

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Beshelach	19 Jan 2019	13 Shevat 5779	Exo. 13:17-17:16	Judges 4:4-5:31	Matt. 14:22-33

Let us review the events leading to this week's Torah portion, Beshelach (And he sent). We read Moshe confronting Pharaoh to "let My people go" so the Children of Yisrael can go out for three days to worship the Creator of the world. Pharaoh refuses to let them go until all the first-borns died in Mitzrayim. Hashem splits the sea for the Children of Yisrael to cross on a dry land. Hashem fought for them; gave food (manna and quail) and water, shelters, and many countless miracles. Yet, the Ten Commandments (or the Ten Utterances) start with "I am YHWH your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Mitzrayim, out of the house of slavery." (Exo. 20:2) Hashem could have said, "I am YHWH your Elohim, who brought plagues to the Mitzrim to save you, Split the Sea, etc. But, He did not. Why?

Pharaoh regrets sending out slaves in chapter 14 and chased after the Children of Yisrael; and his army drowned in the sea. In chapter 15, Moshe and Miriam praises Hashem through their songs. In chapter 16, the joy the Children of Yisrael turned into complaints of bread, and in chapter 17 they complained for lack of water. Within four chapters, the Yisrael turned their joy of leaving Mitzrayim and praising Hashem changed to complaints and bitterness. We discussed chapter 14 in detail last year's portion. So, we will turn to chapter 16 and discuss *lechem* (bread) or *ma'an* (manna).

The sages taught that *lechem* means food but it can also mean money in biblical sense. The people can survive without shelter for long time. But we need bread and water to survive. When the Yisraelites left Mitzrayim in a hurry, they did not have enough time to leaven the dough in their haste and made *matzot* (dried/burnt unleavened flat bread) and carried their water. A month later, they ran out of *matzot* (Shemot 16:1) and water (Shemot 17:2).

Hashem provided *ma'an* in the morning and quails in the evening for forty years while the Yisraelites lived in the desert. Hashem said that they are to collect one *omer* (2.3 quarts in weight) per person for six days and two *omer* on sixth day, one *omer* for sixth day and second *omer* for seventh day which is Shabbat. The sages taught that manna tasted whatever a person desires. If he wanted a steak, the manna tasted like steak. Since they did not eat meat, how did they know the taste?

The Yisraelites complained of no food after one month of exodus. They said, "When we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to satisfaction!" (Shemot 16:3) "We remember the fish which we ate without cost in Mitzrayim, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." (Bemidbar/Numbers 11:5) They were slaves! Their work was so bitter, they cried out to Hashem. So, how could they have time to eat sit around the fire and eat meat and bread until their stomach was full or eat cucumbers, melons, leeks, etc.?

The Talmud¹ says that pregnant women and nursing mothers are to avoid cucumbers, melons, leek, onions, and garlic as they are detrimental to fetuses and infants. Although a person could experience in the manna the taste of any food he desired, the manna did not emit the taste of any of these five foods. (Rashi) They continue that the manna would fall depending on their spiritual status. For example, the manna would fall on to the hands of *tzadik* (righteous). If the person is wicked, he would have go outside the camp to collect manna. The Talmud discusses manna in detail which we will not cover here.

¹ BT, Yoma 75a

There are two mitzvot: first is to gather one omer of manna for six days, and second is to gather two omer of manna on Sixth day.

The Torah commands us to eat three meals during Shabbat: first is after lighting candles; second is in the morning; and third meal is eaten before the Havdalah (Separation of Shabbat). Moshe said, "Eat it today, for today is a Shabbat to YHWH, today you do not find it in the field." (Shemot 16:25) First and second 'today' is Shabbat day, and third day is on the sixth day in the evening after lighting candles.

During Shabbat service, we wash our hands known as Washing for Bread. We pick up the cup with right hand which represents chesed (kindness), then pass it to left hand (gevurah) to wash right hand first, then left hand and again right hand. Now, let's discuss spiritual meanings:

Water- it has a symbolic meaning of Torah and wisdom. The water is the essence of physical life, for without it we would die; whereas wisdom is the essence of spiritual life, the foundation of self-growth and self-realization.

Hands- symbolic of our interaction in the physical world.

Bread-symbolic of physical sustenance; the staff of life.

We take the water and pour it over each hand which is the understanding that all our interaction in the physical world, such as writing, touching, and working. Thus when we wash our hand, it should be done in a wise, meaningful way. There has to be two full loaves of bread on the Shabbat table covered with a cloth until we do the blessing on the breads.