mitzrayim and they begin their travels in the desert. We read about the manna – the miraculous bread that Hashem rained down from the Heavens. This manna sustained Bnei Yisrael for 40 years. Since each family was only allowed to gather enough manna for one day (except Shabbat and Yom Tov), they had to have faith that Hashem would sustain them again the next day. This was a 40 year exercise in emunah – learning repeatedly that all of our sustenance is provided by Hashem.

Many people have a custom of reciting Parshat HaMan (the Chapter of Manna) from this week's Parsha every day after Shacharit.<sup>1</sup> It is said that one who recites this chapter every day is assured that his sustenance will not be lacking. It is a well-known segulah for parnassah (livelihood). A segulah is a charm or ritual that supersedes logic; it is an action that is expected to change one's fortune. Other examples of segulot are giving tzedaka to a traveller to donate at his destination to protect him from harm and giving tzedaka in the name of Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes to help find a lost object.

Some segulahs have rational explanations. For instance, many people are careful not to fold their tallit after davening on Shabbat morning because it can involve a number of prohibitions (such as preparing for after Shabbat). Folding the tallit straight after Shabbat is supposed to be a segulah for shalom bayit. The tallit is traditionally the first present that a wife would buy for her husband when they got married. If the husband spends time carefully folding the tallit straight after Shabbat it reminds him how much he cares for his wife and her gifts.

That reminds me of a joke. Reuven was recently married. He stayed back at shule after davening on Motzai Shabbat to carefully fold his tallit. He would do anything for shalom bayit. The older and wiser Shimon observed Reuven and he came over to give him some advice. "Do you want a fool-proof segulah for shalom bayit?" he asked. "Stop folding up your tallit so beautifully, go home, roll up your sleeves and help your wife to clean up after Shabbat by washing the dishes!"

If we recite Parshat HaMan every day, are we guaranteed to earn a good salary? The whole idea of segulahs is quite controversial. Some Rabbis are strong advocates. Other Rabbis are very much against them. Regardless of which view is correct, reciting Parshat HaMan every day with kavanah can certainly help inculcate the idea that our livelihood comes from Hashem. Admittedly, Hashem does require us to do hishtadlut – to put in the effort to earn our income. That is a curse from the time of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. But the **true** source of our livelihood is Hashem. Our efforts are just to make a kli (vessel) to capture the blessing that Hashem wants to bestow upon us. Alternatively, we can view our efforts as affording a way for Hashem to remain concealed in this world. However, despite our hishtadlut, we are not in control of the outcome of our actions (for instance how much we earn). The outcome is always decided

<sup>1</sup> See page 181c of the standard Artscroll Ashkenaz siddur.

by Hashem. Reciting Parshat HaMan every day reminds us of this important lesson and can help us feel less despairing or overly involved in our work.

The Mishnah Berurah focuses on perhaps the most important part of Parshat HaMan:

*“Bnei Yisrael did so and they gathered [the manna], some gathered a large amount and some gathered a small amount. And they measured it with an omer, and whoever gathered more did not have extra and whoever gathered less was not lacking. **Each one had gathered according to what he eats.**” (Sh’mot 16:17-18)*

This is a remarkable idea. Some of Bnei Yisrael tried to gather as much as possible. Others just put in the minimal effort and gathered a little bit. Yet, despite their varying efforts, when they came home and measured what they had, they discovered that they all ended up with exactly what they needed. This is directly relevant to us. We do have to put in effort to earn our income. Some of us put in a lot of effort while others put in less effort. However, regardless of how much effort we put in, Hashem ensures that we all end up with exactly what we need.

Truly internalising this message can have a huge impact on our lives. Many of us devote more time than we should to our work. Time is a limited resource that is more precious than money. We can earn back money but lost time can never be recovered. The more time we spend at work, the less time that we can spend with our families and the less time we have to learn Torah and perform mitzvot.

The same lesson applies equally to those who are not involved in earning a living. We all need to remember that Hashem is in charge of the outcome – we need to put in the effort but then we need to let go and leave the results up to Hashem.

Absorbing the reassuring emunah lesson of this week’s Parsha can minimise the chance that our minds will worry over how to make ends meet, even when we are praying or learning or spending time with our families.

The lesson of the manna is directly relevant to us today in our busy lives. No matter how much time and effort we currently dedicate to earning a parnassah, Hashem has already decided the end result. We can all afford to spend a bit less time at work and a bit more time working on our spiritual endeavours. We are guaranteed by Hashem Himself that our take-home salary will not suffer.

Let’s try something this week:

1. Recite Parshat HaMan on a regular basis. It is quite lengthy, so if we can’t manage to read it every day, at least try to read through it regularly in English.
2. Be aware of how much time we spend either at work or thinking about work. Make a conscious effort to cut back this effort and any accompanying despair. Try to remember the lesson from Parshat HaMan so that we can be less distracted by our work while we are not at work.
3. Visualise Hashem handing us our salary each month with exactly the amount that we need. Conserve the strength and energy usually reserved for worry over parnassah and re-channel it towards doing an extra mitzvah or Torah learning.

Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Ledder

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## **About Darchai Noam**

The passuk in Mishlei (3:17) describes the Torah as follows: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness (Darchai Noam) and all its paths are peace". The Torah is our guidebook for life. It is packed full of good advice as to how we should live our lives.

The aim of the Darchai Noam weekly email is to examine an idea from the weekly parashah relating to good middot (character traits). It will focus particularly on treating each other with respect and how to interact with each other in a more peaceful and pleasant manner. It will also suggest some practical tips for implementing these ideas in our daily lives.

By learning together each week, and making an effort to regularly put the ideas into practice, with Hashem's help we can all gradually improve our character traits and our observance of 'v'ahavta l're'echa kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

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