Jewish Tribune – Beha’aloscha

**PG Parsha Tips**

I enjoy a good cup of tea. And that’s exactly my problem. You see during the week, I have many cups of this heavenly brew, but a good cup of tea on Shabbos is more complicated.

Like many others I use PG Tips tea granules on Shabbos and whilst it may not be quite as good as my normal cup of tea, it certainly does the job.

Alas, I have recently discovered that PG Tips are no longer making their tea granules and they have been discontinued. So what to do about my oneg Shabbos?

Yes, I am aware that the long Mishna Berura on siman 318 on how to make tea with tea essence now becomes very relevant again, but there is another lesson to be learned here and our parsha contains the key.

In order to bring the Bnei Yisroel to Eretz Yisroel as quickly as possible, the pillar of cloud guiding them through the desert moved at a fast pace. This gave a group of people called the מִתְאֹנְנִים, the complainers, a pretext to complain.

A heavenly fire killed many of them and only stopped when Moshe Rabbeinu davened to Hashem for the fire to die down.

But complainers complain and their stubborn willingness to sin was so powerful that they repeated their folly even after seeing a miraculous punishment.

This time the pretext was the manna. The rabble succeeded in influencing others to complain again. The wording of their complaint was particularly offensive. Not only did they complain that the manna was insufficient, which the Torah itself testifies was untrue (pesukim 7-9), but they went as far as to say that they preferred Egyptian cuisine they ate in slavery.

זָכַרְנוּ אֶת הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר נֹאכַל בְּמִצְרַיִם חִנָּם אֵת הַקִּשֻּׁאִים וְאֵת הָאֲבַטִּחִים וְאֶת הֶחָצִיר וְאֶת הַבְּצָלִים וְאֶת הַשּׁוּמִים

We remember the fish we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic (Bamidbar 11,5).

Rashi cites the Medrash which ridicules this complaint. The Egyptians would not even give them straw for their work, surely they would not give them free food!

But complainers complain. Again, this was just a pretext. They said they were fed up with the manna and wanted meat.

The Torah then goes on to describe the manna.

וְהַמָּן כִּזְרַע גַּד הוּא וְעֵינוֹ כְּעֵין הַבְּדֹלַח

Now, the manna was like coriander seed and its colour was like the colour of the bedolach (a crystal like gem – Rashi).

שָׁטוּ הָעָם וְלָֽקְטוּ וְטָחֲנוּ בָרֵחַיִם אוֹ דָכוּ בַּמְּדֹכָה וּבִשְּׁלוּ בַּפָּרוּר וְעָשׂוּ אֹתוֹ עֻגוֹת וְהָיָה טַעְמוֹ כְּטַעַם לְשַׁד הַשָּׁמֶן

The people would stroll and gather it and grind it in a mill or pound it in a mortar and cook it in a pot or make it into cakes, and its taste was like the taste of dough kneaded with oil.

But why describe the manna now?

The natural place to fully describe it is in parshas Beshalach (Shemos perek 16) where we are first introduced to it. Most strange.

Perhaps the answer is that a sad reality of life is that we only properly appreciate things when we no longer have them.

Those who complained about the manna and wanted meat did not properly appreciate the manna. They complained that they wanted meat. And that’s exactly what they got. Lots of meat. A large flock of quails flew to the camp and the complainers easily and gluttonously caught these birds and prepared to eat them. But as soon as they took their first bite, they either died or were struck by illness which lasted a month, after which they died.

They didn’t realise how lucky they were. The manna was wonderful! The Torah refutes the complaints against the manna by describing it. Aside from its beauty (appearing as gem like crystals), it’s shape and smell (like coriander seed, a strong smelling seed-like plant of the carrot family) and its taste (like a dough rich in oil), it could be gathered effortlessly, merely by strolling near their homes.

The manna was going to be taken away from these people and the Torah chooses to describe it here to emphasise the point that only when you will no longer have it, will you realise how special it is.

If this is true for mere food, is it not true of other more significant things? Do we properly appreciate everything we have? The people in our lives and the relationships we have. Our health, our jobs, the homes we live in, the shuls and schools we attend. The freedom we have to practice our religion.

And so, so many other things - even the hot drinks we drink on Shabbos.

The Torah therefore describes the manna, not when it is given to us, but when, for some people, it was no longer available. To teach us the important lesson that we should appreciate what we have, while we have it, and not only when it is taken away.

And if anyone knows where I can get some good tea granules, I would really appreciate that ...

**Rabbi Golker is the Menahel of Hasmonean High School. To listen to his shiurim, go to TorahAnytime.com or JewishPodcasts.Org**