



TORAH WEEKLY

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A Taste of Torah

One Way to Go

by Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

If ever anyone was stuck between a rock and a hard place, this was it. The newly-freed Jewish People, ordered by Hashem to encamp near Ba'al Tzefon by the Sea of Reeds, find themselves trapped between said sea and the mighty Egyptian army. Turning back will lead them into the waiting claws of their former masters. Going forward would end in a watery grave. With nowhere to go, the Torah tells us that they cried out to Hashem.

This reaction has, indeed, been the *modus operandi* of the Jewish People since time immemorial – when in distress, turn to Heaven in prayer. According to the Rambam, in fact, it is a mitzvah to do so! In this case, however, Hashem does not react favorably to their prayers. Hashem tells Moshe (Shemos 14:15), “Why do you cry out to me?! Speak to the Jewish People, and they should travel!” Hashem tells Moshe that this is not a time for prayer, but for action – the people must walk right in to the waves. This response is very difficult to comprehend; what else are they supposed to do but pray to Hashem?

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746; better known by the acronym of his name, Ramchal), in his work *Da'as Tevunos*, puts forth a principle that Hashem runs the world with two distinct approaches. One is *hanhagas s'char vi'onesh*, the method of reward and punishment. Individuals, nations, the entirety of the world receive what they deserve, good or otherwise. While there are innumerable factors that go into its practical application, one could, if given sufficient information, comprehend everything that occurs within this framework.

The second track, referred to as *hanhagas hayichud*, is predicated upon an approach whose full scope is beyond comprehension to every being in the universe except for Hashem. The cold logic of reward and punishment do not work in this method. For example, the horrific execution of Rabi Akiva was incomprehensible to the extent that the angels themselves complained to

G-d, “Is this Torah, and is this its reward?!” Certain things must occur and fall into place in the course of world history to arrive at the ultimate revelation of Hashem’s *yichud*, or oneness, a point at which the world will see that everything throughout the universe and throughout history ultimately unites in the oneness of Hashem.

While these two paths seem independent, the Ramchal explains that Hashem, in fact, sees to it that they generally work in tandem with each other, so that events and occurrences which must occur for *hanhagas hayichud* are fit into the approach of reward and punishment. Nonetheless, there are certain events which do not fit neatly into this structure, and there is no plausible explanation for a particular event based on standard reward and punishment protocols. At these times, it is impossible to attempt to fit such events into track of *s'char vi'onesh*. The only reaction one can have is to place his faith in Hashem and trust that He is firmly in control, despite the fact that things don't make sense.

Standing at the sea, the Jewish People had nowhere to go. Initially, they believed that prayer would bring them salvation. However, Hashem rejected that notion, explaining that within the confines of the normal, natural system of reward and punishment, there was no way the Jewish People could merit salvation. In fact, our Sages teach us that the angels in Heaven remarked that the Jewish People ought to be destroyed with the Egyptians, as they, too, were guilty of idolatry in Egypt!

There was only one way for the Jewish People to get out of this intractable mess, and that was to express such a deep level of faith and trust in Hashem’s control of the world that they would merit to actually tap into that world of Hashem’s oneness, where the regular approach of reward and punishment fades away. Any sort of effort on their part besides absolute faith and submission to Hashem was pointless. Thus, Moshe tells the Jewish People

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Stories for the Soul

Matzah Sandwich

A woman in Ofakim, Israel was suffering from a life-threatening illness which necessitated her taking certain pills. The pills contained a substance that posed a *chametz* problem on Pesach, but given the seriousness of her condition, there was no question that she was obligated to take them. The woman, however, did not want to ingest *chametz* on Pesach.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (1944/45-2001), the rov of Ofakim, stepped in. “Although these pills contain *chametz*, there is a halachic solution for this unique situation,” he told her. “If you place the pill between two large pieces of matzah, it becomes *batel* (nullified) to the matzah, and the *chametz* wouldn't pose a problem at all.” The woman happily accepted this ruling and took the medicine.

Apart from the obvious idea that one does not place his life in danger to avoid eating *chametz* (or for most other mitzvos, with certain exceptions), it is also a lesson in how a spiritual leader must deal with people who won't always cooperate. Rather than tackle the issue head on, it is sometimes wiser to find a workaround that will sidestep the conflict.

Kollel Happenings

SPRING-SUMMER AVOS UBANIM ON SHABBOS AFTERNOON

The Kollel's spring-summer Avos Ubanim program continues this Shabbos afternoon at the Kollel Torah Center in West Denver and Southeast Denver. Learning begins one hour before mincha, followed by nosh and prizes. For sponsorships and more info, email info@denverkollel.org.

GOLD PARSHA CLASS VIA ZOOM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Senior Division's weekly GOLD parsha class continues via Zoom on Mondays at 11:30 am. Contact info@denverkollel.org for further information.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

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Halacha Riddles

This week's question: Why would a food's blessing receive an adjustment on this particular Shabbos Hagadol?

Answer: This Shabbos Hagadol is Erev Pesach. People who wish to avoid using any *chametz*, even for the bread of the Shabbos meals, may opt to use egg matzah. (Regular matzah may not be consumed on Erev Pesach.) Egg matzah is *pas haba'a bikisnin*, a category of bread-type foods that generally requires a *mezonos*. For practical halachic purposes, *pas haba'a bikisnin* includes three basic categories: 1) dough that is filled with other items (e.g., a knish or pie); 2) dough whose majority of liquid is something other than water, such as eggs or oil (according to some, these liquids must change the flavor of the item), or which contains a significant

amount of other flavorings not normally used in bread, such as sugar (items such as cake and cookies would be included in this category); 3) a hard, cracker-type product (see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 168:7).

Since egg matzah is made without water, it is *pas haba'a bikisnin*, and is usually *mezonos*. However, *pas haba'a bikisnin* upon which one establishes a meal, as if it were bread, is treated as bread and requires *hamotzi*. Consequently, one may use two egg matzos instead of two challoos for the Shabbos meal, and a *hamotzi* blessing would be recited upon them.

This week's question: How is it possible for a food's blessing to differ on Pesach from the rest of the year?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part XXIII

Their efforts were successful, and the two held their Purim feast together. Now reconciled, Rav Saadia was restored to his position as the Gaon of the Sura Yeshiva. Dovid ben Zakkai passed away in 940. Rav Saadia supported Dovid ben Zakkai's

son, Yehuda - the very same person who had threatened to strike Rav Saadia years earlier, precipitating the rift between Rav Saadia and the Exilarch - as the successor to the position of Exilarch.

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(ibid.:14), "Hashem will wage war on your behalf, and you shall remain silent." There is nothing to do, nothing to say - just rise to a level of absolute recognition that even when all logic and sense breaks down, Hashem is firmly in control.

The way to express that faith was to travel into the sea, recognizing that just as Hashem enables a person to survive on dry land, He can also provide life within the sea itself, laws of nature notwithstanding. Ironically, that very faith would then provide the Jewish People with the merit to actually experience that miracle! Having risen to exist in that world of *hanhagas hayichud*, they merited not only the Splitting of the Sea, but the ability to understand how all the events they had experienced until that point, all their suffering in Egypt, fit into the Divine scheme of ultimate goodness - which, in turn, led to them expressing

Shiras Hayam, the Song of the Sea. *Shira* is expressed at a point of recognition of Hashem's oneness, as the pieces, much like the many notes and facets of a song, finally fit together to create a beautiful masterpiece.

As the world continues to navigate through turbulent, unpredictable waters, it is easy to fall prey to frustration. After all, so much effort has been expended, on both a personal and global scale, to right the ship and get back to normal, yet all these efforts continue to be met with more challenges and uncertainty. At times like this, when efforts seem futile, we would do well to take a step back and realize that once we have done what we can, we must calm down and allow Hashem to show us where this is all headed. It is through that realization that we will merit the ultimate revelation of His oneness with the arrival of Mashiach.

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