

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Ekev  
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How can the Parsha help us grow this week?

### Ekev – lesson from the manna

In this week's Parsha of Ekev, Moshe discusses Bnei Yisrael's diet in the desert during their 40 years of wandering, specifically the Heavenly manna which fell from the sky each day.

*He afflicted you and let you get hungry and then he fed you the manna that you did not recognise and nor did your forefathers recognise in order to make known to you that not by bread alone does man live, but rather by everything that comes from Hashem's mouth does man live. (Devarim 8:3).*

The manna was a 40-year long emunah lesson for Bnei Yisrael. Each night Bnei Yisrael would go to sleep with no food or ingredients available for the next day. They would need faith in Hashem that the miraculous manna would continue to fall the next day. Imagine going to sleep with an empty fridge and no provisions in the cupboard. Would we be able to sleep peacefully under such circumstances? Would we have the requisite faith that Hashem would provide for us like He did in the past? Thankfully, most of us have not experienced going to sleep with no provisions. However, unfortunately many of us may still be able to relate to the feeling of stress and anxiety for the future – whether it be lying awake for hours at night worrying about next month's rent or mortgage repayment.

Emunah gives us the serenity and faith that Hashem will provide us with exactly what we need when we need it. One important character trait that is helpful in achieving this emunah is patience. We can learn about the significance of patience from a comparison of Shaul Hamelech and David Hamelech.

Prior to one of Shaul's battles, Shmuel the prophet had instructed Shaul to wait for his arrival before offering a korban to Hashem. However, the Philistine enemy was close and Shaul's men pressured him to act. Shaul felt forced to offer the korban even before Shmuel arrived. He was castigated by Shmuel for this lack of patience.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, David Hamelech was instructed that he should not begin his attack on the Philistine enemy until he heard the sign of the leaves of the trees beginning to rustle. He was told by Hashem that that only at that point would he be assured of success<sup>2</sup>. The Midrash<sup>3</sup> explains that the leaves only began to rustle at the very last minute, when the enemy had almost reached David's camp. David's men were desperate to attack before the Philistine's reached their camp. However, David held them back. He explained that it was of utmost importance to have absolute faith in Hashem and to obey his commandment. If they transgressed Hashem's instruction, they would certainly die. If they delayed the attack, there was only a possibility that they would

<sup>1</sup> See Shmuel I, Chapter 13.

<sup>2</sup> David had consulted the Urim Vetumim – the breastplate worn by the Kohen Gadol through which Divine instruction was received.

<sup>3</sup> Midrash Socher Tov 27.

die, but they would die as pious men that kept Hashem's commandments. David succeeded in holding his men back. Finally, at the last possible minute, the leaves started rustling and David allowed his men to attack. Needless to say, David and his men were victorious. According to the Midrash, the angels had asked Hashem why he chose David to rule instead of Shaul. Hashem pointed to this incident as His explanation. This demonstrates the importance of emunah and the extent to which patience and emunah are intertwined.

Each member of Bnei Yisrael received exactly the amount of manna that they needed – one omer. The pasuk tells us that those who tried to collect more than their allotted portion did not succeed – when they got back to their tent to measure their collection they found that they had collected exactly one omer per person.<sup>4</sup>

The Gemara<sup>5</sup> relates a discussion between David and Hashem about David's death. David wanted to know the date that he was destined to die. Hashem told him that information was hidden. However, He did inform David that he would die on a Shabbat. In an effort to honour Shabbat, David asked if his death could be postponed to a Sunday. However, Hashem informed him that this would not be possible as Sunday was already allotted to Shlomo's kingship. One kingdom cannot overlap with another and Hashem would not subtract from Shlomo's allotted time even so much as a hairsbreadth.

This teaches us that everyone receives from Hashem exactly what is allotted to them – not more and not less. And no one can touch what is not meant for them.

Many of us may become anxious about earning sufficient parnasah or 'missing out' on something. Internalising the lesson of the manna and the message from the story of David's death, helps to give us internal faith that we will receive whatever Hashem has designated for us. We can rest assured that no-one can take what is meant for us, even so much as a hairsbreadth.

How can we tell how successful we are at internalising this message? Perhaps we can try the 'kiddush test'. When we attend a kiddush after shul on Shabbat morning, do we feel nervous about getting to the herring before it runs out? Do we rush for a piece of our favourite chocolate cake before others get to it? Do we ignore the instructions of the President and fill our plate before the Rabbi has finished reciting kiddush? Or do we patiently wait for the Rabbi to finish kiddush and then calmly help ourselves to a snack? Gauging our level of anxiety at a kiddush, may give us some small insight into where we are holding in our level of emunah!<sup>6</sup>

Let's try something this week:

1. Remember the story of David and the rustling leaves – try to have more patience and faith by reminding ourselves that Hashem will give us what we need at the time that is perfect for us.
2. Try the 'kiddush test'. Be sensitive to your true internal level of anxiety and your fear of 'missing out'.

Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Ledder

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<sup>4</sup> Parshat B'shalach, Shmot, 16:18

<sup>5</sup> Shabbat 30a.

<sup>6</sup> If a kiddush is not the right test for you, try to find another area where you feel inappropriate anxiety and be sensitive to that feeling.

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## **About Darchai Noam**

Darchai Noam is available online at [www.darchai-noam.com](http://www.darchai-noam.com). You can access this week's edition of Darchai Noam, archived back issues of Darchai Noam and other divrei Torah.

The pasuk 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, usually 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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