

Parashah Fifty-Eight

Exodus 16:25–17:16; Isaiah 58:13–14; Mark 2:27–28

notes by Tim Hegg

The Torah Teaches Faith

One of the often heard complaints against the Torah is that it is not of faith. Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:12 that “the Torah is not of faith” has been regularly misinterpreted to mean that true faith and Torah do not mix. (In the context of Gal 3 the meaning most assuredly is that the Torah does not *produce* initial saving faith but rather proves whether faith is present or not.) Our *parashah* today however argues strongly against the notion that the Torah envisioned something different than the life of faith.

Three “stories” are woven together in our section: 1) the whole issue of gathering manna and how manna was to be gathered in view of the Sabbath, 2) the striking of the rock to produce water for the Israelites, and 3) the battle of Amalek against Israel, with Moses’ raised hands to give them the victory. It may seem at first that these three stories are arbitrarily chosen and just “pasted” together without any coherent theme. But a closer look reveals something entirely different. What all three have in common is their lessons regarding faith, and the manner in which HaShem expected the ancient Israelites to exercise genuine faith in Him for their daily salvation.

We may first note the obvious parallels with other significant events that pertain to the manna. First, there was sufficient manna for everyone, meaning that there was an “infinite supply” because the manna had come from the hand of God. The manna was gathered *אִישׁ לְפִי אֲכָלוֹ*, “according to what each person eats,” meaning there was always enough manna for everyone. The manna was given to Israel to prove to them that God was able to meet their needs at the individual level. No one need go hungry who has the Almighty as his God. We experience this in our relationship to the Bread from Heaven. He is able to supply every need, no matter how big or small.

Second, we note how clearly all were viewed as equal in terms of their needs, and the manner in which God intended to meet their needs. The princes or elders had no priority, nor did males, nor adults—everyone ate what they needed, and everyone was filled. As in all generations, God teaches that station in life makes no claim of merit upon God, but all are equally needy in His sight, and all receive from the same hand of His grace the filling of his or her needs. It is all of grace.

Third, the whole issue of gathering the manna was an exercise in faith. Trying to assure tomorrow by gathering more than what was needed for today was futile: the manna bred worms and was spoiled. How then were the Israelites to be content for tomorrow? Only by trusting that God would send the manna as He promised.

This same principle is doubly applied in regard to Shabbat. Every other day the extra manna, left over until morning, spoiled. But on the sixth day the people were instructed to do what on all other days was utterly futile: gather twice as much. That required faith! Would God preserve the manna so that food on the Shabbat would be available? If you thought He would, you gathered twice as much. If you thought He would not (or could not), you obviously would not go to the extra trouble of gathering extra. Those who did gather extra, by their obedience also demonstrated their faith that it would last in this specific situation.

The life of faith is a life lived on a daily basis, trusting God for what one cannot see, and for what is entirely out of one’s control. Why else did Yeshua teach us that we should expect God to provide our “daily bread?” Faith lays hold of tomorrow on the basis of God’s word today. This was practically demonstrated in Israel through the manna.

Fourth, it seems impossible that Israel could miss the parallels between the manna and the

Pesach lamb. Nothing of the lamb could be left over until morning. Whatever was left over had to be burned. The number of people per lamb was determined by לָפִי אֲכָלוֹ, “according to what he eats,” the exact same phrase noted in the gathering of the manna. These similarities must have stood out to the people as a pattern: the manna and the Pesach lamb, both prescribed by God, were connected. That Yeshua would claim that He was the “bread from heaven” (John 6:31ff) thus binds the manna and the lamb together in the very Person they both foreshadowed.

We should remember also that the lessons learned from the manna are in connection with Shabbat (before Sinai!). The rest enjoyed on the Shabbat by the Israelites was to be a fitting picture of how their life of faith issued in rest, not only for body but also for soul. Far from a day of “legalistic knit-picking,” the Shabbat was given by HaShem to teach us about the shalom for which we all strive. The point? Shalom comes from submission to God—doing life His way.

In that regard, we learn once again that obedience to God (in this case, keeping Shabbat) requires preparation. The people were to bake and prepare in advance of the Shabbat *so that they could rest*. Our rest in HaShem is not something automatic: it requires our obedient participation, an obedience that flows from the faith that has been given to us as an eternal gift of the Almighty. Thus, preparing to obey is just as important as obeying.

The second story is that of Meribah. The people are complaining about the lack of water, and even are fearful they will die in the wilderness. In this frame of mind they reason that slavery in Egypt was better. Of course, the story is famous: God instructs Moses to strike a rock with the now famous staff and water flows from it, enough for all the people. Paul midrashically considers this whole story a fitting illustration of the blessings that flow from Yeshua (1Cor 10:4ff).

What is the lesson of faith that binds this story with that of the manna? It is submission to authority. And the ability to submit to God is a function of genuine faith. Note carefully how the text reads: (17:2) “Why do you content with me (Moses)? Why do you test HaShem?” In other words, when the people were grumbling against Moses (even to the point he thought they might kill him, cf. 17:3) who was clearly God’s appointed leader, they were actually grumbling against HaShem!

So how is one able to submit to the leadership of mere humans with all of their own failings? Only by trusting God! If God has appointed leaders, then submitting to them has nothing to do with the obvious fact that sometimes they will make mistakes. Submission to them comes from a settled trust in God that He is the One Who is ultimately in control.

One level at which this is practised is marriage. Husbands, are you submitting to God and to the wisdom of your wife? Wives, are you submitting to your husbands as unto the Lord? If you are, you are demonstrating a faith, not first and ultimately in your spouse, but in the Lord’s ability to work in your spouse. Such a submission will prompt your regular prayers for the one to whom you submit.

Learning to submit one to the other is also the “stuff” that builds community. Recognizing God’s patterns of authority brings stability and longevity to the various levels of relationship fostered within the *kehilah*. Ultimately, the ability to submit to authority is the product of a growing faith in the Almighty.

The final story in our *parashah* is about Amalek’s attack upon Israel and the fact that the battle was fought on two levels: with Joshua and the military, and with Moses on the mountain. The two spheres of battle, of course, were vitally linked. Amalek could not be defeated without Joshua and his men engaging in battle, but they could not win the battle unless Moses’ hands remained faithful (note v. 12, וַיְהִי יָדָיו אֲמוּנָה עַד-בֹּא הַשָּׁמֶשׁ, “and so it was that his hands were faithful until the going of the sun.”)

What is the picture here? It is a portrayal of the necessary function of intercession. Moses, as the mediator between God and Israel, intercedes on her behalf. When he does, Israel wins. When he ceases, Israel fails. Israel’s success in battle depends upon the mediator, but the mediator does not fight the battle. Here we see a wonderful picture of the divine/human cooperative. God is the

One who wins the battle, but He does so through the efforts of those who engage the enemy in His name. If we apply this picture to the process of sanctification, we recognize that our own growth in holiness is ultimately secure because God has promised that He will make us holy, and Yeshua is interceding for us. We believe His prayers will surely be answered. Yet this process of sanctification requires our own engagement in the battle. We must walk, run, wrestle, fight, and put to death the deeds of the flesh. In short, the process of sanctification requires our active participation in living a disciplined life of obedience to God, resting secure in the work of Yeshua on our behalf.

Faith therefore recognizes that the battle is fought on two levels: at the sphere of my existence as well as in the heavenly sphere. The spiritual battles in which we are engaged have a direct connection to those being fought in the heavenlies (Eph 6). Moreover, faith recognizes that victory in this world is the result of the faithful intercession of our Master, who “always lives to make intercession” for us (Heb 7:25). “...as He is, so also are we in this world” (1Jn 4:17).