כולל דפילאדעלפיא
PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY KOLLEL

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MENUCHA V'SIMCHA

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TREADING DEEP WATERS

BY RABBI BINYOMIN KAHAN

PARSHAS BESHALACH

Have you ever wondered why Torah feels sweet to some people… and bitter to others?

Many people quietly feel:

"I don't feel the sweetness of Torah. It's hard. It doesn't come naturally to me. Maybe I'm just not built for this."

At times, learning can feel like treading water — expending energy just to stay afloat, unsure if they are moving forward at all.

Shortly after Kriyas Yam Suf, Bnei Yisrael arrive at Marah and discover that they cannot drink the water because it was bitter. The Torah tells us that Hashem showed Moshe an *etz* (branch), which he threw into the water, and the water became sweet.

Chazal teach: **"There is no water except Torah."** From this, we learn that whenever the Torah speaks of water, it can also be understood as a reference to Torah itself.

Reb Leib Eisen, a Dayan in Brisk and a *chassid* of the Rebbe of De'Matchev, explained in the name of his Rebbe that the word *etz* is related to *eitzah* — advice. Hashem was not only giving Moshe an object; He was giving guidance.

What was the advice?

"*Vayashleich el hamayim*" — throw it into the water.

In other words, throw yourself into learning — into the Yam HaTalmud. Just as the waters of Marah only became sweet after the *etz* was fully cast in, Torah becomes sweet only when a person immerses himself completely, even when it is hard, even when it feels dry.

Many struggle to taste the sweetness of Torah, not because they fail, but because they are never truly tested. Even those who sit by a Gemara all day may only be partially present. Their minds wander; their attention drifts. True sweetness comes only when the learner's mind and heart are fully submerged in the words of Torah.

The Vilna Gaon explains (Mishlei 1:22) that one reason people distance themselves from Torah is that they expect it to enter effortlessly. When learning requires struggle and they do not immediately taste sweetness, they give up.

This is exactly what the Rebbe of De'Matchev meant: those who sit by a Gemara without full effort may never truly be tested, and therefore never experience Torah's sweetness. Struggle is not a sign of failure — it is part of the path itself.

The Rebbe of De'Matchev stressed the next step: immersion requires simple faith. One must believe that all progress and success lie within the Gemara in front of them. When this is recognized, other thoughts naturally fade, and the mind becomes fully absorbed in learning. Only through this full engagement does Torah reveal its sweetness.

Once a person reaches this state, he merits: **"And the waters became sweet."** From there, the journey becomes easier. Bitterness turns to sweetness, desire for Torah grows, and the learner rises higher and higher, on the path to becoming a true Talmid Chacham.

As the Vilna Gaon teaches (Mishlei 27:7), when a person hungers for Torah and truly desires to engage in it, even what is bitter becomes sweet for him through his toil and exertion.

We may feel, "Torah is not for me. Even when I sit to learn, it is hard and challenging." The answer is that Torah is meant to be hard. One must accept the challenge with simple faith and throw himself fully into learning. Only then will the real test begin — and only then will the waters become sweet. From there, the desire for Torah grows, and Hashem turns all bitterness into sweetness.

May we merit to taste the sweetness that Torah has to offer by throwing ourselves into it, persevering through the struggle.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Tefillah Treasures #40

BY RABBI YOEL D. ZEFFREN
ASSOCIATE ROSH KOLLEL

Eilu Devarim II

Pe'ah: Chessed in Its Truest Form

The Rishonim attempt to identify what distinguishes the mitzvos listed here from others, since many mitzvos likewise have no defined minimum or maximum. The Rambam, quoted above, explains that with these mitzvos the principle is that the more one invests, the greater the reward.

The Sefer HaManhig adds that these mitzvos are unique in that they can be fulfilled at any time and by any person. Horav Moshe Feinstein zt"l would explain the widespread custom in many communities to begin the study of Gemara with the perek *Eilu Metziyos*, which deals with the laws of lost objects. When a child embarks on the lifelong study of mitzvos, he must understand that they are not distant or reserved for the lofty. Rather, they are accessible and encountered in everyday life, just as the mitzvah of returning a lost object presents itself along the very paths we travel for other purposes.

The mitzvah of Pe'ah, in particular, carries an additional distinction. Beyond its inclusion in this Mishnah, it appears in an unusual place in the Torah's listing of the Moadim (Parshas Emor 23:22), sandwiched between Shavuos and Rosh Hashanah. It is also one of the mitzvos singled out for instruction to a prospective ger, a convert. The Meshech Chochmah, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843–1926), explains that this teaches that even our morals and good middos must emanate from the Torah. Without Torah guidance, even the most well-intentioned person can slide down a slippery slope and mistake cruelty for kindness—something evident in modern-day "mercy killings" carried out in the name of compassion.

The Torah is thus teaching that acceptance of the Torah on Shavuos must precede acts of chessed, so that kindness takes its proper form. Similarly, Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura explains that Pirkei Avos begins with the words "Moshe received the Torah mi'Sinai" to emphasize that even our ethics must be guided by the Torah.

Pe'ah serves as a prime example of this, teaching how chessed should be performed. One leaves the produce ownerless in the field rather than handing it directly to the poor. In this way, we avoid embarrassing them and also do not receive recognition. This may explain why Pe'ah is taught first to a convert and why it is highlighted so prominently in this Mishnah, which we recite daily as our first piece of Torah learning. At the beginning of each day—and of a life committed to Torah and mitzvos—we are reminded that the Torah guides not only our halachic observance, but also our ethical and moral compass.

THE PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY KOLLEL PRESENTS THE

Clear & Concise

practical weekly halachos

By Rabbi Shimon Frank

HILCHOS TACHANUN

Introduction: In earlier times, *Tachanun* was recited with actual prostration on the floor, known as *Nefilas Apayim*. Because of the many halachic restrictions, this practice is no longer performed. Instead, as a remembrance of *Nefilas Apayim*, the custom is to lean one's head to the side and cover one's face during *Tachanun*. The common practice is to lean on the right arm at *Shacharis* when wearing *tefillin*, and on the left arm at *Minchah* or when not wearing *tefillin*. A left handed person always leans on his left arm. The prevalent custom is that women do not recite *Tachanun*.

שו"ע ורמ"א או"ח סי' קל"א ס"א, ביה"ל ומ"ב שם, שו"ת מחזה אליהו סי' כ', הליכות בת ישראל פ"ב סי"ב.

Q: Am I allowed to talk after *Shemoneh Esrei* before saying *Tachnun*?

A: One should not talk before reciting *Tachanun*, as the *Gemara* explains that its effectiveness is diminished if there is a break between *Shemoneh Esrei* and *Tachanun*. However, even if one spoke, *Tachanun* should still be recited.

שו"ח או"ח סי' קל"א ס"א, מ"ב סק"א וב', ערוה"ש סק"ג.

Q: I see that everyone sits. Is that required?

A: One should sit while reciting *Tachanun*. The portion up to and including "*Vanachnu lo neida*" is said while sitting, while "*Ma na'aseh*" and everything afterward is said while standing. If one is unable to sit, for example if the person behind him is still in the middle of *Shemoneh Esrei* and he cannot step back, he may recite *Tachanun* while standing and covering his face.

שו"ע או"ח סי' קל"א ס"ב, מ"ב סק"ט וי'.

Q: When do we not do *nefilas apayim* (covering our face)?

A: The *halacha* is that when there is no *Sefer Torah* in the room, *Tachanun* is recited without covering the face. If one is in a side room and can see the *Aron*, *Tachanun* is recited with covering the face. Many *poskim* hold that the presence of *seforim* in the room is sufficient to recite *Tachanun* with covering the face.

רמ"א או"ח סי' קל"א ס"ב, מ"ב שם, אורחות רבינו ח"א עמ' קל"א.

PARSHAS BESHALACH

SHABBOS ZEMANIM

Friday, January 31

4:32 pm - Likras Shabbos Program
4:59 pm - Candle Lighting
5:02 pm - Mincha/Maariv
5:17 pm - Shkiya/Sunset

Shabbos, January 30

8:15 am - Shacharis
9:06/9:42 am - Latest Krias Shema
4:39 pm - Mincha
5:19 pm - Shkiya/Sunset
6:14 pm - Maariv
6:31 pm - 72 minutes
7:00 pm - Masmid program
8:00 pm - Rabbi Reisman