

Shabbat 23 January 2016 - Beshalach

The Torah is our guide. It gives us direction about how we should comport ourselves in any given situation. Here are a few words from this week's Sedra to apply and derive a message and to share with you. Indeed the word Torah comes from Horaah which means a message.

This week we read from the shirat Hayam- the Song of Moshe and Yisrael after the miracles at the Red Sea.

And what a wonderful song it is; then it is followed by the Shirat Miriam- the Torah tells us how the women separately sang for joy as well.

But from that point on, the story is all down hill.

The first step down

"Vayasah moshe et Yisrael"- Moshe forced the Israelites to journey on.

According to the Midrash, Moshe saw the Israelites becoming so consumed by the treasures from the sea, that he couldn't get them to move on. He had to literally force them to go on their way.

The second step down

And no sooner had they moved on that they travel for three days in the wilderness where they couldn't find water. They came to a place called Marah, called so because the water was bitter and they complain against Moshe; what are we going to drink?

Moshe was shown a special tree to throw into the water and it became sweet and the people drank.

Third step down

They journey on. They arrive at the Wilderness of Sin.

They complain to Moshe and Aharon. They say: We would have preferred to have died in the land of Egypt where we remember the fleshpots and where we ate bread plenty.

G-d sends them the Manna from Heaven.

Fourth step down.

They move on from the Wilderness and they come to a place called Refidim. But there was no water for the people to drink. They gang up against Moshe and Aharon. They declare; give us water that we may drink. They said: why did you take us out of Egypt that we our children and our cattle die of thirst?

So Hashem tells Moshe to take his staff and hit the rock. Moshe did as instructed; he struck the rock and water poured out!! The people thirstily drank from the water.

The last straw

Finally Amalek comes and attack the Children of Israel from behind at Refidim.

What's going on here? Here the Israelites have been saved from their oppressors, they have witnessed the ten plagues, the exodus from Mitzraim, they now have seen the final down fall of their enemies; yet they are not happy. No sooner had they left the Red Sea and they complain. Not once but four times. Where has their faith gone? How could they have fallen so fast?

Rashi brings a fascinating Midrash in the form of a parable. A father is carrying his son on his shoulders to protect him from wild animals.

A dog comes along to bite him, but his father holds him comfortably on his shoulders. Other animals come, yet his father safeguards him from any further harm. However, he's riding high on his father's shoulders. He sees somebody walking along and comments. "Have you seen my father anywhere?"

Immediately, his father is so frustrated with his son and lets him down. Along comes a dog and bites him.

The parable is easy to understand.

God so to speak carries the Children of Israel on His shoulders protecting them from harm. Yet they refuse to acknowledge that ultimately it is Hashem to whom they owe their very existence. He puts up with it once, twice, three times. But finally after the fourth occasion where they have refused to show their gratitude, Hashem takes the Israelites off His shoulders onto the ground. The Amalakites attack and they now realise that it is Hashem to whom they need to show appreciation and recognition. We go through the trials and tribulations of life and God so to speak carries each and every one of us on His shoulders. Yet we do not always show Him the correct appreciation and recognition in life.

The message is that we always need to thank Him for what He gives every single one of us.

Have a thankful Shabbat