

DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

“Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Parashat Va'etchanan
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darchai.noam@gmail.com
www.darchai-noam.com

How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

Ekev – Lesson from the manna

In this week's Parsha of Ekev, Moshe discusses Bnei Yisrael's nourishment 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).

Essentially, the manna was a 40-year long miracle, but also a 40-year long emunah lesson for Bnei Yisrael. Each night, Bnei Yisrael would go to sleep with no food or ingredients stored away for the next day. They would need faith in Hashem that He would provide the miraculous manna again 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, many of us may still experience stress and worry for the future – such as lying awake for hours at night worrying about next month's rent or mortgage repayment.

With emunah that Hashem will provide us with exactly what we need when we need it comes serenity and reduced stress. One important character trait that can be 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.¹ In a separate incident, David 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 success². The Midrash³ 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 command. If they transgressed Hashem's instruction, they would certainly die. If they delayed the attack, there was still a possibility that they would die, but at

¹ See Shmuel I, Chapter 13.

² David had consulted the Urim V'tumim – the breastplate worn by the Kohen Gadol through which Divine instruction was received.

³ Midrash Socher Tov 27.

least they would die as pious men that kept Hashem's instruction. 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, when the angels 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 what they had collected, they found that they had collected exactly one omer per person.⁴

The Gemara⁵ 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 such 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 King 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 provide us with some small insight into where we are holding in our level of emunah!⁶

Let's try something this week:

1. Remember the story of David and the rustling leaves – and work on increasing your patience and faith by reminding yourself that Hashem will give you what you need at the perfect time.
2. Try the 'kiddush test'. Be sensitive to your true internal level of anxiety and your fear of 'missing out'. Then try to increase your emuna in this area of your life.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Ledder

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⁴ Parshat B'shalach, Shmot, 16:18

⁵ Shabbat 30a.

⁶ If a kiddush is not the right test for you, try to find another area of your life where you feel inappropriate anxiety. Then be sensitive to that feeling and realise it can be minimized by strengthening your emunah.