

SEPARATING THE MEN FROM THE BOYS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 269, Paternal Wishes vs. Staying in Israel.
Good Shabbos!*

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

Manna Gathering Separates The "Men" From the "Boys"

There is an interesting Medrash which says that when the Manna originally came down, it came down with precious stones and diamonds. The greatest people (Gedolim she'bahem) of the nation went ahead and took these precious stones and diamonds. However, the simple people, the masses, only collected the Manna.

This is very strange. Everyone appreciates a bargain - especially free diamonds! How was it that only the leaders of the people took advantage of free riches?

I once heard a very interesting observation from Rav Michel Twerski of Milwaukee. He pointed out the unique economic conditions that existed in the Wilderness. For perhaps the only time in the history of civilization, there existed a society where all of a person's physical needs were met. Food was effortlessly available from Heaven. Water was effortlessly available from the Well. Clothing did not wear out, so it was not necessary to buy new clothing. Shelter was available from the Clouds of Glory. We can probably assume that G-d threw in Health Insurance as a guaranteed benefit as well. This was a society that did not have any needs whatsoever.

If one does not have any needs, then of what use are precious stones? What would one do with

them? There was nothing to buy and no need to buy anything. Therefore, people looked at these precious stones, determined that they had no purpose for them, and considered them worthless.

However, the great people among them knew that there would come an occasion when there would be a Mishkan [Tabernacle] and Bigday Kehunah [Holy Vestments (of the High Priest)] which required the contribution of precious stones.

This Medrash teaches us that what differentiates the masses from the leadership, is perspective. A person who only sees in front of his nose, who only considers his requirements for the day, is in the category of a non-leader. The leader recognizes that although certain things might be unnecessary in the current situation, in the future there may come a time when these things will have value.

It is well known that trees do not grow in deserts. The Jews needed a significant amount of lumber to build the Mishkan. Where did they obtain the lumber? Our Rabbis credit the existence of the trees to the foresight of Yaakov. Our Sages tell us that Yaakov planted cedar trees when he first came down to Egypt so that his descendants would be able to cut them down and take them out with them for the purpose of building the Mishkan. This is the perspective of a great individual. He is not merely caught up in 'today'; he plans for and considers what will be in the future.

The Lesson of the Manna: Complaining Reflects An Attitude

The narration of the Manna gathering, which is first mentioned in this week's reading [Shemos 16:4-27], is repeated again in Parshas BeHa'aloscha [Bamidbar 11:6-9]. There, the Torah tells us that after a while, a certain segment of the people became tired of the Manna. They complained: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner is always Manna. Manna, Manna, and more Manna. Every day was 'Mon'-day. They could not take it anymore!

The Torah says that the Manna was like coriander seed. (V'HaMan k'zra gad hu). Rashi (1040-1105) says that this pasuk [verse] is telling us that G-d, as it were, was saying, "Look what my children are complaining about. They are complaining about the Manna, which is so outstanding - it is like coriander seed."

There was nothing better than Manna. It tasted like whatever one wanted. It was spiritual food. It was great for both body and soul. It was the best food that a human being could ever aspire to eat.

The Torah went out of its way to describe the Manna in order to teach us a lesson. The lesson is that if people will complain about Manna, they will complain about anything.

A person can have the best situation in life - compared to his neighbors, compared to people in other countries, compared to people in other times in history - and still complain about everything under the sun!

I recently heard from a Rosh Yeshiva [Dean of a Yeshiva] that a couple came to him for marital counseling. The husband complained that his wife, who was a full-time mother, did not keep a neat

house. Whenever he walked in, he was likely to stumble on the children's toys strewn all over the floor. His wife responded that kids will be kids, and that she can't go around every minute picking up after them.

The Rosh Yeshiva told the fellow as follows: "How many couples in the world would give their right arms to have your problem -- who would like nothing more than a child leaving his toys on the floor? How many couples would give anything to live in a home that was not immaculate, because there were a bunch of kids creating a mess?"

If people can complain about Manna, they can complain about children... or any other of life's blessings that sometimes go unappreciated. That is what Rashi is emphasizing in this verse about the Manna. "See, oh world, how my children complain about an outstanding gift that I have given them." This is the paradigm for all future complaining.

It is all a matter of attitude. A person can have nothing and still be happy, and a person can have everything and still complain. When we see all the troubles that exist in the world around us, we can really begin to appreciate how well off we are. Our mantra should be the pasuk "And the Manna is like coriander seed..." The next time we are tempted to complain, we should think of the lesson of the Manna. If a person does not have proper values, if he can not distinguish between what is important in life and what is secondary, he will always find something to complain about.

The Passive Battle With Egypt: A Symbolic Prototype

The Ibn Ezra (1089-1164) points out that there are two wars in Parshas B'Shalach - the war against Egypt at Yam Suf and the war against Amalek. The Ibn Ezra asks, since we see from the war with Amalek that G-d was prepared to allow the Jewish people to fight a real military battle on their own - albeit with Divine Assistance - why was it that in the war against Egypt, G-d insisted that the Jewish people not lift a finger, that the entire battle be waged solely by the Hand of G-d? Why was this necessary? Why were the tactics changed between the battle against Egypt and the battle against Amalek?

Of course, the battle with Egypt would prove to be the historical exception. In all future wars -- be it the wars of Yehoshua or the wars of King David -- the Jews were obliged to participate in battle. Why was the war with Egypt different?

Rav Yosef Neiman suggests the following answer: The first time that something happens in the Torah it is instructive. It sets the tone. This is the prototype of how one should behave and how one should act in the future. G-d wanted the Jewish people to know that just as in the very first battle which they fought, where they were not required to do anything because "G-d will fight for you and you shall be silent," so too in all future generations -- even if you will have to participate physically in the battle, never forget the lesson of the first. The lesson is that ultimately Help from Heaven and G-d's Mercies determine our fate. If it is G-d's will, we will be victorious, regardless of what we do or do not do militarily. And if, Heaven forbid, as we find in numerous cases in Tanach, it is not G-d's will, we

will lose miserably regardless of our military prowess. The determinant of our fate is not our military prowess; it is our meriting G-d's desire for us to be successful.

I think that at this particular junction in Jewish history -- when we are living in literally amazing times -- it is vital to never forget the lesson of "G-d will fight for you, and you will be silent".

It was Thursday night, a week ago, that we were all in this room [at the beginning of the Gulf War in 1991]. We all remember how we felt when we left the radios and the media to come to the class. We literally did not know what was happening. The initial reports were that there had been a chemical attack on Israel (by Iraq). When we came out of this room at 10:00 o'clock last Thursday night we heard that there were 7 minor injuries and no fatalities. I do not want to make light of anyone's injuries or the accompanying fright and terror, Heaven forbid. But we saw miracles from G-d. I do not think it is hyperbole to say that this was an 'Open Miracle.' This was even without American Patriot missiles as a defense system. This was the Chasdei Hashem defense system [G-d's Mercy].

This does not mean that our approach can be to sit back and not prepare. We are not allowed to rely on miracles. If we have what is currently considered the top of the line defense missiles, we certainly must deploy them and certainly must use them. But, on the other hand we should not rely on benefactors who are not able to save (Al tivtichu b'nedeemim sh'ayin lahem teshua). We should never put our faith in the wizardry of electronic military might. We must put our faith in the Master of the World. We should not allow ourselves to get caught up in the 'Evil Inclination' of "Kochi v'Otzem Yadi" [my strength and the might of my arm have accomplished this valor].

We must realize that ultimately we rely on the concept that "G-d will fight for you, and you be silent". It must be our prayers, our charity, our learning Torah, and our merit that will ultimately carry the day. Whether the patriots will be effective or not depends on the merits and the spiritual level of the Jewish people.

I was in Los Angeles on Shabbos. The Rabbi, who is also a principal in a school there, related that he overheard two second graders discussing various strategies and scenarios. They were discussing what President Bush should do and what Saddam Hussein should do and what Israel should do. It was a ludicrous scene. These seven-year-olds were giving opinions about what actions world leaders should take. Upon pondering the matter, he realized that G-d looks down from Heaven and He hears us discussing these matters - For Him, even George Bush and Saddam Hussein and Colin Powell's discussion of these matters are like the conversations of second graders: "What do they know? Everyone has an opinion!"

That which counts is that we should merit the Salvation of G-d, which can come at the bat of an eyelash.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Beshalach are provided below:

- Tape # 041 - Kiddush: To Sit or Not to Sit
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- Tape # 179 - The Mitzvah of Kiddush for Men and Women
- Tape # 225 - Music in Halacha
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