



PARSHAS SH'LACH 5777

The transition from Parshas Beha'alosechah to Parshas Sh'lach is an interesting one.

Rav Avrohom ben HoRambam, in his lengthy discussion of bitachon in Sefer Hamaspik provides an interesting insight into the case of the meraglim in this context.

He has three categories of how to balance appropriate hishtadlus and inappropriate hishtadlus.

One level is where a novi receives a nevuah from Hashem that a miracle will happen to provide a certain outcome. The novi has to have absolute confidence that the miracle will occur. When Hashem promised Avrohom that he would have descendants, Avrohom said that Soroh had no capacity to have children. Hashem responded that Avrohom has to have complete confidence in the fulfillment of the nevuah. Avrohom complied and he achieved that complete confidence despite the reality he saw in front of him. He was given special reward for achieving that level of bitachon.

But this doesn't mean that all nevi'im at all times can rely on miracles. Many times Eliyahu Hanovi relied on miracles and at other times he was fearful for his life. It depends on the level and on the direct promise that the miracle will occur.

Another level described by Rav Avrohom is the level of the average person who only sees natural cause and effect and does not see anything that happens in this world as happening under Hashem's guidance. They may even believe that Hashem created a world but they believe that it runs by itself naturally. He calls these people "kofrim".

The level of a believing Jew is someone who is not on the level of a novi, who can depend on a miracle, and he does regular hishtadlus, but he has full awareness that Hashem is in total control of the final outcome.

Rav Avrohom asks the question, why do we find Tehilim cursing the one who relies on people? Don't we all rely on our partners or benefactors in some area of life? Children on parents, spouses on each other, business partners on each other, etc.?

He quotes his father the Rambam who answers that it depends if by relying on other people, this person leaves Hashem out of the picture. But when you know that your hishtadlus is only a way of doing one's best and leaving the rest in Hashem's hands, then you have the proper balance between hishtadlus and bitachon.

It is a challenge for a novi to completely ignore the reality in front of him and trust that the laws of nature will be suspended for him, like for Avrohom and Soroh and for Klal Yisroel before Kriyas Yam Suf. They started walking into the sea before it actually split at the last minute! They kept

walking into the water up till their noses because they had absolute confidence that the miracle would occur.

Klal Yisroel in the Wilderness are being told they are going to enter Eretz Yisroel. They are themselves nevi'im and are being promised by Hashem through a nevuah that it shouldn't matter that they have no professional soldiers who could successfully wage a conventional war. Hashem expected that they would have complete confidence that Hashem will fight their battles for them above the rules of nature. Klal Yisroel themselves should have taken the lessons from Kriyas Yam Suf and all the other miracles to maintain that absolute confidence.

They came to Har Sinai and received the Torah and built the Mishkon and were travelling to Eretz Yisroel with the Schechinah leading them right in front of them. There is no way they are surviving day-to-day without constant miracles on all sides. But even with all the miracles happening, Klal Yisroel still had difficulty relying on the miracles continuing into the future. There is a break in last week's parsha—a discontinuation which we spoke about last week.

Who were the misonenim and the asafsuf who complained against Hashem? They were the Eirev Rav. They complained about the mon and they wanted meat. But they have their own sheep and cattle! Why can't they just slaughter their own animals? The gemara in Chullin explains that one couldn't just eat meat in the Wilderness. One had to bring a korbon shlomim if one wanted to eat meat. This means one had to first be on a certain level. One has to be tahor and prepare himself and his family to eat kodshim. You couldn't just do what you wanted with the meat. They didn't want those restrictions. They reminisced about the freedom from restrictions that they once had in Egypt.

They complained about the mon—even though it could have tasted like meat. It only fell at certain times and could not taste like five foods that were harmful for pregnant women. Mon was an incredible food. It gave total nutrition and total satisfaction but it created no physical desire. It was given with rules.

The Torah has rules and a definitive structure. This is the same as the reality of the physical world. There are limitations in every area in life. But people don't like limitations. They resent having to obey rules. There is an enormous desire in the human condition called the desire for hefker. It spills over into every area where we have limitations.

Why is this section made into a separate Chumash? It is because they have now taken their first step in the wrong direction. Up till now, they have been following the will of Hashem and been living with bitachon and living with the

Schechinoh on a certain level. Now Klal Yisroel are declaring that they don't want to live on this lofty level. They don't want to live with the limitations that come with this higher level.

This was the fatal flaw of Homon. He had everything that anyone can ask for in this world—money, power, many sons, an entire empire bowed before him. But there was one person, one Jew who refused to show him honor, and Homon lost it. He couldn't stand that one limitation on his power and kovod. As long as he didn't have everything, it was worth nothing to him.

Odom Horishon couldn't tolerate one restriction. He was allowed to eat from the fruits of all the trees in Gan Eden—except for one. Odom Horishon couldn't bear not being able to eat from that one tree. He couldn't accept any limitations.

Everyone has to know that if he wants to maintain his level, he needs to accept limitations.

The gemara in Chullin says all the foods that the Torah forbade have their equivalent counterpart which taste the same and are permitted. The pleasure is not forbidden. But you have to have to enjoy that pleasure in the permitted way and not in the forbidden way.

The parsha continues with the punishment of those who wanted to have taivoh, and the appointment of the seventy zekeinim. When Moshe Rabbeinu hears that Eldad and Meidad are having a nevuah that he will die and be replaced by Yehoshuah, he responds that he would prefer that everyone would become nevi'im and live their lives on the highest level possible. On that level, Hashem will do miracles for them and there is nothing to worry about. But Klal Yisroel don't want to live on that level. They want to conquer Eretz Yisroel without miracles and not have the restrictions that come with living with miracles. But it doesn't work because from the viewpoint of natural causation, Klal Yisroel will never be able to overpower the nations of Cana'an.

There are twelve shvotim who sent meraglim. But one shevet does not send a representative. Shevet Levi. Shevet Levi never allowed themselves to become part of Egyptian culture and they never got pulled away from the level that they started on. They had no need to send meraglim to prepare to enter Eretz Yisroel on a lower level.

Klal Yisroel painted themselves in a corner. They chose to reduce their level and not rely on miracles, they are now vulnerable to the Amoleikim and hostile nations around them on the border and they needed to take a circuitous route around the desert to avoid them. When they last encountered Amoleik after Kriyas Yam Suf they were successful only because Klal Yisroel put their success in the hands of Hashem. It wasn't because of their physical prowess. Moshe tells Klal Yisroel they can't fight Amoleik in this situation where they have removed Hashem from their midst. Those Jews who defied Moshe Rabbeinu's order to stand down and went out to fight anyway were totally annihilated.

Hashem deals with us on the level that we deal with Him. The posuk says Hashem is our shadow, our reflection. When we pull up our level, Hashem upgrades His hashgocho protis to reflect our level. When you reach the level of nevuah,

you are protected beyond natural limitations. But there are levels and levels. To the degree you rise or go down is the degree that Hashem responds.

Bitachon is required for mundane and material pursuits like military victory and financial success. Hishtadlus is useless if you don't recognize the outcome is not up to your efforts. So Klal Yisroel undermined their own ability to enter Eretz Yisroel by reducing their level. Without being on a higher level which would merit miracles, they would not succeed from a strictly military point of view.

However, when I have certain goal in my avodas Hashem and I do my maximum effort leaving no stone unturned, the Ramban says, then I can have total confidence that Hashem will grant success to my efforts.

But when I engage in business, I can try to succeed, but I have no way of knowing if it will succeed or not. The same is true with any mundane goal like medicine. I make my effort knowing that Hashem is in charge of the outcome, and I leave it to Him to decide. I have no assurances of success because it is part of Hashem's cheshbon of my mitzvos and aveiros. But when I am sincerely trying to achieve something positive in the realm of ruchniyus, then if I put in my maximum effort, I can expect Hashem will help me achieve my goals. The Ramban says this is a challenge because Hashem can see through a person to know whether he is sincere or insincere in his striving for ruchniyus.

We have the tragedy of Klal Yisroel in the midbor. On the one hand, we refer to them as the Dor De'ah, who as a nation, achieved nevuah when they left Egypt to receive the Torah. It is a level which they maintained throughout the forty years in the midbor and were accompanied by open miracles constantly. But on the other hand, getting Benei Yisroel out of Egypt was easy. Getting Egypt out of them was a very long and difficult process with many ups and downs and progressions and regressions. This is the experience most people have in life. Klal Yisroel had gotten used to a lifestyle of hefker and sunk down to 49 shaarei tumoh. They were always being pulled back to that state even after they broke from it with bris miloh and korban Pesach. Shevet Levi never had that pull because they never sunk down to that level to begin with in Egypt. They never wanted to be part of Egyptian culture. They took pride in their unique identity.

Hashem realized that He needed to raise a new generation in the midbor that does not have that pull towards the hefker of Egypt. He needs to keep them in the midbor for forty years. The Mechilta says that it took forty years for Torah to totally permeate their being and prepare them to live in Eretz Yisroel.

We live today in very hard times. We grew up with western culture and we are part of the world around us. There is deep corruption and immorality that surrounds us. As low as you think it is today, you are always surprised how it gets even lower with every passing year. The world is poisonous to us spiritually, yet we are expected to be Benei Torah and make Torah the center of our lives. We are expected to live a life with spiritual goals and pull ourselves out of the decadent culture that we are surrounded by.

It's a challenge, a very big challenge. It's not a one-time confrontation where you decide to do it and you're done. You push it away and then it pulls you back. You move

ahead and then you regress. It is an ongoing struggle. As much as you see the truth, you are attracted to the hefkerus of no restrictions and no limits. This is what Klal Yisroel was drawn to in Egypt. It is a very attractive impulse that never lets you go. Hashem tells us that without restrictions and limitations, you won't get anywhere. Broadly speaking, you can't achieve anything worthwhile in life without structure and discipline and rules. If there were no constant laws of nature, we couldn't function in this world. We would wake up in the morning and not know whether we are going to step down onto the floor or float to the ceiling. We need structure and rules.

Klal Yisroel wanted hefker in the Wilderness because that was the culture in Egypt that they grew up with, and that is the culture that we grow up in today. There comes a point in every Jew's life where he has to say to himself that he can no longer live in two worlds simultaneously. He can't have one foot in the Beis Midrash and another foot in the cesspool of the western world. Either you are here or you are there. You can be in Torah and perhaps be occasionally pulled toward hefkerus, or you live in the world

of hefkerus and there is Torah pulling you to rise out of it. But you can't be in both worlds at the same time.

When a person decides he wants to become a Ben Torah, he has to realize that when it comes to the type of music he listens to or the form of entertainment he enjoys, all the trappings of western culture revolve around the same corrupt message of getting as much taivoh as you can get. You want everything accessible at all times. I'll sacrifice my morals and my human decency to get it. That is the world we live in and somehow function in. But we cannot think that this is who we are.

The Ohr Hachayim says that Kedoshim Tihyu is a mitzvah obligatory on everyone. It comes right after the Torah lists all the abominable, animalistic practices of Egypt and Cana'an to tell us that despite our exposure to these corrupt societies, we are commanded to live a higher life and resist that pull.

That is the biggest challenge of a person becoming a Ben Torah.