



## Parades's Parsha Discussion with Rabbi Alex Israel

TORAH TO DISCUSS WITH TEENS AND ADULTS AROUND YOUR SHABBAT TABLE

### Beshalach. What can you not live without?

What can you not live without?

Your cell phone?

An internet connection?

Coffee?

Love?



What does the answer to this question say about you?

In our parsha, the Israelites walk for several days in the wilderness without encountering water:

They went on to the wilderness of Shur; they travelled three days in the wilderness and found no water. They came to Marah, but they could not drink water from Marah because it (they) were bitter; that is why it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses saying 'What shall we drink?' He cried to the Lord and the Lord showed him a tree. He threw it into the water and the water became sweet. There he set for them statute and judgment and there he put them to the test. He said 'If you listen well to the voice of the Lord your God, doing what is upright in his sight, giving ear to his commandments and keeping all his laws, then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians for I the Lord am your healer.'" (15:22-26)

They need water, but God gives them water, and then - Torah, statutes and judgements!

As Ibn Ezra notes, in the first plague, God makes Egypt's water undrinkable. In this first act after the crossing of the Red Sea, God makes undrinkable water drinkable! "If you listen well to the voice of God ... I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians for I the Lord am your healer."

The Rabbis of the Talmud suggest that it is not water that Israel required:

“They went three days in the wilderness and found no water” (Ex. 15:22). Those who interpret verses metaphorically said that water here is referring to Torah, as it is states in Isaiah (55:1) [concerning those who desire wisdom]: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come for water.” The Israelites travelled for three days without hearing any Torah. They became weary. The prophets among them arose and instituted Torah reading each Shabbat, ...Monday ...and Thursday ...so they would not wait three days without Torah.” (Talmud. Bava Kamma 62a)

The Rabbis seem to be saying that Israel’s spiritual needs are just as important as their physical needs; possibly more vital.

In order to ensure that the important things get done, a schedule is organized so that we hear Torah every three days.

**Please Discuss:**

1. What can you not go without for three days?
2. If you were stranded on a desert Island what three items would you take?
3. Sometimes we have things that we need but they don’t represent our values. If you had to choose three objects to express your values, then what would you take?

Are the objects in question 1 or 2 the same as in question 3?

In other words, do your daily needs match your values? If not, then do we abandon our values for other, more pressing, things?!

- How can we ensure that our routine actions express the values we cherish, the principles that we want to uphold?

One of the ways that happens is that the Rabbis instituted to keep a sense of Jewish values is that the Torah be read publicly every 3 days. It makes a statement. Torah is as essential as water. They built a daily recitation of Shema – a statement of belief - into our schedule – morning and evening. They instituted many other daily rituals

- How does your Judaism express itself in your daily schedule?
- Is it enough?

Shabbat Shalom!