

## Crash Course in Faith - Shlach

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וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה עַד אָנָה יִנְאָצְנִי הָעָם הַזֶּה וְעַד אָנָה לֹא יֶאֱמִינוּ בִּי בְּכֹל הָאֵתוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ. (במדבר יד, יא)

When people think of hafrashat challah, they think perhaps of the world Shabbat Project, countless women around the world gathering to perform the mitzva of hafrashat challah erev Shabbat Vayeira (where we read about Sarah Imeinu, the first human to do hafrashat challah in history, baking matza bread for the angels). Or perhaps bridal parties where the bride and her friends do hafrashat challah before the wedding. Or regular wives (and husbands) doing hafrashat challah while baking challah at home erev Shabbat. Or perhaps pro-bakers like myself (or our mashgiach) doing hafrashat challah in our bakery multiple times almost every day ... This is what *most* people associate hafrashat challah with.

What they certainly do *not* associate hafrashat challah with is the episode of the meraglim! What possible connection could there be between the spies (who came back with a slanderous report about Eretz Yisrael) and hafrashat challah?

But, incredibly, *immediately* following the parsha of the meraglim, the Torah goes on to describe two "bread" related mitzvot. The Minchat Nesachim - 3 esronim of solet for a פַּר, two esronim for a אֵיל, one isaron for a כֶּבֶשׂ. This is then immediately followed by the mitzva of hafrashat challah, רֶאשִׁית עֲרִסְתֶּכֶם חֶלֶה תָּרִימוּ תְרוּמָה (במדבר טו, כ).

Before we tackle the subject, a short introduction.

According to the Midrash (בראשית רבה יז, ח), Adam HaRishon is called חֶלֶה, the "challah" of the world. HKB"H did hafrashat challah from the world (עָפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה) and that "challah" was - Adam HaRishon, who was created from the dust of the earth.

HKB"H *loves* the mitzva of hafrashat challah. Adam HaRishon was not the first time HKB"H did hafrashat challah. Another Midrash (תנא דבי אליהו זוטא, ) (פרק ב) tells us that HKB"H did hafrashat challah from all the countries of the world, and this "challah" was Eretz Yisrael. HKB"H then did hafrashat challah from Eretz Yisrael and this was Yerushalayim. HKB"H then did hafrashat challah from Yerushalayim and this was the location of the Beit HaMikdash.

The Midrash goes on to say that HKB"H did hafrashat challah from all the nations of the world and this "challah" was Am Yisrael. He did hafrashat challah from Am Yisrael and this was the tribe of Levi. HKB"H continued to do hafrashat challah from the tribe of Levi and this was Aharon HaKohen and his descendants.

Another example (not from the above Midrash), HKB"H's *פְּסָא הַקְּבוֹד* has four "legs". Each leg is represented by a different hafrashat challah. HKB"H did hafrashat challah from the animal kingdom and this "challah" was the lion. HKB"H then did hafrashat challah from the domesticated animal kingdom and this was the ox. He did hafrashat challah from the bird kingdom and this was the eagle. Finally, HKB"H did hafrashat challah from *all* living creatures and this was man – the fourth leg of the *פְּסָא הַקְּבוֹד* is in the form of Yaakov Avinu (some say David HaMelech).

HKB"H passed this method of hafrashat challah on to all living creatures. Creation of new life is also according to the principle of hafrashat challah. The male contributes his "hafrashat challah" (semen), the female her hafrashat challah (ovum), HKB"H complements with His hafrashat challah (neshama). The birth process itself is a kind of hafrashat challah, separating the infant from the womb of the mother (*אלשיך, בראשית ג, ט*).

We see from this that the way HKB"H structures the hierarchy of His creation, is according to the formula of hafrashat challah - with people, with places and also with *every other creation He created*.

After that introduction we can now begin the shiur.

If the world operates according to the methodology of hafrashat challah, as we have seen above, then by the same measure – *beliefs* also operate according to that methodology.

Humans have many beliefs. We believe the world is round (we didn't always). We believe in the laws of nature, like gravity. We also believe in things we cannot always prove or see, like karma (what goes around comes around). Some people believe in aliens (re: the Pentagon and the newly declassified UFO files), etc.

(Aside: I cannot understand why people consider belief in "extraterrestrials" so far-fetched. The Torah and Tanach frequently tell us that we "are not alone" and contain *umpteen* accounts of "extraterrestrials" visiting earth and people. Like the three angels visiting Avraham Avinu. Like the angel visiting Hagar. Like the angel visiting Manoach and his wife before the birth of Shimshon [from the haftara two weeks ago]. How did they know he was not from this world? The angel ascended into the sky with fire and suddenly disappeared [ *שופטים יג, כ-כא*]. There *certainly are* "extraterrestrials" and they are *sent by HKB"H!* The

only *real* question is why is it that only *recently* physical, irrefutable evidence has been made public that everyone can see with their own eyes! We are living in historic, biblical times).

When someone does hafrashat challah on their beliefs, that "challah" is faith in HKB"H, the most *elevated* of all the beliefs.

The foundation and cornerstone of our relationship with HKB"H is based on faith. Faith that HKB"H, the Creator, who created us, did so because *He loves us and wants the best for us*, (כָּל דְּעֵבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטַב עֵבִיד (ברכות ס, ע"ב).

A small child cannot understand why his parents tell him not to play around the electric socket. The curious infant is inexorably drawn to explore and experiment. He wants to know what lies "hidden" inside the hole of that electrical socket, so he grabs grandma's metal knitting needle and crawls toward the socket with the intent to start poking around in there. The father sees this out of the corner of his eye and quickly whisks him away. The child is unrelenting and crawls back toward the socket, so the father issues a polite warning "Chaimke, don't go near the electric socket!" If the baby listens, then all is well. However, sometimes it is necessary to teach him a lesson the hard way, by yelling or by spanking. When the child matures, he comes to understand that the parent was simply trying to protect him and that the spank was for his own good.

When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, they were likened to an infant (רש"י, (יחזקאל טז, ד). How do you forge the "infant" that was Bnei Yisrael into *Am Yisrael*, the nation? You give them a *crash course in faith*.

HKB"H first sends Moshe as their redeemer. HKB"H lays out for Moshe the precise "roadmap", the entire military campaign strategy (שמות ג, טז-כ). "Gather up זְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל and tell them that I have sent you. They will believe you. Then go with the זְקֵנִים to Pharaoh and tell him to let My people go. Pharaoh will not cooperate, so I will unleash a series of plagues on him and eventually he will let you go".

What was Moshe's first response to HKB"H? וַיַּעַן מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר וְהֵן לֹא יִאֱמְנוּ בִּי כִּי שָׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלִי (שמות ד, א) ... יִאֱמְנוּ לִי. "They won't believe me when I tell them that You sent me!" But, HKB"H just told Moshe that they *would* believe him, no? So, HKB"H gives Moshe some signs to show them. HKB"H reveals to Moshe the "codeword" פֶּקֶד וּפְקֹדָה.

Moshe arrives and (surprise) Bnei Yisrael don't believe him. Moshe shows them the signs and tells them the codeword and only then do they believe him (שמות ד, א). וַיִּאמְרוּ הָעָם לְמֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר הָאֵל לֹא בָּאוּ אֵלָינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ וַיִּשְׁמַעְתָּ אֶת קוֹלֵנוּ (שמות ד, א), only Moshe and Aharon entered Pharaoh's palace. What happened to the זְקֵנִים?

You don't just waltz into Pharaoh's palace. You have to get past security first! Who guarded Pharaoh's palace? Lions, bears and wild animals ( שמות רבה (ה, יד). Anyone who attempted unauthorized access was – lunch! The זקנים saw the lions and bears and they were afraid to enter (Rashi, ibid.) But just in the *previous* passuk it says וַיֵּאֱמָן הָעָם, they had faith in HKB"H, they believed Moshe! "Yes, sure we believe, but first let's see you get past the lions and the bears, then we will believe ... *more!*" The Midrash describes how Moshe and Aharon walked unharmed through the menagerie of wild animals, who not only caused them no harm, they began to lick Moshe and Aharon's feet and accompanied them to Pharaoh's inner chamber!

After Pharaoh receives Moshe and Aharon's message from HKB"H he flips! "Get out ... and from now on the Israelites will have to make their own bricks!" When the Bnei Yisrael hear this, they gang up on Moshe "Let G-d be our witness and let Him judge you. You have doomed us and given Pharaoh an excuse to wipe us out!" But, just a few psukim ago it said וַיֵּאֱמָן הָעָם, no?? Then Moshe *himself* questions HKB"H "Why have You made it worse for the people, why did You send me? Since I have arrived, things have only become worse!" (שם, ה, כב-כג) But, just a chapter or two ago HKB"H told Moshe *in advance* "Pharaoh will not cooperate", no? HKB"H says "How I long for the Avot, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov – they did not question me!" (ד, שמות רבה ו, ד).

Then HKB"H unleashes a series of Ten Plagues on Egypt, not only to punish them for what they did to Bnei Yisrael, but primarily for *Bnei Yisrael* to see and believe that what Moshe told them was true – a crash course in faith! Plague after plague. First HKB"H cuts off the Egyptian water supply, then He undermines their self-confidence with the loud cacophony of frogs. HKB"H attacks them with every weapon in His arsenal, rains guided missiles down on them, destroys their economy, and finally kills them piecemeal.

In the end, Pharaoh surrenders and Bnei Yisrael parade out of Egypt, laden with all the Egyptians' possessions and with unbaked dough strapped to their belts. Only when they reach Sukkot do they bake this dough into matzot. How do they get to Sukkot (a distance of 520 mil, approx. 260km, three days walk from Raamses!) without the dough becoming chametz? According to the Midrash (מדרש שכל טוב [בובר] שמות פרק יב; ספורנו שמות יב, יז), HKB"H made a קפיצת הדרך, He "teleported" them from Raamses to Sukkot instantly, in the blink of an eye.

So, if HKB"H is prepared to teleport them, why not teleport them directly to Har Sinai, give them the Torah and then teleport them directly to Eretz Yisrael? Why make them shlep through the desert, get stuck at Yam Suf, have to make the sea split, give them bitter water at Mara, let the Amalekim attack them at Refidim, let the erev rav lead them astray repeatedly, give them nisayon after nisayon? For what? Doesn't HKB"H love His people? Couldn't He have saved them all this tribulation?

The answer is that it was all a crash course in faith. Faith cannot be given - faith can only be *acquired*, (ברכות לג, ע"ב), חוץ מִיִּרְאַת שְׁמַיִם (בְּרַכּוֹת לַג, ע"ב). Only the person themselves can do "hafreshat challah" with their beliefs and acquire faith, it cannot be done for them.

It was all a learning curve for Am Yisrael, to forge us into a nation. We are a nation *only* when we have acquired faith in HKB"H. When we were at Har Sinai we achieved that leap of faith. וְנִשְׁמַע וְנִשְׁמַע, we accepted the contract without first reading it, because we had total faith that כָּל דֵּעֲבִיד רַחֲמָנָא לְטָב עֲבִיד – if it is HKB"H giving us this Torah, it must be good!

However, we were still an infant who had not yet matured. It was a brief, but fleeting epiphany, the infant remained an infant. It required more lessons in faith, including the tribulations in the Midbar, like the spies. What, the spies didn't believe HKB"H when He told them that it was an אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ? It was another test of faith, which they catastrophically failed, the ramifications of which we are still experiencing 3337 years later.

The last two centuries (210 years) since the students of the Vilna Gaon made aliyah to Eretz Yisrael have been our יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם. Everything that happened to our nation in Egypt, has happened once again to our nation in the last 210 years. Exile, oppression, Holocaust, liberation, rebirth, wars, in-fighting, lack of faith - in ourselves and in HKB"H.

We are like the same infant that left Egypt, immature and not yet having acquired faith. HKB"H is putting us through that same crash course in faith that He did in the time of Moshe, because we have to acquire it on our own, it cannot be given.

We have experienced the same template episodes of the זִקְנִים not believing that the Geulah has arrived, the war with Amalek, the mergalim - the national demoralisers, Korach - the anarchists with agendas. We have also experienced something close to Har Sinai, an incredible return to HKB"H and a thirst for Torah.

What we are experiencing now with Iran is nothing short of the Ten Plagues against our primary enemy. Klap after klap – drought and depleting their water supply, targeted missile attacks against their military infrastructure and hierarchy, relentless dismantling of their economy, etc.

HKB"H is doing all of this to punish them for what they did to us, but *primarily for us* – so that we should wake up.

This is not Trump doing it all, it is HKB"H! we are hanging on every word that Trump tweets and posts on Facebook. We are fearful. Will he sign a deal? Won't he sign a deal? ...



you. Not the land that that *you* merited by your good behavior, nor the land of swamps that *you* drained, or the wars *you* fought with כָּחִי וְעֶצְמִי לְדִי, but that I (HKB"H) gave you! Because I promised it to your forefathers. לֹא בְצַדִּיקוֹתַי וּבְיִשְׁרָי וּבְצַדִּיקוֹתַי וּבְיִשְׁרָי לָבָבְךָ אֵתָהּ בָּא לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת אֶרְצָם כִּי בְרַשְׁעַת הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה ה' אֵל-לְקִיךָ מוֹרִישָׁם מִפְּנֵיךָ וּלְמַעַן הַקִּים אֶת הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב (דברים ט, ה)

Have you ever wondered why it is davka the generals and ex-generals in the army who are so left wing and against defeating our enemies? It is because they rely solely on כָּחִי וְעֶצְמִי לְדִי and have no faith in HKB"H. Only those who are privy to the most intimate military secrets know for a certainty that there is *no way* to survive in this hostile neighborhood purely on military might. If they understood that it is our *faith in HKB"H* that gives us the strength to defeat our enemies, not technology or sophisticated weapons systems, then they would succeed in their military campaigns. וְזָכַרְתָּ אֵת ה' אֵל-לְקִיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחַ לְךָ כַּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת חָיִל לְמַעַן הַקִּים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחַ לְךָ (דברים ח, יח)

The Torah tells us the remedy for the demoralisation of the meraglim is to "come to your homeland". HKB"H has brought us to our homeland, but for what purpose? To live bourgeois lives of materialism and narcissism? That is not why we are here, it is to serve HKB"H in the Beit HaMikdash, bringing korbanot.

It is to do "hafrashat challah" from our experiences during the last 3338 as a nation. To separate from the "dough" of Jewish history, the "challah", the most elevated elements of our nation – our faith in HKB"H and our unity with one another, that we experienced once for a brief instant at Har Sinai and that we will soon merit experiencing once again for ever more.

Shabbat Shalom

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Machon Lechem Hapanim

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