

Bnei Yisrael



Learning to Live in the Desert

JOURNEY REFRESHER:

- We went from [ים סוף](#) <--- מצריים (Egypt → Sea of Reeds)

1. שמות יד יא- יב

(יא) ויאמרו אל־מֹשֶׁה הַמְבִלִי אֶיךָ קַבְרִים בְּמִצְרַיִם לְקַחְתָּנוּ לְמוֹת בַּמִּדְבָּר מֵה־זֹאת עָשִׂיתָ לָנוּ לְהוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם (יב) הֲלֹא־נָה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְנוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּמִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר תַּחַל מִמָּנּוּ וְנַעֲבֹדָה אֶת־מִצְרַיִם כִּי טוֹב לָנוּ עֲבֹד אֶת־מִצְרַיִם מִמָּתוֹנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר:

Exodus 14:11-12

11)And they said to Moses, “Was it for want of graves in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, taking us out of Egypt? 12)Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us be, and we will serve the Egyptians, for it is better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness?’”

- *What was the problem and complaint at ים סוף (Sea of Reeds)?*
 - *Problem:*
 - *Complaint:*
- *What was the lesson בני ישראל (Bnei Yisrael) were meant to learn?*

2. שמות יד יג

(יג) ויאמר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם אֲלֵי־תִירְאוּ הַתִּצְבּוּ וְרֵאוּ אֶת־יְשׁוּעַת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לָכֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי אֲשֶׁר רֵאִיתֶם אֶת־מִצְרַיִם הַיּוֹם לֹא תִסְפוּ לְרֵאֲתָם עוֹד עַד־עוֹלָם:

Exodus 14:13

13)But Moses said to the people, “Have no fear! Stand by, and witness the deliverance which the LORD will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again.

- *What was the lesson בני ישראל (Bnei Yisrael) were meant to learn?*
- *How does this help their slave mentality?*

COMPLAINT STORY #1- Marah

(3)

שמות פרק טו:פסוקים כב-כה

כב וַיִּסַּע מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּם-סוּף, וַיֵּצְאוּ אֶל-מִדְבַּר-שׁוּר; וַיֵּלְכוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת-יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר, וְלֹא-מָצְאוּ מַיִם
 כג וַיָּבֹאוּ מַרְתָּה--וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְשַׁתֵּת מַיִם מִמֶּנָּה, כִּי מָרִים הֵם; עַל-כֵּן קָרָא-שְׁמָהּ, מַרְהָ
 כד וַיִּלְנוּ הָעָם עַל-מֹשֶׁה לְאָמֹר, מַה-נַּשְׁתָּה
 כה וַיִּצְעַק אֶל-יְהוָה, וַיֹּרְהוּ יְהוָה עֵץ, וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶל-הַמַּיִם, וַיִּמְתְּקוּ הַמַּיִם; שֵׁם שֶׁם לוֹ חֶק וּמִשְׁפָּט, וְשֵׁם נִסְהוּ

Exodus 15:22-25

22 And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. 23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying: 'What shall we drink?' 25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them

4. Rabbi Menachem Leibtag- *'Beshalach: A Desert Seminar'* - <https://outorah.org/p/37349/>

Certainly God realized that the people could not survive without water, nonetheless He led them to a location without water - **in order** that the people would complain. In this manner, God teaches the nation not to take their water supply for granted; rather - it now becomes clear to them that their physical survival is dependent upon God - who now tends to their water supply. [Recall that in Egypt, the Nile River supplied drinking water for the entire country, and hence it became like a God to Egypt - and Pharaoh considered himself as the god-like master over the Nile / see Yechezkel 29:1-3.] Now, after these two traumatic events have shown the nation who their real 'master' is....

- *With Rabbi Leibtag's interpretation in mind, what was the lesson בני ישראל were meant to learn?*
- *How does this lesson help their slave mentality?*
- *With this in mind, why does Hashem take the opportunity to remind בני ישראל to keep his laws?*

5. רש"י טו:כה

ושם נסהו – לעם, וראה קשי ערפו, שלא נמלכו ממשה בלשון יפה: "בקש עלינו שיהו לנו מים לשתות." אלא נתלוננו.

Rashi 15:25

“*And there He tested them*” - as a nation, he saw their stubbornness, that they weren't speaking to Moshe kindly, “we ask that there should please be for us water to drink”, rather, they complained.

- *According to Rashi, what did Bnei Yisrael do wrong? What traits should they develop?*
- *How was Hashem testing them? What was the purpose of the incident?*
- *How does this fit in with our idea of slave mentality?*

6. רמב"ן - כה-כו

שייסרם ב"חקי" המדבר: לסבול הרעב והצמא, לקרוא בהם אל ה' לא דרך תלונה.

Ramban 25-26

הק- He tested them to the conditions of the desert, to anticipate hunger and thirst, but to call to Hashem but not via complaint.

- *According to the רמב"ן, what was the test and the purpose of the whole incident?*
- *What traits should Bnei Yisrael develop according to the רמב"ן?*

COMPLAINT STORY #2- The Manna

(7)

שמות פרק טז: פסוקים ב-ח

ב וילינו (וילוננו) כל-עדת בני-ישראל, על-משה ועל-אהרן--במדבר ג. ויאמרו אליהם בני ישראל, מי-יתן מותנו ביד-יהוה בארץ מצרים, בשבתנו על-סיר הבשר, באכלנו לחם לשבע: פי-הוצאתם אתנו אל-המדבר הזה, להמית את-כל-הקהל הזה ברעב. ד ויאמר יהוה אל-משה, הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן-השמים; ויצא העם ולקטו דבר-יום ביום, למען אנסנו הילך בתורתם-אם-לא. ה והיה ביום הששי, והכינו את אש-יביאו; והיה משנה, על אש-ילקטו יום יום. ו ויאמר משה ואהרן, אל-כל-בני ישראל: ערב--וידעתם, פי יהוה הוציא אתכם מארץ מצרים. ז ובקר, וראיתם את-כבוד יהוה, בשמעו את-תלנתיכם, על-יהוה; ונחנו מה, פי תלוננו (תלינו) עלינו. ח ויאמר משה, בתת יהוה לכם בערב בשר לאכל ולחם בבקר לשבע, בשמע יהוה את-תלנתיכם, אש-אתם מלינם עליו; ונחנו מה, לא-עלינו תלנתיכם פי על-יהוה.

Exodus Chapter 16:2-8

2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness; 3 and the children of Israel said unto them: 'Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.' 4 Then said the LORD unto Moses: 'Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or not. 5 And it shall come to pass on the sixth day that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.' 6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel: 'At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that He hath heard your murmurings against the LORD; and what are we, that ye murmur against us?' 8 And Moses said: 'This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him; and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.'

8. Rabbi Menachem Leibtag- *'Beshalach: A Desert Seminar'* - <https://outorah.org/p/37349/>

The very tone of their complaint (and its content), indicate that Bnei Yisrael had retained their instinctive dependence upon Mitzraim. Their instinctive reaction to this terrible hunger includes reminiscing about the 'good old days' in Egypt. The trauma they had experienced heretofore was not sufficient to totally change their character. To rectify this, God will force them into a **daily**

routine that hopefully will slowly change their instinctive behavior.

The manna served this very purpose, as it provided a daily routine that transformed what was once their physical dependence on Mitzraim into a physical dependence on God. As explained in Sefer Devarim:

"And He tormented you and starved you, then gave you 'manna' to eat... **in order to teach you** that man does not live on bread alone, rather, man lives by whatever God commands" (Devarim 8:3). By allowing only enough food for one day at a time, Bnei Yisrael learn to become dependent solely on God. To emphasize this point, their food falls directly from heaven.

- *With Rabbi Leibtag's interpretation in mind, what was the lesson בני ישראל were meant to learn?*
- *How does this lesson help their slave mentality?*

9. Rabbi Michael Hattin - 'The Manna' - <https://etzion.org.il/en/manna>

As Bnei Yisrael enter the confines of the wilderness to be confronted for the first time with genuine hunger and thirst, they naturally react with disappointment and despair. Suddenly, the servitude of Egypt seems to them less onerous, if only because a slave's insufficient rations are predictable and dependable. God addresses their needs and fears, and a miraculous substance rains down from the heavens to sustain them. Blanketing the camp all around, the manna is easily scooped up by the famished masses, who greedily gather it for their households. As the sun ascends, however, the manna vaporizes with the morning mists like a desert mirage, leaving not a trace of its superabundance. Any hopes that the people had of finding it in the field at a later time are thus dashed.

- *Why does not having food cause בני ישראל to miss מצרים? What part of מצרים are they missing?*

Returning to their tents with their prize, the people are puzzled to discover that in spite of their attempts to accumulate more than their needs, the manna is exactly sufficient to sustain them according to measure, neither less nor more. Most telling of all, any portion that the people leave over for another day becomes putrid and loathsome. In other words, try as they might to hoard

the manna for another day, it cannot be done. It neither lends itself to being gathered all day, nor to being amassed in large amounts, nor to being left over at all for tomorrow.

The manna therefore speaks of God's continuous sustaining intervention, rather than of man's illusions of single handedly ensuring his self-preservation and prosperity. The manna indicates that, at the core of the matter, **a person's survival is not solely a function of his own efforts, but of God's saving providence.** There is no manna to be saved for another day, for each day's new provisions are a function of God's ceaseless grace.

- *What message is the מן supposed to teach בני ישראל? How does it teach them this?*

Most of the time, we labor mightily under the illusion that if only we gather more, acquire more, save more, and hoard more, we can be sure of our future and of our ability to survive. The manna forcefully indicates that this is not necessarily the case, for often our painstakingly plotted plans go up in proverbial smoke, leaving behind the cinders of our dreams of invincibility. What sustains a man is not only the bread that he consumes, but the trust in God's pledge...

- *How can this message apply to us today?*
- *Do you relate to this message? Why or why not?*

COMPLAINT STORY #3- Maseh U'Merivah

10. שמות פרק יז:א-ז

א וַיִּסְעוּ כָּל-עַדְת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּדְבַּר-סִין, לְמִסְעֵיהֶם--עַל-פִּי יְהוָה; וַיַּחֲנוּ, בְּרַפִּידִים, וְאִין מַיִם, לְשִׁתּוֹת הָעָם. ב וַיִּרָב הָעָם, עִם-מֹשֶׁה, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, תָנוּ-לָנוּ מַיִם וְנִשְׁתֶּה; וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם, מֹשֶׁה, מַה-תִּרְיבִּיּוֹן עִמָּדִי, מַה-תִּנְסוּן אֶת-יְהוָה. ג וַיִּצְמָא שָׁם הָעָם לַמַּיִם, וַיִּלְוּ הָעָם עַל-מֹשֶׁה; וַיֹּאמֶר, לָמָּה זֶה הַעֲלִיתֶנּוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, לְהָמִית אֹתִי וְאֶת-בְּנֵי וְאֶת-מִקְנֵי, בְּצָמָא. ד וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר, מָה אֶעֱשֶׂה לָּעָם הַזֶּה; עוֹד מְעַט, וְסָקְלֵנִי. ה וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, עֲבֹר לִפְנֵי הָעָם, וְקַח אֹתָהּ, מִזִּקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל; וּמִטָּף, אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתָ בּוֹ אֶת-הַיָּאֵר--קַח בְּיָדְךָ, וְהִלַּכְתָּ. ו הִנְנִי עֹמֵד לִפְנֵיךָ שָׁם עַל-הַצּוּר, בְּחֶרֶב, וְהִכִּיתָ בַּצּוּר וַיִּצְאֹוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מַיִם, וְשָׁתָה הָעָם; וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן מֹשֶׁה, לְעֵינֵי זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. ז וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם, מִסֵּה וּמְרִיבָה: עַל-רֵיב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְעַל נִסְתָּם אֶת-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר, הֲיֵשׁ יְהוָה בְּקִרְבָּנוּ, אִם-אֵין.

Exodus 17:1-7

1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, by their stages, according to the commandment of the LORD, and encamped in Rephidim; and there was

no water for the people to drink.² Wherefore the people strove with Moses, and said: 'Give us water that we may drink.' And Moses said unto them: 'Why strive ye with me? wherefore do ye try the LORD?' ³ And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said: 'Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?' ⁴ And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying: 'What shall I do unto this people? they are almost ready to stone me.'⁵ And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thy hand, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.' And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.⁷ And the name of the place was called Massah, and Meribah, because of the striving of the children of Israel, and because they tried the LORD, saying: 'Is the LORD among us, or not?'

11. Rabbi Avidan Freedman- *'Testing, Testing- 1,2, 3'*-

<https://www.929.org.il/lang/en/page/67/post/41876>

Children by their nature are "little scientists" suggested Jean Piaget, learning about their world through constant testing. They test what happens when things fall, or when they draw on the walls with crayons; they test limits, and they test patience.

The biggest mistake a parent can make is to take these tests personally, interpreting them as an affront and an attack on our authority. This is what happens to Moses in chapter 17. "Why are you fighting with me?" He asks the people. "They're about to stone me!" He tells God.

But the Torah points out that this test isn't about Moses at all, and it isn't even about God as much as it about the people testing their own insecurity. The question of whether "God is in our midst/in our hearts" is hard to explain as one which expresses doubt concerning God's abilities to provide water. The people have seen God bring ten miraculous plagues, split the sea, provide food and meat. Why should water be a problem for Him? The people don't doubt God, they doubt themselves, their own worthiness, their own worth. When children test their parents' love, what they are really trying to find out is if they deserve to be loved.

To truly answer their question, simply providing the particular item they're asking for misses the point. God needs to respond in a way that the people can come to believe in themselves, can prove to themselves their own worth. He sends Moses off to the rock on Mount Horeb, a distance

from where the Jews currently are, so that to enjoy the water, they will need to go to it, to work for it.

- *With Rabbi Freedman's interpretation in mind, what was the lesson בני ישראל were meant to learn?*
- *How does this lesson help their slave mentality?*