



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

BESHALACH • בשלה / Does G-d Need Our Protection?

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SERMON TITLE:

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BESHALACH

DOES G-D NEED OUR PROTECTION?

When did it become acceptable for people to express their religious indignation through violence? Why is it that whenever Arabs get angry they begin to riot – destroying property and taking lives by the dozens. Where did they learn this from?

This behavior is not new. The Christians, throughout history, have subjected Jews to such horrors as the inquisition, Chmelnicki pogroms, the Crusades and the Holocaust. Often the excuse is because we “insulted” the Christians by not accepting their faith. They killed and maimed millions upon millions of men, women and children in “defense” of their god’s honor.

The truth is that much before Christianity was even a thought, people behaved that way. When Moses told Pharaoh that the Jews needed to go out into the desert to sacrifice to their G-d, Pharaoh didn’t understand why they couldn’t do it in Egypt. Moses then explains to him that the Jews would be sacrificing sheep which was considered sacred by the Egyptians. “When the people see us sacrificing the “sacred” sheep they will surely stone us!” Moses explains. So we see that even back in Egypt they were protective over what they found sacred and even violent that no one should dare disgrace it.

For some reason, you don’t find this among the Jewish people. Why don’t we riot when our G-d is insulted, and trust me, it’s happened countless times in history. Let’s stop for a moment to examine this week’s parsha.



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Four times in this week's Parsha we find angry Jews complaining to Moses. In the beginning of the Parsha when the Jews were faced by the sea in front of them and the Egyptians behind them, they began to complain to Moses and, as the Midrash relates, they even wanted to go to war with Egypt.

Why would the Jews, after all the miracles they'd witnessed in Egypt, have any doubt in G-d's ability to save them again here?

They were thinking that in Egypt G-d performed miracles in order to save them, but outside of Egypt, maybe G-d wouldn't fend for them, but would wait for them to react, to do something on their own.

Reassuring them, Moses responded, not to do anything. "Stand and see the deliverance of G-d which He will do for you today! G-d will fight for you, while you remain silent." In fact, even the Egyptians finally came to the same conclusion. The Jews were protected by G-d's fierce protection.

Nevertheless, later on in the parsha we see that they still had a little trouble digesting the idea that G-d would protect and sustain them always. As they arrived in Mara and realized that they couldn't drink from the water there because it was bitter, they again complained to Moses. Here again they must have had the same worry, "True that G-d had protected us both in and out of Egypt, but that was protection from our enemies, but supplying food and drink we've got to do on our own." Then when G-d sweetened the water the Jews realized that He wasn't just a warrior but an all-time caring G-d.



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Yet soon after that the Jews continued to doubt the fact that G-d had everything under control, when they showed their concern about finding food. "G-d could sweeten bitter waters" they thought, "because to change something is only a 'small task' on G-d's part,. On the other hand, to supply food in the middle of the desert meant to bring about something from nothing, seemingly a much bigger deal."

Then they again saw the great care G-d had for them when they were supplied with the *manna*.

It didn't take long, however, for their belief to get shaky again. When they reached Refiddim they thought, "In Mara the job was only to change bitter water to sweet, but here there is no water at all to work with. Perhaps G-d expects us to find water for ourselves." But again G-d gives the Jewish people water.

When reading these stories you must wonder what was happening to the Jews. After the numerous miracles that G-d performed for them what was their cause to worry? Time and time again G-d proved his ability in every possible situation. Why were the Jews so reluctant to accept that as reality?

The explanation is, that coming from a place like Egypt where the way of life was that **man** had to take care of his idols, his deities, feeding, watering and cleaning **them**, they couldn't relate to a G-d whom they couldn't see, hear or feel, yet **He** takes care of **them** and guards **them**. Although they saw it clearly, the concept had to be proven for them every time the question "what's going to be tomorrow" could possibly come up.



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Let's think about this.

Why, in fact, is it that in every other religion their gods have to be taken care of, while in Judaism, the exact opposite is true?

The difference is simple: Who created whom?

When man creates his god, inevitably, it needs constant care from its creator, because on it's own it's nothing. The whole worth of this g-d is only from the man's decision to believe in it, and the more it's believed in, the more worth is attributed to it, and the same true the other way around.

On the other hand the one and only G-d, omnipresent and omnipotent, created his believers and his worth remains eternally untouched even if no one would believe in him.

It is for this reason that Judaism doesn't seek converts, being that number of Jews doesn't affect G-d's greatness. E.g. a person who is naturally an immense genius doesn't need people to praise him in order to validate his genius. However someone who, like they say, is not dealing a full deck needs very much that people should say whether what he's doing right or not.

In simple terms:

All other religions are centered on the man and it is man who creates his god in his own image. In Judaism on the other hand, G-d is the center. In Judaism we know



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that it is G-d who creates man in His image. This is why other religion can bend and be molded to the needs of the people, while in Judaism it is the people who need to mold themselves to the eternal everlasting will of the Holy One blessed be He, Almighty G-d.