

# פרשת מסעי Parashas Masei

וַיִּחַנו בְּרֵפְחִידִם וְלֹא הָיָה שָׁם מַיִם לָעָם לִשְׁתּוֹת — and they encamped in Rephidim, and there was no water there for the people to drink (33:14).

In the travels, no mention is made that the people were given manna; only the lack of water is mentioned. The Sages say: Although Chazal say (Yoma 75b) that when they were given bread, they did so appropriately, nevertheless, the Torah writes that it was a sin for they did not believe that Hashem would give them bread. The same occurred with water. I have written (Devarim 8:3) that if their level of faith in Hashem was as it should have, they would not have felt hungry or thirsty for bread and water. They, however, did not have faith; therefore, they did not merit the miracle of not feeling hungry and instead suffered, as it is written (ibid.): וַיַּעֲרֹב וַיִּרְעַבְךָ, וְנִצְּנָנוּ וְנִצְּנָנוּ, and let you hunger; and (Shemos 17:3-5): וַיִּבְרַח הָעָם: וַיִּצְּנָנוּ וַיִּצְּנָנוּ, And the people contended with you and let you hunger for water. The proof that, had they had faith, they would have been able to survive without bread and water, the Torah states (Devarim 8:4): שָׁמְרָתְךָ לֹא בָקִיָּה, Your garment will not wear out; since they did not request clothing, they did not merit it, the bread and water they received were also due to their lack of a lesser degree as compared to the miracle of being given manna, as did Moses, when he was in Heaven. The Torah did not wish to narrate this in its account of the Jews' travels in the wilderness because it was uncomplimentary. The Torah

writes merely that they had no water, and since they remained alive, that is proof that a miracle was wrought for them, and they were given water.



וַיִּסְעוּ מֵרֵפְחִידִם וַיִּחַנו בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי — They journeyed from Rephidim, and they encamped in the Wilderness of Sinai (33:15).

In the parashah's account of the journeys, it is not mentioned that Israel received the Torah at Sinai. I believe that this is due to the fact that the Torah must always be considered as if it was just given, and not like a document that was given at Sinai thousands of years ago. Therefore, here the Torah does not record its being given (Pesikta Zutra, VaEschanan 6:7).



כִּי הַדָּם הוּא יִחַנֵּף אֶת הָאָרֶץ — for the blood will bring guilt upon the Land (35:33).

The word יִחַנֵּף, usually employed in the context of flattery and hypocrisy, does not seem to be appropriate here. This can be resolved in the following manner. All governments have laws against murder. There is, however, a vast distinction between the prohibition of bloodshed issued by the secular governments and the prohibition of bloodshed issued by the Torah. Secular governments wish to preserve the civilization of the world (see Avos 3:2), as is self-evident. Therefore, if, by foolish reasoning, one feels that someone else is destroying civilization, he feels justified in killing him. This is the reason there are wars. People justify their actions by thinking that they did nothing wrong, but, on the contrary, brought about improvement in the world.

An outgrowth of the common view of the prohibition of bloodshed is that most countries do not legislate the duty to preserve a person's life if he can live only a short time; neither do they insist on the preservation of the life of elderly people. The prohibition of the Torah, however, is a function of the importance of human life. Therefore, even if a person is considered to be of no value to society — e.g. an imbecile, or a terminally ill person — the prohibition to slay him bears the same gravity as the

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prohibition to slay anyone else. Moreover, in order to save the lives of such people, one may desecrate the Sabbath.

Thus, a murder committed because the perpetrator believes that the victim is a threat to his conception of civilization, is, in effect, an act of flattery of the world, or the land. Such a murderer believes that man is subordinate to the land which is contrary to the Torah's view that the land is subordinate to man.



לְטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיהֶם תִּהְיֶינָה לְנָשִׁים אֲךָ לְמִשְׁפַּחַת מִשָּׁה  
אֲבֵיהֶם תִּהְיֶינָה לְנָשִׁים — *Let them be wives to  
whomever is good in their eyes, but only to the  
family of their father shall they become wives*  
(36:6).

**T**he Talmud (*Bava Basra* 120b) tells us that Zelophehad's daughters themselves were permitted to marry outside their tribe, but it was recommended that they too should marry within their tribe. As we see, they followed the advice of the Torah. Now, although the Holy One, Blessed is He, knew very well that they would marry within their tribe even though they were not commanded to do so, He should still have commanded them to do so, because one who is commanded and observes the *mitzvah* (*metzueh ve'oseh*) is superior to one who is not commanded and still performs the *mitzvah*.

It must be then, that even without the formal Divine imperative, one who ignores Divine advice has committed a grave transgression, because he demonstrates with his behavior that he believes himself to be wiser than Hashem, which is of course apostasy. The evil inclination will thus surely seek to sway man to disregard the Divine counsel, just as it seeks to entice one who is commanded to do a *mitzvah*. Indeed, the chief distinction of the *metzueh ve'oseh* is that he must overcome his evil inclination. In the case of Divine counsel, the evil inclination will have even more power to sway him by arguing that the Divine advice is not actually mandatory. Therefore, in this case, the daughters of Zelophehad actually received a greater reward because they were not commanded to marry within their tribe, only advised.

