

Inspired Torah perspectives for our wondrous generation

# Eilecha weekly



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וּיקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם מִסָּה וּמִרִיבָה עַל־רִיב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל נִסְתָּם אֶת־ה' לְאֹמֹר הִישׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם־אֵין:

## MEKOR

SHEMOS 17:6

They called the place Massah and Merivah, because the Jewish nation quarreled and because they had tested Hashem, saying, “Is Hashem present among us or not?”

## MEANING

HA'EMEK DAVAR

The harsher sin is mentioned first; they had tested Hashem, and had quarreled with Moshe. Moshe then switches the order to position Am Yisrael's doubt regarding Hashem's Presence among them just before Amalek's arrival, highlighting the causal relationship they share. Am Yisrael must surely have known that Hashem was in their presence. They were only unsure whether Hashem's Presence would **remain** even after Moshe's passing and the termination of open miracles.

## MESSAGE

TZEMACH TZADIK OF VIZHNITZ

**הַיֵּשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ**: The affirmative certainty that Hashem fills a Jew's life is dependent upon one essential factor: **אִם־אֵין**: whether he has attained the trait of “*ayin*”, **humility**, getting himself out of the way to allow Hashem's light to illuminate the world through his daily thoughts, words, and actions of holiness. When a person makes himself small, recognizing his limits and utter reliance upon Hashem, Who gifts life each minute for the purpose of the mission we were sent here to accomplish, he makes room for the Infinite One to fill his life and transform the darkness of the human experience into a marvelous journey of wonder and passion. Such a person will taste the sweetness of casting his bundle – understood as being too heavy for him to carry alone – on our loving Father in heaven.

## THE GREAT CURE

AFTER THE SPLITTING of the sea, the first place the Jewish nation camped along its journey to Har Sinai to receive the Torah was a place called Marah. Our Sages teach that although the rest of the Torah's commandments were given on Har Sinai, the Bnei Yisrael were given three commandments while they camped at Marah, one of them being the foundation of Shabbos. In his classic sefer *Sidduro Shel Shabbos*, Rebbe Chaim of Chernovitz presents a beautiful parable to explain why it was imperative for our holy nation to taste the sweetness of Shabbos before being presented with the rest of the Torah's commandments.

There was once a medicine man who walked around selling healing substances for various illnesses. One day, someone told him about a faraway land where all of the citizens had contracted a certain disease for which only he had the cure. Being a shrewd businessman, he understood they would be sold out in no time at all. He opened a shop in that place and waited. But as the hours passed, his shop remained empty. Many townsfolk limped by, but not one of them heeded his call. Perplexed, the medicine man thought long and hard about why nobody was purchasing his life-saving medicine. After some contemplation, he arrived at the answer: this illness was so much a part of life in this country that the townsfolk simply didn't believe there was a cure! Surely there had been many charlatans in the past who had claimed to be selling a cure, only to disappear before the hapless customers discovered the hoax. No one was willing to take the risk!

Walking outside, the medicine man found the sickest looking person he could find and offered to heal him for free. The person agreed – after all, what had he to lose? After taking some of the medicine, the man was instantly cured of all his ailments. When the townspeople saw how their friend had been healed, they flocked to the shop, hoping to obtain some of this wondrous elixir at any cost. Says the Chernovitzer Rav, the holy Torah is a medicine for the human condition, guiding us toward the sweetest, most meaningful experience in this world and the next. However, because the world had lived in such darkness and chaos before the giving of the Torah, Hashem wanted to make sure the Jewish nation embrace its precepts, willing to make the sacrifices that accompany Torah observance for the benefits and sweetness of Torah and mitzvos. Therefore, Hashem gave the Bnei Yisrael a taste of the Torah's cure, one commandment which encapsulates the beauty of Torah – where the benefit can be readily perceived and the sweetness most easily tasted. That little taste of Hashem's heavenly elixir of life was **Shabbos**, which, as Chazal teach, is equal to all of the Torah's commandments. Once the Bnei Yisrael had experienced the beauty and wonder of Shabbos Kodesh, they were able to say “*na'aseh v'nishma*”, ready to accept the rest of the Torah with open arms.

**EASILY UNDERSTOOD AS BEING A NECESSARY INGREDIENT FOR A LIFE OF JOY, PLEASURE, AND MEANING, SHABBOS DEMONSTRATES HOW ALL OF THE MITZVOS SHARE THIS HEALING NATURE.**

- Rebbe Chaim of Chernovitz zy"א

- The *Parsha* begins with the description of Hashem leading Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt and the many miracles that occurred.
- Three *pesukim* into the *Parsha*, there appears to be a *pasuk* (13:19) out of place...  
 וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת-עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף עִמּוֹ כִּי הִשְׁבַּע הַשִּׁבְיַע אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פֶּקֶד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים אֹתְכֶם וְהִעֲלִיתֶם אֶת-עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה אִתְּכֶם

Moshe is taking Yosef's bones out of Egypt because of a promise that was made to Yosef before he died. Just as the long-awaited Exodus unfolds, the Torah stops to record Moshe's actions and to quote a line verbatim from *Vayechi*.



Why break up this great moment in Jewish history and add a copy-paste of *pasuk* we've already seen?

**Moshe's evolution is on display**, as he becomes the person to merit speaking face-to-face with Hashem and receiving Torah. What are we to learn from Moshe's actions? Rav Taragin highlights **two of Moshe's incredible traits**:

## #1 Maintaining focus and sensitivity, not to overlook the needs of others amid our own excitement:



- *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was a whirlwind of excitement... yet Moshe does not get caught up in that frenzy and lose focus.
- He was sensitive to the requests of an ancestor which could have otherwise gotten overlooked.

The trait of **mindfulness**; not losing sight of the particular needs of others, despite the commotion of surrounding euphoria. Even in the midst of exciting events happening to us or going on around us, we can't lose composure or sensitivity.

## #2 Investing substantial effort and attention toward performing (seemingly) pedestrian activities:



- More than anyone, Moshe deserved to sit back and enjoy the parade out of Egypt. Instead, he was hard at work...
- The Midrash even says that the bones were buried underground, in the bed of the Nile. Moshe wasn't simply removing Yosef's bones from a dusty room; retrieving Yosef's coffin took tremendous effort and ***messirus nefesh***.
- He could have easily justified delegating the task of excavating an ancestor's watery grave. But he didn't do that at all.
- Moshe didn't view this as something below him or unworthy of his full attention; he was **excited** to perform this duty.
- Superficially, hauling bones is boring and menial; but for Moshe, it didn't distract or detract from his experience of freedom.

Not every responsibility in Yiddishkeit is objectively stimulating. However, if mitzvos are viewed as **servicing the Borei Olam**, and all our actions are directed **לשם שמים**, then **every activity deserves our immersion**, and can, in turn, **have great meaning**.

A *midrash* quoted in *Mechilta* 13:19 describes the "funeral processions" of Yaakov and Yosef, at different times, out of Egypt:

**Yaakov's funeral** (*Vayechi*)

Beautiful procession: 12 children, many grandchildren, Egyptian dignitaries, world leaders, etc.

**Yosef's funeral** (*B'Shalach*)

Even **grandier**: Aharon, Moshe, *nesi'im*, *nevi'im*, *annanei hakavod*, *amud ha'aish*, *aron kodesh*, etc.



The Midrash is puzzling: All these tzaddikim and miracles weren't part of Yosef's *levaya*! They were part of a national *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and Bnei Yisrael's historic march to Eretz Yisrael! Weren't Yosef's bones just along for the ride?!?

- The *Mechilta* is **describing the scene through one person's eyes**: Moshe Rabbeinu's.
- From **Moshe's** perspective, all the grandeur was connected to Yosef's burial *just as much* as being about *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.
- We also try to achieve proper perspective, awareness and sensitivity to others, and fervor for all 'shapes/sizes' of mitzvos.

