

BESHALACH (EXODUS 13:17-17:16)**Get Rich THIS TUESDAY!!!!**

2010 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

Almost exactly a year ago, I received an email in reference to this week's Torah Portion. The email, a forwarded group mailing, offered advice on how to secure Divine guarantees of income. The advice was to use a *Segulah*.

A *Segulah* is an action that someone does with the hope of it leading to a particular result. A non-spiritual example might be that a *Segulah* for losing weight is to diet. In the spiritual world, however, there is not as close a link between the *Segulah* and the desired result. [I once saw the word *Segulah* translated as “nostrum”, which the dictionary defines as, “a medicine of secret composition recommended by its preparer but usually without scientific proof of its effectiveness.”]

This week's Torah Reading includes the “*Parshas Ha-Mann*” — the “Section of Manna,” (Exodus, 16:4-36) the verses in the Torah describing the Manna that fell from Heaven for the Israelites in the desert to eat. The email advocated reciting these verses, twice in Hebrew, and once in Aramaic translation. You can find the texts, in Hebrew and Aramaic, by clicking [here](#). Supposedly, reciting these verses on the Tuesday preceding the Sabbath when it is read in Synagogue is a “*Segulah*,” a Divine Guarantee, that G-d will provide livelihood.

The connection, of course, is obvious. For forty years, the Israelites in the desert didn't have to go to work in order to provide for their families. Every morning, G-d rained down bread from Heaven and took care of their every need. By reciting these passages, we “remind” G-d to provide our needs as well.

Presumably, the reason for reading it on Tuesday is that in general, Tuesdays are considered to be auspicious. (I got married on a Tuesday!) The reason for this is that in the first chapter of Genesis, Tuesday is the only day in reference to which the Torah says the phrase, “*G-d saw that it was good*,” twice. (Verses 10 and 12) On the other days it only says it once, or not at all.

This custom is attributed to the great Chassidic master, Rabbi Mendel of Rimanov. He was a big believer in strengthening one's faith by reviewing the story of the Manna.

In all due respect to the great Rabbi Mendel, I am troubled by this concept. Is it possible that a once-a-year reading of ninety-nine verses (33x2 in Hebrew +33 in Aramaic) is all we need to do to make a living??

It almost appears to be a "quick fix;" a short formula that guarantees results without too much work. (A "spiritual Amway!" :-) And Read the magical verses and the money will flow in! No pain, big gain!

I believe we can answer this question on two levels, super-Natural and super-Rational.

SUPER-NATURAL

The *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law, in *Orach Chaim*, Chapter 1, paragraph 5, states that "... it is good to recite ... the "Section of the Manna," and the Ten Commandments..." in addition to other readings. These verses should be recited DAILY. (The *Shulchan Aruch* makes no mention of reading it twice or with Aramaic translation.)

The *Mishnah Berura*, a commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*, explains that we do this...

"... in order to believe that all of one's livelihood comes through Divine Providence, as it says, '*He who took more (Manna) didn't profit, and he who took less didn't lose.*' (Ibid, verse 18) This shows that extraordinary efforts will not help. The Jerusalem Talmud states that whoever recites the 'Section of the Manna' is guaranteed that he will never lack his needs."

Is the idea here that we can just say a few verses, and Heaven will respond with dollars floating down from Heaven? Is it that easy to get rich?!

I don't think so. The *Shulchan Aruch*'s suggestion takes work. It's not just WHAT you read; it's HOW you read it. The above-mentioned *Mishnah Berura* says: "It is not sufficient to read it. Rather, one must delve into what he is saying, and recognize the wonders of G-d."

I am equally certain that when the great Rabbi Mendel of Riminiv advocated reading these verses on the Tuesday of the week in which they are read in the synagogue, he referred to much more than a perfunctory recital of a few Hebrew and Aramaic sentences. Rabbi Mendel was certainly aware of what the *Shulchan Aruch* says on this topic. It seems to me that a quick perusal of those 99 verses will accomplish little if anything unless it is accompanied by an in-depth daily review and appreciation of G-d's overwhelming generosity.

Faith is hard work. When one recites the "Section of the Manna" with intense concentration and devotion, he becomes a new person; he becomes a "believer."

Rabbi Bachya Ibn Pakuda writes in the *Chovos Halevavos* that when it comes to faith, G-d makes a "deal" with us. There is a direct correlation between the amount of trust we place in G-d, and the amount of Divine assistance we receive. If we place our faith in other people or in ourselves, forgetting

about G-d's intervention, G-d says "O.K., if you'd rather trust a human than rely upon Me, I will put you into their hands. I'm out of the picture."

If, on the other hand, we put our faith in our Creator, He will not abandon us.

So, you may ask, isn't this a bit naive? Are we really supposed to blindly put ourselves into "G-d's hands?" Isn't it shortsighted to just ASSUME that "G-d's going to take care of it all?" Isn't that a bit reckless?

Rabbi Israel Lipkin of Salant (better known as Rabbi Israel Salanter,) was of the opinion that G-d will provide EVERYTHING, even luxuries, to a person who has 100% faith that he will receive it. (This concept is not universally accepted. Some scholars state that this only applies to one's NEEDS, as opposed to his WANTS.) A disappointed disciple once approached him. The young man had purchased a lottery ticket and lost.

"Rebbe," complained the young man. "I don't understand. You told us that if we have total faith in G-d, He'll give us whatever we ask for. I bought a lottery ticket. I had total faith in G-d. I believed with every fiber of my being that G-d was going to let me win the grand prize. Why did I lose?!"

"Let me ask you a question," the rabbi replied. "How much did you spend for the ticket, and how much was the grand prize?"

"It cost me a ruble," the young man said. "The grand prize was a million rubles."

The rabbi had another question. "If I had offered you a half-million rubles for your one-ruble lottery ticket the day before the drawing, would you have sold it to me?"

"Of course!" replied the student. "That would be a 500,000-to-one payback on my investment!"

"If that is the case," said the rabbi, "I now understand why you lost. You claim that you had total faith that you would win a million rubles. Why, then, would you throw away half the anticipated prize by selling it for ONLY half a million? You obviously didn't have as much faith as you think you did!"

SUPER-RATIONAL

Let us look again at the words of the *Mishnah Berura*:

"It is not sufficient to read it. Rather, one must delve into what he is saying, and recognize the wonders of G-d. ... in order to believe that all of one's livelihood comes through Divine Providence, as it says, '*He who took more (Manna) didn't profit, and he who took less didn't lose.*' This shows that extraordinary

efforts will not help. The Jerusalem Talmud states that whoever recites the "Section of the Manna" is guaranteed that he will never lack his needs."

This can be understood quite simply.

If one carefully delves into the concept of Manna, he develops a keen appreciation for EVERYTHING G-d does for us. The idea of bread being RAINED DOWN FROM HEAVEN shows that G-d can and does provide the needs of His children. The Israelites in the desert didn't go to work; they didn't even go to the store! G-d provided everything! For forty years in the desert, clothes didn't wear out; they grew in size with the wearer!

One who focuses in on this concept understands that whatever we have comes from G-d. It doesn't have to float down from Heaven on a cushion of dew. It can be an investment that pays off or a flood of new customers responding to an ad.

Or, it can even be a LACK of new customers!

The *Mishnah Berura* was written by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, better known as the "*Chofetz Chaim*." (Brief biographies of the Chofetz Chaim can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Read his obituaries in the New York Times and Time magazine [here](#).)

Rabbi Kagan lived in a simple home with almost no furniture. When a visitor asked him why he had no furniture, he responded by asking the questioner, "and where is YOUR furniture?"

"MY furniture?! I have no furniture here! I live in another town. I am just passing through!"

The Chofetz Chaim responded, "So am I!"

There is a story told of a young man who suffered from severe depression. The doctors advised his father that the only cure was for him to wear a shirt belonging to a person who was totally satisfied with his lot in life. They searched the world over to find such a person.

They finally found him. They actually located a person who was totally at peace with what G-d had allotted him. There was only one problem. He didn't own a shirt.

When we study about G-d's gift of Manna from Heaven, we see that He gave every person exactly what he needed; not more, not less. Remember that quote from the Jerusalem Talmud? The guarantee that whoever recites the "Section of the Manna" will never lack his needs? If we study about the Providence

of G-d, we can come to appreciate that the Master of the World gives us what we need. As a result, we learn to be satisfied with whatever He chooses to give us.

Once that happens, we wake up and realize that we lack for nothing. He has showered His Blessings upon us.

Regardless of which of my two answers you prefer, we do a great disservice to our understanding of prayer and Torah study when we interpret it superficially. There is more to religious life than prayers and ceremonies. The Torah requires us to constantly strive to work on ourselves to strengthen our belief and dedication to G-d. Living as a Torah Jew entails intellectual and emotional work!

I don't know if there is a person alive today who has such total faith in G-d's Providence as Rabbi Israel Salanter described. I don't know if anyone exists who can live a life of abject poverty and be genuinely capable of feeling total satisfaction with his lot in life.

The fact that we are not yet at that level doesn't mean we shouldn't strive to achieve it. A major component in greatness is having gone through the struggle to get there!

Have a great Shabbos.

Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

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