

12 Shevat, 5782  
January 14, 2022

## Parashat Beshalach

In this week's Parasha, we read about the miracle of the Mann- food with which Hashem provided for Benei Yisrael throughout the forty years in the desert. Every day, the Mann would fall, and each person would get an exact portion for that day. On Friday, everyone would get a double portion, to last through Shabbat. No Mann would fall on Shabbat.

When Moshe informed Benei Yisrael that the Mann would not be falling on Shabbat, two Jews, looking to mock Moshe, decided to fake the Mann's falling on that day. They spread out Mann on Shabbat to show the Jewish nation. However, their plan failed when birds came and ate up the Mann they had spread out. For this reason, many have the custom to put out food for the birds on the Friday before Shabbat Beshalah, as a thank you to the birds.

The question is obvious. What does the American Tree Sparrow in your backyard have to do with some Sinai Rose Finch who ate up the Mann in the desert 3,333 years ago? Does it know why we're saying thank you? Does it even know that we're doing this as a thank you? Of course not! So what's the point?

The answer is that when we say thank you, it's not merely for the person we're thanking. Of course, he or she deserves our gratitude, but we're really saying thank you for another reason. We are doing so to perfect our own character. We are recognizing that we're indebted to someone other than ourselves, and by doing something to show it, we're making ourselves better people.

This is a lesson we find throughout the Torah. Moshe was indebted to the sand and to the water, he therefore did not hit the sand or the water when bringing the Makkot on Egypt. The dogs in Egypt did not wag their tongues or bark when the Jews were leaving Egypt, we therefore have a Mitzvah to treat dogs better than other animals in certain ways. The sand doesn't know the difference. Neither does the water, nor the dog. But WE do know the difference. Learning and keeping the Torah laws and customs makes us more than law-abiding Jews. It makes us more pleasant and perfect human beings.

Shabbat Shalom,  
R' Elnadav