

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

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פרשת חקת בלק תש"פ

Why were the Yidden concerned about the Manna?

וַיְדַבֵּר הָעָם בְּאֵלֶיךָ וּבְמֹשֶׁה לְמַעַן הִעֲלִיתָנוּ מִמִּצְרָיִם לְמוֹת בְּמִדְבָּר כִּי אֵין לָחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם וְנִפְשָׁנוּ קָצָה בְּלֶחֶם הַקֶּלֶקֶל: (כא ה)

The people spoke against Hashem and against Moshe, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in this desert, for there is no bread and no water, and we are disgusted with this rotten bread." The commentaries ask, what was the legitimacy of the complaint of לָחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם for there is no bread and no water, when they had the Manna and water from the Well of Miriam? Secondly: Why did the Yidden term the Manna as "rotten bread"? To give a better insight to this Parsha, Rashi quotes from the Sifri 88b and the Gemarra Sota 75b בְּלֶחֶם הַקֶּלֶקֶל: לְפִי שֶׁהָיוּ נִבְלָעוּ בְּאֵיבָרִים כְּרֹאוּהוּ "קֶלֶקֶל" אָמְרוּ, עֲתִיד הָיוּ הַמֵּן הַזֶּה שֶׁיִּתְפַּח בְּמַעֲיָנוּ, בְּלוּם יֵשׁ יְלֹד אִשָּׁה שֶׁמְכַנִּים וְאֵינוּ מוֹצִיָּא,

With this rotten bread: Since the manna was absorbed into their limbs [and not excreted from their bowels], they called it rotten [Mizrachi, or cursed, according to Gur Aryeh.] They said, "This manna will eventually swell up in our stomachs." Is there any mortal who ingests but does not excrete? However, this insight adds much difficulty, as the Yidden were now close to the end of 40 years in the dessert, and they consumated the Manna all these years, and they did not get sick. Why would they expect that now they would suddenly become sick from the Manna? The Rebbe of Pashischa has a brilliant insight to our difficulties: Chazal teach us that after Miriam passed away, her well stopped giving out water. Bamidbar 20:2 states: The congregation had no water; so they assembled against Moshe and Aharon. Rashi quotes: From here we learn that all the forty years that they had the well, it was in Miriam's merit. — [Ta'anith 9a], Afterwards, Posuk 11 states: Moshe raised his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, when an abundance of water gushed forth, and the congregation and their livestock drank. Now the Yidden had their water supply from the rock. The Rebbe continues, the Yidden realized that the water from the Well of Miriam was very holy, that its water's were the cure for the Manna, and as such weren't worried about getting sick from the Manna. However, now that the Well of Miriam ceased to give water, and they had to drink water from the rock, the Yidden were worried that this water was not as holy, and would not be the cure for the Manna, hence, they became frightened that now they would become sick from the Manna. That is why they complained לָחֶם, we have no physical bread, only spiritual bread, and we may get sick, since לָחֶם וְאֵין מַיִם we don't have the holy water from the Well of Miriam, therefore the bread is לָחֶם הַקֶּלֶקֶל "rotten bread". This explains very well this Parsha according to the Rebbe of Pashischa. This complaint was ill received, as Hashem was upset at the lack of Emunah. The Torah states: וַיִּשְׁלַח ה'

בָּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִם רַב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל: Hashem sent against the people the venomous snakes, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died. Then Hashem told Moshe "Make yourself a serpent and put it on a pole, and let whoever is bitten look at it and live. This was to rectify the sin of Emunah, as now the Yidden realized that Hashem only does good things for the Yidden, and with the power of Emunah, of looking at the serpent, did they live. This is a powerful message: whatever happens in the world, is only good for the people. Emunah in Hashem, is the only solution to navigate through rough terrains and to get on the right track of peaceful tranquility. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Bilaam hated the Yidden

אִם־לִקְרָא לְךָ בְּאוֹ הָאֲנָשִׁים קוֹם לְךָ אֲתָם וַיִּלָּךְ עִם שָׂרֵי מוֹאָב: וַיַּחַר אֶף אֱלֹקִים כִּי הוֹלֵךְ הוּא: (כב כ-כב)

Hashem came to Bilaam at night and said to him, "If these men have come to call for you, arise and go with them, but the word I speak to you-that you shall do... Hashem's wrath flared because he was going..The question is: if Hashem granted Bilaam permission to go if he was called by Balak's people, why did Hashem get angry with him? Another difficulty is, the word in the phrase "כי הולך הוא" because he was going. It would have been suffice to state הוֹלֵךְ כִּי הוֹלֵךְ. The holy Chida brings a Rabbeinu Ephraim [from the Baalei Hatosfos] that Bilaam was hired to curse the Yidden and Hashem warned him, that if would dare to curse the Yidden, he would die. Bilaam hated the Yidden, that he was willing to die with the Yidden. He felt that his curse would cause many Yidden to die, and he would also die together with them. To prove that the word הוֹלֵךְ is referring to dying, the Rabbeinu Ephraim brings the Posuk by Eisav אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ הַגֵּה הַגֵּה אֲנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ Eisav told Yaakov "I am going to die anyway". We see that the word הוֹלֵךְ refers to dying. Therefore, Hashem who knows the thoughts of a person, was very angry at the hatred of Bilaam to the Yidden, and His wrath flared. The Chida continues, this is the reason it states "כי הולך הוא" since he was willing to go and die together with the Yidden. I saw in a Sefer that the words "וַיַּחַר אֶף אֱלֹקִים כִּי הוֹלֵךְ" is the same numerical value as לָמוֹת = 476, he was willing to go and die. The Torah attests to this insight as the Posuk states that Bilaam said: תָּמוּת נַפְשִׁי מוֹת יִשְׁרָיִם וְתִהְיֶה אַחֲרֵיתִי כְמוֹהוּ "May my soul die the death of the upright and let my end be like his." This is a powerful lesson of what hatred can cause. On the other hand, loving another Yid, and sharing his needs, can produce great benefits.

STORY OF THE WEEK (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

***** *The Shpoler Zeide brings Moshe Rabbeinu to save a city* *****

Not far from the City of Shpole, where the famous Tzaddik, Harav Aryeh Leib-, the Shpoler Zeide resided, there was a Shtetl where the Yidden lived peacefully with the Gentiles. One day an Anti-Semitic Poritz, purchased the entire Shtetl, and began to persecute the Yidden. Initially, the Poritz's decrees were bearable. But, as time went on, the decrees became harsher and harsher, but the Yidden suffered quietly, and life went on.

The Poritz was a low life person, who loved to drink. He often threw parties for his friends, where alcohol was consumed by the barrel; at every party, the Poritz and his friends became drunk. At one party, when the Poritz was drunk, he told his friends that he wanted to cause some mischief for some Yidden and that would make him happy! He ordered his servants to bring the Yidden who had rented inns and taverns from the Poritz, and demanded that they pay an astronomical sum for the privilege to rent their holdings. When they responded that the price was too high for them, the Poritz had them beaten, and thrown into the dungeon. This made the gentiles very happy, and the Potitz was thrilled at what he had done!

(After the party everyone went home.) In the morning, when the Poritz woke up, he was reminded of what he had done the night before. This reignited his hatred of the Jews, and he was very happy about what he had done. He sent a messenger to the Leaders of the Kehilla, demanding an enormous sum to ransom the captive Jews from his dungeon. The Yidden sent a respected delegation, and begged the Poritz to have mercy on them. He softened, and agreed to settle on a smaller amount. The delegation was relieved and promised to deliver the money that day. When the Poritz received the ransom, he released the imprisoned Yidden.

Life was back to normal until the Poritz became drunk again. At the next party he came up with an idea how to really make the Yidden suffer. The Poritz decreed that all the Yidden in the Shtetl must hang a portrait of Yoshka in their home within the next 30 days, and that all businesses must be open on Shabbos. Whoever would not follow the rules, would be expelled together with their families from the Shtetl. This decree hit the Yidden very hard. Again, a respectful delegation was sent, and they begged the Poritz to nullify the decree, but this time it was to no avail. The delegation left the Poritz with a heavy heart.

It was only a few weeks before Shavuos; and Leaders of the Kehilla, decided it was an urgent matter, they had to act fast.

They traveled to the Shpoler Zeide to seeking a Yeshua and poured out their pain from the evil Poritz. The Rebbe went into a trance, when he awoke, he said: "there's no need to worry, I have a plan to soften the heart of the Poritz! You invite the Poritz to listen on Shavuos when you read the Aseres Hadibros, the Ten Commandments, from the Torah."

The delegation was perplexed; they didn't understand. The Rebbe continued: "I will come with my Chassidim, and daven in your Shtetl this Shavuos. You should set up a large tent to accommodate the crowd. Then invite the Poritz and his friends to come to our tent and listen to the davening, as it would be interesting for him to watch."

The delegation understood, and promised to follow the Rebbe's instructions. The Kehilla found a nice empty space to set up a huge tent, and let out the word that the Shpoler Zeide would daven in their Shtetl this Shavuos. Everyone was excited, and prayed that the Rebbe would be able to nullify the Poritz's decree. The preparations were in place, and a delegation was sent to invite the Poritz to join them in their tent in Shavuos morning. They assured him that he and his friends would have a ball there.

The Poritz was always interested in new forms of entertainment, agreed to come with his friends. Shavuos morning, they Poritz and his friends arrived at the tent, they were greeted with great respect, and were given elegant chairs to sit on. They found the davening amusing. As they were about to read the Ten Commandments from the Torah, the Rebbe asked the Poritz to come closer and told him that he will have someone interpret what they were reading. The Rebbe told the Chazan to read aloud, and the interpreter began, "You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness; You shall neither prostrate yourself before them nor worship them, for I, the Lord..." Then he continued "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it." The Poritz paled and sent his friends home. Then he came over to the Shpoler Zeide, and said he wants to meet him after davening. The Rebbe reassured the Kehilla, that the decree will be nullified soon.

The Poritz met the Rebbe and apologized for his behavior towards the Jews. He said that he didn't realize how important it was to keep Shabbos as how important it was not to worship idols. The Poritz promised to nullify the decree immediately! The Shpoler Zeide thanked the Poritz blessed him. Afterwards, the Shpoler Zeide revealed that to remove the decree, Moshe Rabbeinu had to come and read the Ten Commandments; that's why the Poritz softened.

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