This week we read how the Jews miraculously crossed the sea and sang an epic song of thanks to G-d. Then, shortly thereafter the Manna (called Mahn) which fed them for 40 years in the desert, began to fall.

But amazingly enough, while the Jews praised the one-time splitting of the sea they never showed ANY thanks in the 40 years they were eating Mahn in the desert.

This doesn't make sense. First of all the Mahn was a much bigger miracle; without it everyone would have died of starvation, while without the splitting of the sea Jews could have just returned to Egypt. Second, The Mahn fell EVERY day (twice on Friday for Shabbat as well) for forty years, while the Sea split only once. Third the Mahn was personal; each Jew got his/her individual portion whereas the Sea split once for everyone (some say there was a special channel for each tribe; but not for each person).

So if they thanked G-d for the sea, why didn't they do it for the Mahn (and even complained about it?)?

This Shabbat is also the holiday of TU (Tes Vav are two Hebrew letters also standing for 9 and 6 i.e. 15) B'Shvat.

Is there a connection?

To understand this, here is a story

The holiday of Tu B'Shvat is mentioned in the beginning of Tractate Rosh HaShanna as the "New Year for Trees". It has no special prayers or commandments and is hardly important to the average religious Jew. But spiritually the holiday is very potent.

Trees are compared to man: the roots; hidden deep down but the basis of life are like faith. The trunk is like the man himself and the fruits are like good deeds.

This story took place some one hundred years ago in the city of Spinka, Hungary (Source: Yerachmiel Tilles, ascentofsafed.com)

It was the night of Tu B'Shvat, and a large gathering of Chasidim surrounded the table of Rabbi Yosef Meir; the Rebbe of Spinka. The Rebbe sat at the head of the table, explaining in great depth the Kabalistic significance of the New Year for trees and the things that they have in common with men:

"With great care and effort, even a crooked, barren tree that has lacked nourishment and water can grow. Indeed, with proper devotion and persistence it is possible to even transform it into one that bears fruit."

At that moment, a middle aged, bearded, well-dressed Jew entered the room, walked over to the Rebbe and set down a gigantic basket bulging with choice fruits from Israel on the table before him.

Looking up and seeing his guest, the Rebbe smiled broadly. He invited the man to sit beside him and showed him the most remarkable warmth all through the evening. Many of the Chasidim had
never seen this man before. Who was this man who had brought such a stunning fruit basket and had been honored by such tokens of the Rebbe's affection?

The Rebbe distributed the fruits to his followers, each made a blessing and ate and finally the Rebbe requested the visitor to stand and tell his Holiday story. Many had heard the story before but it was impossible to see it on their faces. Everyone looked with anticipation at the guest as he rose, straightened his long suit coat, glanced again at the Rebbe for approval and then began.

"I was born in Germany," he said, "and arrived here only a few years ago. The education and upbringing I received at home were completely divorced from any connection to Judaism, Torah and Commandments. My father and grandfather identified with the Haskalah ("Enlightenment") movement in Germany that scoffed at religion and anything that didn't make sense to them, and raised me accordingly.

"On my arrival here in Hungary, I opened a textile factory. At first I sold my goods only in the surrounding area, but success soon smiled on me and my business expanded greatly. I sent my merchandise to every part of the country and even to neighboring countries. Everything was wonderful.

"Then one morning I happened on a rare deal; a chance to purchase an enormous quantity of high quality raw material at three-fourths of the price. I got the money together, put it in my safe and was already mentally counting up the tremendous profits I would make from the deal.

I went to the seller and made the agreement; I pay would for all the materials in cash and they would be delivered to me immediately. I went home, got the money, paid, returned to my office and I was thinking pleasurably about the successful deal I had just concluded, when the supplier of the materials suddenly walked into my office with two other well dressed men and demanded payment for what he had sold me!

He was blazing mad, yelling about how much of his time I wasted and how I lied about saying I would pay up front and now I wanted the supplies!

"At first I though he was joking. Very soon, however, it became clear that I had fallen into a trap. I remembered that the man had not signed a receipt for the money I had paid him. I simply trusted him! What remained was the contract, signed by me agreeing to pay in advance for the materials and authorizing the materials to be transferred when I paid for them. But no bill of sale!

"Furious, I threw him out of my office, but he was unmoved by my anger. He turned, narrowed his eyes in feigned disgust and informed me that he planned to sue me in court. He could have sold to someone else for more, he would demand that I pay full price and a fine as well, now he wouldn't take the lower price even if I gave it to him! And he slammed the door and left.

"I sat slumped in my seat, feeling totally helpless. It was clear to me that if it got to court he would win the case. Suddenly instead of the vast profits I had anticipated, I would be a poor man. But if I paid I'd also lose a fortune. In very low spirits, I went outside for a breath of fresh air.

"In the street, I ran into an acquaintance, a religious Jew, and told him all about the misfortune that had just befallen me but he told me not to worry, that all was not lost. I figured he meant that he had a good lawyer or connections with the judge and started to breathe easily. I asked him how much it would cost but he answered that he had a Rebbe and it wouldn't cost me anything. He actually suggested that I accompany him to this Rebbe of his and ask for advice.

At first I wanted to just run away, I though he was crazy! And how could it be for free! It probably didn't cost anything because it wasn't worth anything; that's what I thought to myself. But in my despair, I was ready to do anything. So I agreed.

"I'll never forget the glow in the Rebbe's eyes that evening when I was first privileged to enter his room. I could not conquer the tears that coursed down my cheeks, and managed only with
difficulty to tell the Rebbe what had befallen me. When I finished my story, the Rebbe waited a few 
seconds in thought and then asked if I was Shabbat observant.

I barely knew what Shabbat was, and did not attach much significance to his question. I explained 
that a good deal of my business was done on Shabbat, making it impossible for me to refrain from 
working on that day. But I promised to give him money if he saved me.

"The Rebbe went on to ask if I was careful to eat only kosher food. I answered in the negative, 
justifying myself by saying that my many business pressures prevented me from paying attention 
to such details. But, in fact, it was totally unimportant to me.

"Then the Rebbe asked if I at least put on Tefillin. Once again, my answer was no. I was already 
feeling a bit uncomfortable. I couldn't figure what this Rebbe wanted. On one hand I had never 
seen such a holy person but on the other hand he kept asking these crazy questions that had 
nothing to do with my problem.

"'Rebbe!' I said to him 'I'm going to lose millions of dollars, I'll be a debtor. Give me some advice! 
Or maybe put a curse on that cheater. Help me!! I'll give you some of the money! I'll give you 
half! Please save me!'

"But it didn't help. The Rebbe began to try to persuade me to put on Tefillin every day. 'If you 
agree to put on Tefillin each morning,' he said, 'I guarantee that you will emerge from your trial 
having won your case.'

But I don't have Tefillin! I protested. 'I'll get you some' he replied.

'But I don't know how to put them on!' I'll teach you' he answered.

'But I have no time!' If HaShem could split the sea He will give you the time.' He replied.

'But I never put them on in my life' 'You'll get used to it' he said.

"After much inner debate, I agreed. He ordered one of his Chassidim to give me a pair and left 
him with a lighter heart. From that day on I began to faithfully put on Tefillin every day and not to 
think about the court case. It wasn't easy for a man like me, and sometimes I nearly 
stopped....until I remembered the Rebbe's promise.

"A few months later I got a subpoena to court. I tried to get a lawyer, but they all refused because 
I had no evidence. My day in court arrived. It was Tu B'Shvat, exactly one year ago today. My 
chances of winning the case seemed nil, but I went in comfortable spirits, inexplicably placing my 
trust in the Rebbe's promise.

"The supplier had two lawyers. He portrayed me as a cheater, a man who wanted to take his 
material and refuse to pay. To back up his claim, he presented the contract I had signed. I then 
took the stand and told the truth, that I had paid but didn't get a receipt. I don't know how to 
explain it, but the judge believed me! He was persuaded of the truth of my story and ordered the 
supplier to give me the goods. Just like that!

I couldn't believe it! Suddenly I saw that it's not like my parents told me! The commandments 
weren't just superstitions! They worked where nothing else would!

Well, after that I went to the Rebbe told him what had happened and he just answered "One 
mitzva brings another." And he was right; the commandment of Tefillin dragged me along to begin 
observing other mitzvot. I began eating kosher, learning Torah and from that day on, my offices 
were closed on Shabbat. Not only has this not harmed my interests, but business has boomed! I 
have begun to live a full life of Torah and mitzvot, though I am not an actual Chasid."

The man smiled joyously at his rapt audience. "Today, on the anniversary of the day when I won 
my court case; Tu B'Shvat. I was, so to speak, like a withered tree but the Rebbe renewed my
roots to Judaism and now look at all these fruits! That's why every year I, will G-d willing bring the Rebbe a basket of the best fruits as well as a nice donation."

Now we can answer our question. The reason the Jews sang after the parting of the sea was that G-d took them from Egypt and, seemingly, gave them freedom and people like freedom with no obligations (despite the fact that it is harmful to them).

But the Manna was totally different; it brought with it obligations and, most irritatingly, demanded faith. First of all, it had to be gathered up and prepared every day, so the people had to work on it. Second, it could not be saved for the next day so the people were totally dependant on G-d. Third, they got a double portion on Friday and were not allowed to gather it on Shabbat so they had to believe in Shabbat. And there were more reasons.

In other words, the splitting of the sea made them feel like kings, so they sang. While the Manna humbled them, against their natures, as servants, so they complained!

In truth, G-d really wants both! But to be a servant is most important. That is why we suffered in Egypt for 210 years; to learn to be servants and transfer it to be servants of the King of the Universe.

The prophet tells us (Micha 7:15) "Just as when you left Egypt I will again show you miracles." And he is referring to the future redemption by the Moshiach. In other words; then there will be again the splitting of the sea and the giving of Mahn.

The splitting of the sea are the teachings of Chassidut which remove all spiritual obstacles to feeling G-dliness, while the falling of Mahn will be total reliance on G-d for our entire physical and material existence.

This is the message of Tu B'Shvat that our roots must be deep and our fruits many. Through this we will fix the sin of the Tree of Knowledge and all the world will dance with....

Moshiach NOW!

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