



MACHSHAVOT

Parashat Beshalach

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Who We Should Strive To Be

Rabbi Andrew Shaw
Chief Executive, Mizrachi UK

It is everywhere.

Front pages, back pages.

Jewish press, national press.

There is anger, upset and fury.

What do we do? What can we do?

One of the biggest problems, is that people (Jewish and non-Jewish) feel that this is the way religious Jews behave. That is why leaders such as the Chief Rabbi have come out and unequivocally said that 'such illegal behaviour is abhorred by the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community'.

So how should religious Jews behave? How should Jews behave?

There is the midrash that famously says that even though we were on the 49th level of impurity we merited redemption from Egypt during last week and this week's Parshiot as we kept our Jewish names, Jewish dress and Jewish language.

However, I have a problem with that Midrash. My name is Andrew, I dress like a westerner and I speak English – would I therefore have not been redeemed?

The strange thing is with that logic, I know someone else who would not have been redeemed!

His name is Moshe Rabbenu.

Moshe's name was given to him not by his parents, his name was given to him by Batya – Paroh's daughter – and that is what he is known as for the rest of his life, his secular name.

We know when he rescued Yitro's daughters he was called *ish mitzri* by them to Yitro – the midrash tells us there, that his clothes were Egyptian.

And later we hear that he cannot speak, he has *ara/ sefatayim* – uncircumcised lips, again the midrash fills in the details, he speaks Egyptian.

So our leader and saviour does not fit into the paradigm of Jewish name, dress and language so how are we to understand this Midrash?

Let me offer an explanation which will hopefully will inspire us despite all the chillul Hashem occurring in our community and can motivate us to live lives of Kiddush Hashem.

What is a Jewish name? It cannot simply be that Yosef is and Barry isn't. Pirkei Avot spells it out, it is what we are known as, do we have a *shem tov* – a good name.

R' Shimon says there are three crowns: the crown of Torah and the crown of priesthood and the crown of kingship (civil rule) and the crown of a good name rises above them all.
(Pirkei Avot 4:13)

When people say our name what do they think of? A good Jewish person, observant of the mitzvot, kind, friendly, honest, trustworthy, law abiding. Or someone who cheats, lies, is rude and dismissive. That is your Jewish name, when people think of you, do they think of a Kiddush or Chillul Hashem.

It doesn't matter what your name is, what matters is how you act – that defines your name.

What about clothing? What is Jewish clothing? I don't think Avraham Avinu wore a black hat, or Moshe had a big kippah sruga, or Shmuel Ha Navi dressed in a kappota for Shabbat – the only Jewish clothing I know is tzitzit and a kippah.

However, it goes far deeper than that. How is a Jew to dress? Hopefully with modesty, cleanliness and pleasantness. But Jewish clothing also means that the clothes we wear, do they bring us respect or do they bring on negative comments and looks. Furthermore, how do we wear our clothes? Do we walk around with a sense of entitlement, feeling that we are superior or is there a sense of humility, of openness.

How we dress is not just about what we wear – but also how we wear it.

And our language? Is our language Hebrew, or Yiddish or Aramaic? It is how do we speak. A Jew should speak politely, with care, concern – no room for crass, rude or immoral words. Are our words honest? Do we make sure that our word is our bond? Are we refraining from Loshen Hora, do we speak with empathy and thoughtfulness?

Jewish language is far more than linguistics, it is not in what language you speak but how you speak and how you use your words.

So ask yourself, if in those definitions, if all Jews dressed Jewish, spoke Jewish and their names were Jewish, would there not be a proud people who saw the absolute joy and honour in being Jewish - and the rest of the world would concur.

It is very easy to criticise – and I have and I will continue to decry any *Chillul Hashem* that I see - but I also realise that I have to make sure that I am doing what Hashem expects of me with my name, my language and my dress.

We should all be striving to be Torah Jews, Jews that the Torah would be proud of.

Next week, with the receiving of the Torah and the Ten Commandments, we will learn that means observing both *mitzvot ben adam l makom* and *ben adam l chavero*. You cannot have one without the other.

As long as we strive for this excellence and live our lives in this way, then I believe, just like in *Mitzrayim*, *Geulah* is not too far away.

Shabbat Shalom

I want to make clear that, in last week's Machshavot, I was not personally attacking anyone specific or making a comment about Gedolei Yisrael but focussing on the tremendous Chillul Hashem that is being caused by people who are endangering lives.

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Rabbi Ari Silberman, Rav Shaliach Mizrachi UK - Manchester



Part II: Sunday, 21st Feb @ 8:30pm

WHEN EXACTLY DID PURIM TAKE PLACE?

Rabbi Andrew Shaw, CEO of Mizrachi UK

Rabbi Shaw served as Rabbi at Stanmore and Canons Park United Synagogue for over 15 years. He has also been a leading figure in the United Synagogue's central organisation for more than a decade and was the founder of Tribe as well as Director of the Living & Learning department. Rabbi Shaw lives in Edgware, London with his wife and two sons.

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Beshalach

Atira Baruch

Participant of the Mizrahi UK Fellowship Programme

After a miraculous and eventful ending to the Jewish people's stay in Egypt, they finally get to the desert. The people are very quickly dissatisfied with the conditions in the desert and so they start to complain and reminisce about the "good old days" in Egypt wondering why Hashem took them out of Egypt just to kill them in the desert. Hashem responds by telling the Jewish people He will be giving them Manna from heaven every day, in order to test them.

ס'וֹרֵב־בְּיָד יוֹטָקָה לָלוּ סָעָה אֲצִיּוֹ מִיָּמֵי שְׁהָיוּ מִסְּחָל מִכָּל רִשְׁמוֹת יַגְנֵה הַשָּׁמַיְלָא הָיוּ רָמָא יִי
אֶל־מֵאֵי תַרְוֹתֵיב־רַלִיָּה יִנְסִנְא נְעִמֵל וּמוֹיִב־

At the end of the chapter, Moshe tells Aharon to take a jar and put one Omer measurement of Manna in to keep it as a תרומה for future generations. What is so significant about the Manna that it should be preserved and kept for posterity?

To answer this question, let us ask another question about the Manna. As noted above, the purpose Hashem ascribes to the Manna is "in order to test them". However the Manna seems like more of a gift or an act of kindness; it definitely does not seem like a test. How then do we understand this phrase that Hashem chose to use?

According to Rashi the test is one of obedience; Hashem was testing whether the Jewish people would observe all the mitzvot connected to Manna. For example, they were commanded not to leave it overnight and not to collect over Shabbat. The Ramban takes the idea of a test in a different direction. He says that the test is a test of faith; will the Jewish people continue to have faith and trust in Hashem even when only receiving food for one day at a time not knowing what tomorrow will bring?

Finally, the Ohr Hachaim explains that it is teaching us a lesson about how we use our time. The Manna required no preparation at all and therefore the test was about how they would put all of their extra time to use. Would the Jewish people use their free time for Torah study and meaningful pursuits, or rather use it for things lacking worth and value.

Now that we see the deep significance of the Manna, we can perhaps understand why the Torah places such an emphasis on it, and why Moshe and Aharon were commanded to preserve it.

The lessons of the Manna were important for the generation in the desert, but Manna also saved for future generations because its message is timeless. A look at Devarim chapter 8 can help us understand this message and the importance of always remembering how Hashem provided us with Manna in the desert.

רַעֲדוּהָ נְעִמֵל רִתְּבָא וְנִעְדִי אֵלָיו יִתְעַדִי אֵלָיו שְׂאָ נִימָה תָא רַלִי כָאֵלָיו רַב־עֲרִיּוֹ רַב־נִעִי
מִדָּאָה הֵיחִי הָיוּ פִּאֲצִיּוֹמֵל כִּלְעִי כִסְדָּא הֵיחִי וְדִבֵּל מִסְחָל־הֵלֵעֵל אֵלֵינוּ

The Manna reminds us that the reason we have bread and all of our other needs is because Hashem gave it to us. This lesson was vital in the desert and is even more vital when it is not as clear to us that everything we have is from Hashem. In this context the Torah warns us of the danger of thinking we are self sufficient:

מִי־דִבְעֵתִיב־מִי־רָצִמְצִמְרָאֵמ רַאֲצִיּוֹמָה רַיָּה לֵא הָיוּ יִתָּא תַחֲכִי שׁוֹ רַב־בֵּל מִרָו

We must always remember that Hashem is the one 'who gives us the strength to do valour', who provides us with all our needs, and without Whom we would literally be nothing. This is the timeless message of the Manna, and it is as relevant nowadays as it ever was.

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