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ON BEHAALOSCHA - 5782

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from: Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ryfrand@torah.org>
to: ravfrand@torah.org
date: Jun 16, 2022, 5:24 PM
subject: Rav Frand - It Was Not the Cucumbers and Onions!

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Behaaloscha

It Was Not the Cucumbers and Onions!

The pasuk says: "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic" (Bamidbar 11:5). The people were ostensibly crying over the food that they missed while they were in the Wilderness. Rashi quotes the teaching of Chazal that they were not really crying over the fish,

cucumbers, garlic and onions, but rather they were crying over "family matters." They were bemoaning the fact that they recently became forbidden in the arayos prohibitions. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky shares a very basic idea over here (as he does in two other places in his Chumash commentary). He asks, how do Chazal know this? The simple reading of the pasuk is that they were crying over food deprivation. Chazal say that rather than crying over food, they were really crying over the newly-given arayos prohibitions. There is no indication of such in the pasuk, so how do Chazal put words into the mouths of the Jews in the Wilderness that appear nowhere in the p'shuto shel Mikra?

Rav Yaakov answers that there is a concept in Torah interpretation called "PaRDeS". PaRDeS is an acronym which represents the Torah being understood on several different levels—the level of Pshat (simple interpretation), Remez (hidden allusion), Drash (homiletic exposition), and Sod (mystical interpretation). So too, he says, human beings need to be understood on different levels. When a person says something, it needs to be analyzed at the level of Pshat, at the level of Remez, at the level of Drush, and at the level of Sod. Many times, people don't really understand their own words on the subconscious level.

Sometimes something much deeper is really going on than the face value of someone's words. People don't really cry about fish and cucumbers—especially when they have mann falling from Heaven on a daily basis. The mann was the best food in the world. According to Chazal, it could taste like whatever the person consuming it desired. So obviously, no one's taste buds were being deprived by a lack of garlic or onions. Either through Ruach HaKodesh or some other means, Chazal realized that something much deeper than onions was motivating them over here. This is what Rav Yaakov calls "Klayos v'Lev" (literally kidneys and heart), which is a Rabbinic idiom for what we call the subconscious. In other words, they were not even aware themselves of what was really bothering them.

This occurs all the time with interpersonal relations—with our children, our spouses, our employees and our employers. Sometimes a person has a "fit" about something and we ask him, "Why are you having a fit about this? It is such a trivial issue (whatever it may be). Why are you having a fit about this?" Sometimes the

answer is that something else is going on. It is not the onions. It is something else.

Rav Yaakov says the same thing in Parshas Lech Lecha. Lot said he wanted to separate from Avraham Avinu and go live in Sodom. Why did he say that he wanted to go live in Sodom? It was because “Sodom was a fertile lush valley” (Bereshis 13:10). Rashi there cites a Medrash Aggadah that Lot’s real interest in moving to Sodom was because they were an immoral and licentious people. He desired to live in a region where the residents had an “everything goes” lifestyle.

Rav Yaakov asks the same question there: Why do Chazal attribute such amoral intentions to Lot? Where do Chazal see this motivation? Why not assume that Lot is going there to make a better living in the fertile region?

Rav Yaakov explains the same idea: Lot was with Avraham Avinu. Not only was he with Avraham Avinu, which is a tremendous merit, but he made an economic fortune by virtue of having attached himself to Avraham. “Also, Lot, who went with Avram, had flocks, cattle, and tents.” (Bereshis 13:5) So if he wanted to make a good living, he should have stayed with Avraham Avinu! Why then is Lot migrating to Sodom? The answer is that it is for some unverballed reason. It is not for parnassah!

There is an old quip: “We say the Hagaddah, but we want the Kneidlach.” It was the same thing over here: We say “Parnassah, paranassah,” but it is not really parnassah. Now, Lot may not have even realized this himself. That is the nature of the PaRDeS of human conversation—there is Pshat, Remez, Drash, and Sod behind each of man’s comments. Lot may not have fully understood what he was saying, and neither do we fully understand everything we say.

Sometimes we get upset about something. We need to ask ourselves, “Why am I so upset?” Sometimes we don’t even realize it. “Why should this bother me so much? It is such a minor issue!” We need to ask ourselves: “What is really bothering me?” We see this by the cucumbers and onions. We see this by Lot. We always need to ask the question: What is really motivating us?

The Ish Moshe Was More Humble Than Any Adam
The Torah testifies: “And the ‘Ish’ Moshe was extremely humble, more so than any ‘Adam’ on the face of the earth” (Bamidbar 12:3). In Lashon HaKodesh, the word “Ish” (literally – ‘man’) always connotes a distinguished individual, a person who has accomplished something

important in his life. The word Adam (also meaning ‘man’) connotes any human being.

Rav Nissan Alpert, zt”l, points out that this pasuk apparently lacks symmetry. Rather than comparing the ‘Ish’ Moshe with any ‘Adam’, the pasuk should have used the plural of the word ‘Ish’ (Anashim) and state that the Ish Moshe was humbler than any Anashim on the face of the earth.

Rav Nissan Alpert explains that the pasuk is telling us that Moshe Rabbeinu was haIsh Moshe—the most accomplished person in the world, an Ish haElokim. He had what to be haughty about! And yet, he was humbler than even the simplest unaccomplished Adam anywhere in the world!

The Gemara (Sotah 5a) says that a person should learn a lesson from his Creator. The Holy One Blessed be He abandoned all the higher peaks in the world and had His Presence descend onto a relatively lowly mountain upon which He gave His Torah (i.e. – Mt. Sinai).

The Kotzker Rebbe once asked, if the Almighty wanted to teach us humility, why didn’t He give the Torah in a valley? The answer is that true humility occurs when someone has something to brag about and nevertheless remains humble. Hashem gave the Torah on a mountain. If someone is a nothing (e.g. – a valley) and does not act haughty about it, that is no big deal. However, when a person has what to be gayvedik about (for example, a mountain) and nevertheless remains humble, that is a big deal! Therefore, the Almighty gave the Torah on a mountain, but on a humble mountain.

Similarly, that is why there is a principle that the Divine spirit of prophecy descends upon people who are strong, wealthy, wise, and tall. What is the reason for that? It is because the Ribono shel Olam wants people to remain humble, despite having qualities that can legitimately cause them to be proud, or even haughty.

from: Esplanade Capital
<jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>
subject: Rabbi Reisman's Chumash Shiur - Audio and Print Version

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Behaloscha 5782
1 – Topic – A Thought from Rav Hutner – Shabbos Tefillos

As we prepare for Shabbos Parshas Behaloscha.
Marching B’ezras Hashem towards a summer of growth

in Torah, Avodah and Yir'as Shamayim. Let me begin with the end of the Parsha. One of the Yud Gimmel Ikrim, one of the thirteen principles of Jewish faith, is taught to us at the end of Parshas Behaloscha. There we are taught that the Nevua of Moshe Rabbeinu was greater than the Nevua of any other Navi. As the Rambam says, She'ain Navi Kamohu. There is no Navi like Moshe Rabbeinu and Moshe Rabbeinu's Nevua was unique. Lo Chein Avdi Moshe B'chol Baisi Ne'eman Hu. His Nevuah was a unique Nevuah and superior to all other Neviim. This is what we have as one of the Yesodos of Emunah taught to us in the Parsha of Miriam at the end of this week's Parsha.

Where do we talk about this article of faith, where do we have this Yesod Emunah in our Davening? It is interesting, the one place and I think that it is the only place where this Yesod Emunah is mentioned in Davening is Shabbos morning in our Davening when we say in Shemoneh Esrei (כי עֲבַד נְאֻמָּן (קְרֵאתָ לוֹ יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ. בְּעֶבֶד נְאֻמָּן (קְרֵאתָ לוֹ). There we mention this praise from this week's Parsha of Moshe Rabbeinu (כי עֲבַד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ). The one place we mention it is by Shabbos Shacharis. Halo Davar Hu! There must be some sort of an explanation. Why is it placed in Shabbos Shacharis in particular?

Rav Hutner in the Mamarei Pesach, Maimer Lamed Hei, has a wonderful insight. We know that the Tur says that there are three Shabbasos that we remember. We remember Shabbos Kodosh on three levels. One is of course is Zeicher L'ma'asei Beraishis which is the original Shabbos, the Shabbos of the seventh day of creation. The second Shabbos is the Shabbos of Mattan Torah. The Gemara says (IN Maseches Shabbos) that (ודכולי עלמא בשבת ניתנה תורה לישראל) that the Torah was given on Shabbos. That is the second aspect of Shabbos. The third of course is the Yom Shekulo Shabbos, the Shabbos L'asid Lavo, the day of rest for the whole Bri'ya when Moshiach will come. These three Shabbasos explains the Tur are mentioned one in each of the three Shabbos Tefillos, the Shabbos Shemoneh Esrei. On Friday night, on Leil Shabbos (אָתָּה קְדַשְׁתָּ) referring to HKB"H creating Kedushas Shabbos at the Maiseh Beraishis, at creation. The second is Shabbos Shacharis when we say (כי עֲבַד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ). יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ. בְּעֶבֶד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ. (קְרֵאתָ לוֹ). This seems to indicate that the one who wrote this pronounced Oy as Nusach Sfard does and not Oh as Nusach Ashkenaz does. Because you see if you say it as Nusach Ashkenaz you say (יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ, בְּעֶבֶד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ. כְּלִיל תִּפְאַרְתָּ לֹא).

(אָתָּה וְשִׁמְךָ אָתָּה וְיָמֵי כְעֶמְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאַרְצֵי) is referring to the Shabbos of L'asid Lavo when the Achdus Hashem, the uniqueness of Klal Yisrael will be recognized with the (מְנוּחָה שְׁלֵמָה שְׁאֵתָה רוּצָה בָּהּ). These are the three Shabbasos. Question – On the Shabbos of Mattan Torah we say (בְּעֶמְדוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ עַל הַר סִינַי. וְשָׁנֵי לַחֹת אֲבָנִים הוֹרִיד בְּיָדוֹ) two Luchos of stone. The (וְשָׁנֵי לַחֹת אֲבָנִים) were broken, they were shattered. Moshe Rabbeinu broke the two Luchos. The two Luchos that replaced them were given on Yom Kippur not on Shabbos. Why do we mention the broken Luchos in our Davening?

The answer is that we are Muvtach, we feel certain that the day will come when the energy, the potential of the Luchos Rishonos will return. When the Luchos that were broken will come back. That level of serving Hashem will return. Why do we have such a Havtacha?

Moshe Rabbeinu broke the Luchos. Hashem did not tell him to. (עֲשֵׂה מִשָּׁה מְדַעְתָּו). Moshe broke the Luchos. Could it be that we lost forever the Luchos because Moshe Rabbeinu chose to break them? The answer is (עֲבַד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ). We have a faith that Moshe Rabbeinu was totally given over to HKB"H. Whatever he did was done with the full and correct understanding that HKB"H even if he did not command that it be done, would want that it be done. Therefore, when we remember the Shabbos of Har Sinai and we have a Kasha as the Luchos were broken we mention as an article of faith and Emunah that what Moshe Rabbeinu did was good. What Moshe Rabbeinu did didn't prevent the eternity of Klal Yisrael from having Luchos Rishonos. Therefore, we have a right to celebrate the (שָׁנֵי לַחֹת) that came down.

Incidentally, I want to mention something else. As you know the Choilam is pronounced Oy by most Ashkenazim who Daven Nusach Sfard and is pronounced as Oh by most of the Ashkenazim who Daven Nusach Ashkenaz. Oy or Oh. So that we say when we are Davening, Moideh Ani or Modeh Ani depending on how you express it.

As you know, (יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ) is a poem. It rhymes. Every sentence fragment rhymes with the next one. (יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ. בְּעֶבֶד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ). (כְּלִיל תִּפְאַרְתָּ לֹא). This seems to indicate that the one who wrote this pronounced Oy as Nusach Sfard does and not Oh as Nusach Ashkenaz does. Because you see if you say it as Nusach Ashkenaz you say (יִשְׁמַח מֹשֶׁה בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ, בְּעֶבֶד נְאֻמָּן קְרֵאתָ לוֹ. כְּלִיל תִּפְאַרְתָּ לֹא).

(בְּרָאוֹשׁוֹ נִתְּתָ לּוֹ, בְּעֶמְדוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ עַל הַר סִינַי בְּמִתְנַת חֶלְקוֹ, כִּי עֶבֶד נֶאֱמָן) . How does Sinai rhyme with Oh. Now if you say (קְרָאוֹתָ לּוֹ. כְּלִיל תְּפִאֲרַת בְּרָאוֹשׁוֹ נִתְּתָ לּוֹ, בְּעֶמְדוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ עַל הַר סִינַי). Sinai and Oy are similar. It would seem to be an indication that at least the one who wrote this Nusach pronounced it Oy.

2 – Topic – A Thought for Weddings and Sheva Berachos

I would like to move on and share with you a totally separate Vort something that has absolutely no direct connection to this Parsha but this is the season B'ezras Hashem Yisbarach of weddings, of Sheva Berachos and I would like to share with you an absolutely wonderful thought I heard from a good friend who is Boruch Hashem celebrating the engagement of his daughter and shared with me the following thought. (Please forgive me as I don't remember in whose name it was said).

When a couple gets engaged and married we wish them that they should have a Keshet Shel Kayama. It is interesting that even in other languages we say they tie a knot. We use a Lashon of Keshet, of a knot. Why a language of a knot? There are two ways to connect different threads. One way is through Oreg, through weaving. Another way is through tying. Keshet. On Shabbos there is a Melacha of weaving, there is a Melacha of Koisher, of tying. Keshet Shel Kayama, tying things together permanently.

A person might think that when a couple gets married they become woven together into a single fabric. That is a beautiful expression. But it is really not that way. Even after a couple gets married they remain separate people. It is not healthy and not even possible for them to actually be one. They are not one. Each one is its own unique human being.

I remember a dear friend in Shul Alex Gross Alav Hashalom, made a 50th Anniversary Seuda. He said then that for 49 years I tried to change my wife, tonight I decide let her be the way she is and I will be the way I am and we will live happily ever after. There is a lesson in that. Couples try to change each other. It is a mistake. Each individual is an individual. It is okay. Different people can do things differently. Even people who are married can do things differently. That is perfectly all right. We wish them a Keshet Shel Kayama. A Keshet, each string remains independent. But they are

permanently connected. Not an Ariga Shel Kayama because we don't become one, it is a Keshet Shel Kayama.

Now with that understanding we understand why we have during Sheva Berachos one Bracha that ends Sameach Chosson V'Kallah and one that ends Sameach Chosson Im HaKallah. Why? Simple. Because Chosson V'Kallah is one thing but it is Chosson Im HaKallah. They stay separate people. They remain individuals and that is the way a person is Zoche to his Hatzlacha.

The Chasam Sofer says this in Parshas Chayei Sarah. When the Shidduch of Rivka was proposed, and Lavan was asked by Eliezer, Nu what do you say? Lavan said as it says in Beraishis 24:50 (לֹא נוֹכַל דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים, רַע אוֹ-טוֹב). I can't tell you it is no good, I can't tell you it is good. What? You can't tell me it is good and you can't tell me it is no good? Tell me, are you for it then say it is good if you are against it say it is no good. Speak your mind. No! Zagt the Chasam Sofer (לֹא נוֹכַל דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים, רַע אוֹ-טוֹב). Why? Because in Shidduchim people are looking for others that are similar to them. Oy, what a mistake. Now of course it is natural to look for people that are similar, but it doesn't add anything to the marriage. If you have two identical people and they get married, so what do you have more than you had before? No! (לֹא נוֹכַל דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים, רַע אוֹ-טוֹב). When you are looking for a Shidduch and you are looking for similarities it is neither good nor bad. No! (לֹא נוֹכַל דְּבַר אֱלֹהִים, רַע אוֹ-טוֹב). Because he gives an example.

If a couple gets married and one likes to spend money and one doesn't like to spend money. It is a very good Shidduch when they both don't do the same thing. You know why? Because if they both like to spend money there would be no money in the house. If they both like to save money and not spend there will be plenty of money in the bank but the house would be a tense place. So G-d in his infinite mercy gave every couple a situation where the two of them, the husband and wife have different opinions on how much money to spend. I will not say which one wants to spend and which one doesn't want to spend. It varies, it might vary or may not vary. But that is not the point. The point is that they are different for a constructive reason.

Therefore, we use the expression Keshet Shel Kayama. Sameach Chosson Im HaKallah. Because the joy of a Chosson is to realize and it shouldn't take 49 years, it should happen a little sooner than that. The realization

that people don't have to be identical to be happy. As a matter of fact they are better off not being exactly identical. B'ezras Hashem if each accepts the other, not only that if each one compensates for the faults of the other, in such a case there will Taka be a Keshet Shel Kayama.

So this is not only a wonderful thought and a nice Vort but a tremendous point of foundation for all relationships, for all married couples, the foundation is the idea that you are not looking for a clone of yourself, you are looking for someone who brings other benefits to the marriage, to the home, other talents to the home and with the two talents G-d willing it will work as long as you respect each other. With that absolutely wonderful thought I want to wish one and all an absolutely extraordinary Shabbos Kodesh!

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
<info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein
Home Weekly Parsha BEHALOTCHA 5782
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

One of the tasks of the Priests in the Tabernacle and in the Temple was the rekindling of the great Candelabra on a daily basis. We are taught in this week's Torah reading that the Priest had to keep the flame, with which he was lighting the wicks of the lamps, next to those wicks until the lamp wick caught hold and was able to burn by itself. Over the ages, this has become the metaphor for Jewish parenting - for Jewish education itself. The parent or the teacher is responsible for the child or the student, just as the Priest was responsible for the wicks until they were lit.

The task of the parent/teacher is that the child/student will sustain himself or herself spiritually, socially, financially, and psychologically, after having been given the necessary life tools. I was a child at a time when children were considered adults by the time they reached puberty and their teenage years. However, in our more modern era childhood extends far beyond even the teenage years. Many children and students do not achieve any sort of true independence until they are well into their twenties, and sometimes even later than that.

The question then arises: is the responsibility of the parent/teacher open ended, i.e., does it remain, no matter how long it takes for the child or the student to truly become independent? Is the parent/teacher still on the hook, so to speak, to provide aid, sustenance, financial support and means for survival? Since it is not clear to us when the flame of independence and self-sufficiency is truly able to burn on its own, there arises a situation where the obligations of the parent, the educational system and even of society generally appears to remain unlimited. This type of dependency eventually becomes self-destructive, and certainly cannot be what the Torah had in mind for the Jewish family and the Jewish society. The goal of parenting and of education is to produce people who are well-balanced, to provide their child/student – the next generation, with the necessary tools for self-reliance and independence of thought and action. There is a window of time for such an opportunity. In my opinion, that window closes quickly as time progresses. The options remaining in life for someone in their 30s or 40s are far fewer than the options that existed when they were in their 20's. Keeping the outside flame on the wick of the lamp of the candelabra for too long does not enhance the flame nor will it light the candelabra. Rather, it creates a situation of danger, containing too much fire, and is counterproductive in its purpose of lighting the lamps of the candelabra itself. So, too, a wise parent and/or a devoted teacher will eventually see the productivity of removing that outside fire and letting the wick burn on its own, to radiate its own life. Every human being is unique and holy. Every human being is entitled to its own lamp and light.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Sacks <info@rabbisacks.org>
subject: Covenant and Conversation
BEHA'ALOTCHA

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZTL
COVENANT & CONVERSATION

From Pain to Humility

David Brooks, in his bestselling book, The Road to Character,[1] draws a sharp distinction between what he calls the résumé virtues – the achievements and skills that

bring success – and the eulogy virtues, the ones that are spoken of at funerals: the virtues and strengths that make you the kind of person you are when you are not wearing masks or playing roles, the inner person that friends and family recognise as the real you.

Brooks relates this distinction to the one made by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in his famous essay, *The Lonely Man of Faith*.^[2] This essay speaks of “Adam I” – the human person as creator, builder, master of nature imposing his or her will on the world – and “Adam II”, the covenantal personality, living in obedience to a transcendent truth, guided by a sense of duty and right and the will to serve. Adam I seeks success. Adam II strives for charity, love, and redemption. Adam I lives by the logic of economics – the pursuit of self-interest and maximum utility. Adam II lives by the very different logic of morality, where giving matters more than receiving, and conquering desire is more important than satisfying it. In the moral universe, success, when it leads to pride, becomes failure. Failure, when it leads to humility, can be success.

In that essay, first published in 1965, Rabbi Soloveitchik wondered whether there was a place for Adam II in the America of his day, so intent was it on celebrating human powers and economic advance. Fifty years on, Brooks echoes that doubt. “We live,” he says, “in a society that encourages us to think about how to have a great career but leaves many of us inarticulate about how to cultivate the inner life.”^[3]

That is a central theme of *Beha'alotecha*. Until now we have seen the outer Moses, worker of miracles, mouthpiece of the Divine Word, unafraid to confront Pharaoh on the one hand, his own people on the other, the man who shattered the Tablets engraved by God Himself and who challenged Him to forgive His people, “and if not, blot me out of the book You have written” (Ex. 32:32). This is the public Moses, a figure of heroic strength. In Soloveitchik terminology, it is Moses I. In *Beha'alotecha* we see Moses II, the lonely man of faith. It is a very different picture. In the first scene we see him break down. The people are complaining again about the food. They have manna but no meat. They engage in false nostalgia:

“We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic!”

Num. 11:5

This is one act of ingratitude too many for Moses, who gives voice to deep despair:

“Why have You treated Your servant so badly? Why have I found so little favour in Your sight that You lay all the burden of this people upon me? Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who gave birth to them all, that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your lap, as a nursemaid carries a baby’?... I cannot bear all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how You treat me, kill me now, if I have found favour in Your sight, and let me not see my own misery!”

Num. 11:11-15

Then comes the great transformation. God tells him to take seventy elders who will bear the burden with him. God takes the spirit that is on Moses and extends it to the elders. Two of them, Eldad and Medad, among the six chosen from each tribe but left out of the final ballot, begin prophesying within the camp. They too have caught Moses’ spirit. Joshua fears that this may lead to a challenge to Moses leadership and urges Moses to stop them. Moses answers with surpassing generosity:

“Are you jealous on my behalf? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that He would rest His spirit upon them all!”

Num. 11:29

The mere fact that Moses now knew that he was not alone, seeing seventy elders share his spirit, cures him of his depression, and he now exudes a gentle, generous confidence that is moving and unexpected.

In the third act, we finally see where this drama has been tending. Now Moses’ own brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam, start disparaging him. The cause of their complaint (the “Ethiopian woman” he had taken as wife) is not clear and there are many interpretations. The point, though, is that for Moses, this is the “Et tu, Brute?” moment. He has been betrayed, or at least slandered, by those closest to him. Yet Moses is unaffected. It is here that the Torah makes its great statement:

“Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than any other man on Earth.”

Num. 12:3

This is a novum in history. The idea that a leader’s highest virtue is humility must have seemed absurd, almost self-contradictory, in the ancient world. Leaders were proud, magnificent, distinguished by their dress, appearance, and regal manner. They built temples in their

own honour. They had triumphant inscriptions engraved for posterity. Their role was not to serve but to be served. Everyone else was expected to be humble, not they. Humility and majesty could not coexist.

In Judaism, this entire configuration was overturned. Leaders were there to serve, not to be served. Moses' highest accolade was to be called Eved Hashem, God's servant. Only one other person, Joshua, his successor, earns this title in Tanach. The architectural symbolism of the two great empires of the ancient world, the Mesopotamian ziggurat (the "tower of Babel") and the pyramids of Egypt, visually represented a hierarchical society, broad at the base, narrow at the top. The Jewish symbol, the menorah, was the opposite, broad at the top, narrow at the base, as if to say that in Judaism the leader serves the people, not vice versa. Moses' first response to God's call at the Burning Bush was one of humility: "Who am I, to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Ex. 3:11). It was precisely this humility that qualified him to lead.

In Beha'alotecha we track the psychological process by which Moses acquires a yet deeper level of humility. Under the stress of Israel's continued recalcitrance, Moses turns inward. Listen again to what he says: "Why have I found so little favour in Your sight...? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? ... Where can I get meat for all these people? ... I cannot carry bear these people alone; the burden is too heavy for me."

The key words here are "I," "me" and "myself." Moses has lapsed into the first person singular. He sees the Israelites' behaviour as a challenge to himself, not God. God has to remind him, "Is the Lord's arm too short"? It isn't about Moses, it is about what and whom Moses represents.

Moses had been, for too long, alone. It was not that he needed the help of others to provide the people with food. That was something God would do without the need for any human intervention. It was that he needed the company of others to end his almost unbearable isolation. As I have noted elsewhere, the Torah only twice contains the phrase, lo tov, "not good," once at the start of the human story when God says: "It is not good for man to be alone," (Gen. 2:18), a second time when Yitro sees Moses leading alone and says: "What you are doing is not good." (Ex. 18:17) We cannot live alone. We cannot lead alone.

As soon as Moses sees the seventy elders share his spirit, his depression disappears. He can say to Joshua, "Are you jealous on my behalf?" And he is undisturbed by the complaint of his own brother and sister, praying to God on Miriam's behalf when she is punished with leprosy. He has recovered his humility.

We now understand what humility is. It is not self-abasement. A statement often attributed to C. S. Lewis puts it best: humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less.

True humility means silencing the "I." For genuinely humble people, it is God and other people and principle that matter, not me. As it was once said of a great religious leader, "He was a man who took God so seriously that he didn't have to take himself seriously at all."

Rabbi Yochanan said, "Wherever you find the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, there you find His humility." (Megillah 31a). Greatness is humility, for God and for those who seek to walk in His ways. It is also the greatest single source of strength, for if we do not think about the "I," we cannot be injured by those who criticise or demean us. They are shooting at a target that no longer exists.

What Beha'alotecha is telling us through these three scenes in Moses' life is that we sometimes achieve humility only after a great psychological crisis. It is only after Moses had suffered a breakdown and prayed to die that we hear the words, "The man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone on earth." Suffering breaks through the carapace of the self, making us realise that what matters is not self-regard but rather the part we play in a scheme altogether larger than we are. Lehavdil, Brooks reminds us that Abraham Lincoln, who suffered from depression, emerged from the crisis of civil war with the sense that "Providence had taken control of his life, that he was a small instrument in a transcendent task." [4]

The right response to existential pain, Brooks says, is not pleasure but holiness, by which he means, "seeing the pain as part of a moral narrative and trying to redeem something bad by turning it into something sacred, some act of sacrificial service that will put oneself in fraternity with the wider community and with eternal moral demands." This, for me, was epitomised by the parents of the three Israeli teenagers killed in the summer of 2014,

who responded to their loss by creating a series of awards for those who have done most to enhance the unity of the Jewish people – turning their pain outward, and using it to help heal other wounds within the nation.

Crisis, failure, loss, or pain can move us from Adam I to Adam II, from self- to other-directedness, from mastery to service, and from the vulnerability of the “I” to the humility that “reminds you that you are not the centre of the universe,” but rather that “you serve a larger order.”[5]

Those who have humility are open to things greater than themselves while those who lack it are not. That is why those who lack it make you feel small while those who have it make you feel enlarged. Their humility inspires greatness in others.

[1] David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, Random House, 2015.

[2] Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Doubleday, 1992.

[3] David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, xiii.

[4] *Ibid.*, 93.

[5] Brooks, *ibid.*, p. 261.

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Behaaloscha

It's the Real Thing

In this week's portion, there is a brief conversation that may get lost in the myriad activity of some of its more fascinating stories and commands. Moshe beseeches his father-in-law, Yisro, to continue travelling with the Jewish nation. “We are travelling to the place of which Hashem has said, ‘I shall give to you.’ Go with us, and we shall treat you well” (Numbers 10:29).

Yisro replies by saying that he would like to return to his land and family. Moshe implores Yisro by telling him that he must accompany the Jews. After all, he knows the encampments and would be eyes for the Jewish people. Whether Yisro was influenced by his son-in-law's arguments is debated by the commentaries. The Torah does not refer to the outcome. What interests me, however, is that Moshe never tells Yisro where the Jews are going. He just tells him that “we are travelling to the place of which Hashem has said, ‘I shall give to you.’”

It is reminiscent of Hashem commanding Avraham to travel to Canaan with the petition “go from your land and your birthplace to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). But Moshe is not the Almighty, and the entire nation knew of the land where they would be going. After all, the land of Canaan was the focal point of the Exodus. Why, then, does Moshe describe it to Yisro in a mysterious manner, not by defining its location, longitude or latitude, but rather identifying it as “the land that Hashem has promised to give us”? Would it not have been easier for Moshe to tell Yisro, “We are travelling to the Land of Canaan and we want you to accompany us”? New York Times columnist Ralph de Toledano had a different view of the world than that of his editors. Despite protestations of the editorial board of the Times would always capitalize the words Heaven and Hell in any context.

His editors called him to task citing that heaven is only capitalized when it is an alternative for the Deity as in “Heaven help us.” Moreover they insisted hell never got a capital H. De Toledano, however, insisted that any reference of those two places be spelled with a capital first letter.

“You see,” the conservative columnist explained, “Heaven and Hell must always be capitalized. I want my readers to understand that Heaven and Hell are real places just like Scarsdale!”

When describing the Land of Israel, Moshe does not take a topographical approach. He delves deeper. Moshe Rabbeinu does not refer to the land of Israel merely as the land of Canaan. In telling his father-in-law where the Jews would be going, he does not offer the longitude and latitude. He does not even describe Eretz Yisrael as the land flowing with milk and honey. Moshe's only descriptive was, “the land that “Hashem told us, this I shall give to you.”

That statement describes Eretz Yisrael in stronger terms than agricultural potential, natural beauty, or strategic location.

It tells us that Eretz Israel is the place that Hashem promised. Any other quality is temporal. Bounty withers, beauty erodes, and natural resources dry-up. But the promise of Hashem remains eternal. It makes us understand that like both extremes of the world-to come, the Land of Israel is real.

Good Shabbos

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff
<ymkaganoff@gmail.com>

to: kaganoff-a@googlegroups.com

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Confused genealogist asks: Which?

Which Keil erech apayim should I say?

Question #2: Caring husband/son asks: Who?

My wife is due to give birth shortly, and I am saying kaddish for my father. On the days that the Torah is read, should I lead the davening (“daven before the amud”), open the aron hakodesh, or do both?

Question #3: Concerned davener asks: When?

When do I recite Berich She’mei?

Background

Prior to taking the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh, various prayers are recited, all of which have been part of our liturgy for many hundreds of years. This article will discuss the background and many of the halachos of these prayers.

Introduction

Reading the Torah, which is a mitzvah midrabbanan, is actually the earliest takanas chachamim that was ever made. It was instituted by Moshe Rabbeinu in his capacity as a community leader, which placed on him the responsibility of creating takanos when necessary. As a matter of fact, one of Moshe Rabbeinu’s names is Avigdor, which refers to his role as the one who created fences to protect the Jewish people (see Midrash Rabbah, Vayikra 1:3). In this instance, after he saw what happened at Refidim (see Shemos 17:1), he realized that three days should not go by without an organized studying of the Torah. Therefore, he instituted that the Torah be read every Monday, Thursday and Shabbos (Bava Kamma 82a; Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah 12:1).

Over a thousand years later, Ezra expanded this takkanah, including a reading on Shabbos Mincha, to provide those who did not study Torah regularly an extra boost of Torah learning. Ezra also instituted that, when the Torah is read, three people are called up, each aliyah contains at least three pesukim, and the entire reading should add at least one additional pasuk, for a minimum of ten pesukim.

(There is one exception to this last rule -- on Purim, Ashkenazim read the story of Vayavo Amaleik that is

exactly nine pesukim. This is because the topics both before and after this section have nothing to do with the Amaleik incident, and it is therefore better to keep the reading focused rather than add an extra pasuk.

Ashkenazim read just the nine pesukim, whereas Sefardim repeat one of the pesukim, in order to extend the reading to ten pesukim.)

Keil erech apayim

On weekdays on which tachanun is recited, prior to removing the sefer Torah we say a short prayer that begins with the words, Keil erech apayim, “Hashem, You who are slow to anger and are full of kindness and truth, do not chastise us in Your anger! Hashem, have mercy on Your people (Israel), and save us (hoshi’ einu) from all evil! We have sinned to You, our Master; forgive us, in keeping with Your tremendous compassion, O, Hashem.” The Keil erech apayim prayer should be said standing, because it includes a brief viduy, confession, and halacha requires that viduy be recited standing (Magen Avraham, introduction to Orach Chayim 134).

Am I a German or a Pole?

In virtually every siddur I have seen, two slightly variant texts are cited, the one I quoted above, which is usually labeled the “German custom” or “German version,” and a slightly variant version described as the “Polish version.” Some siddurim provide greater detail, presenting the “first” version as the “custom of western Germany, Bohemia and parts of ‘lesser’ Poland,” and the “second” version, as the “custom of ‘greater’ Poland.” In one siddur, I saw the following, even more detailed explanation, describing the “first” version as the custom of the areas in and near “western Germany, Prague, Lublin and Cracow,” and the second text for the areas around “Posen and Warsaw.”

But, if your family came from somewhere other than Germany, the Czech Republic (where Bohemia and Prague are located) or Poland, which one do you recite? Many people are bothered by this question, myself included, since my father was born in Ukraine, as were all my grandparents and greatgrandparents on his side of the family, and my mother’s side of the family is from Lithuania.

Eidot hamizrah

A more intriguing question is, that both versions of this prayer are in Eidot Hamizrah siddurim, and their custom is to recite both, “German” version first. I found this or a

similar custom mentioned in several rishonim from very different times and places – in the Machzor Vitri, of 11th century France; the Kol Bo, of 13th century Provence, and the Avudraham, of 14th century Spain. Some rishonim record a custom of reciting both versions, but having the chazzan recite the first and the community respond with the second (Machzor Vitri). According to either of these approaches, the question is why recite both prayers, since they are almost identical.

The answer given by the Machzor Vitri is that the first version uses the word hoshi'einu, whereas the second uses the word hatzileinu. Both of these words translate into English as "Save us." However, their meaning is not the same; hoshi'einu implies a permanent salvation, whereas hatzileinu is used for a solution to a short-term problem. The Machzor Vitri, therefore, explains that the first prayer is that Hashem end our galus. After requesting this, we then ask that, in the interim, He save us from our temporary tzoros, while we are still in galus.

Ancient prayer

The facts that these prayers are in both Ashkenazic and Eidot Hamizrah siddurim, and that rishonim of very distant places and eras are familiar with two different versions, indicate that these prayers date back earlier, presumably at least to the era of the ge'onim. Clearly, although our siddur refers to a "German" custom and a "Polish" one, both versions were known before a Jewish community existed in Poland – earlier than when the words "Polish" custom could mean anything associated with Jews!

Atah hor'eisa

In some communities, reading of the Torah was introduced by reciting various pesukim of Tanach, the first of which is Atah hor'eisa loda'as ki Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim, ein od milevado, "You are the ones who have been shown to know that Hashem is The G-d, and there is nothing else besides Him" (Devarim 4:35). The practice among Ashkenazim is to recite the pesukim beginning with Atah hor'eisa as an introduction to kerias haTorah only on Simchas Torah. However, in Eidot Hamizrah practice, Atah hor'eisa is recited every Shabbos, just before the aron is opened, and a shortened version is recited any time that no tachanun is recited. (Essentially, these pesukim are said instead of Keil erech apayim, which is recited only on days that tachanun is said.)

According to the Ben Ish Chai, as many pesukim should be recited as people who will be called to the Torah that day: On Shabbos, the pasuk Atah hor'eisa is the first of eight pesukim; on Yom Tov, the first two pesukim, including the pasuk of Atah hor'eisa, are omitted (Ben Ish Chai year II, parshas Tolados, #15); on weekdays when no tachanun is recited, only three pesukim are recited, beginning with the pasuk, yehi Hashem Elokeinu imanu ka'asher hayah im avoseinu, al ya'az'veinu ve'al yi'tesheinu (Melachim I 8:57). The Ben Ish Chai emphasizes that, apparently because of a kabbalistic reason, it is incorrect to recite more pesukim than the number of people who will be called to the Torah that day. Most, but not all, Eidot Hamizrah communities follow this approach today.

Opening the aron

Having completed the recital of either Keil erech apayim, Atah hor'eisa, neither or both, the aron hakodesh is opened. The poskim rule that the aron hakodesh should not be opened by the chazzan, but by a different person, who also removes the sefer Torah. (In some minhagim this is divided between two honorees, one who opens the aron hakodesh and one who takes out the sefer Torah.) The chazzan himself should not remove the sefer Torah from the aron hakodesh because it is a kavod for the sefer Torah that someone else remove it from the aron and hand it to the chazzan. The honor is that the extra people involved create more pomp and ceremony with which to honor the reading of the Torah (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chayim 282:1, based on Mishnah, Yoma 68b).

The opener

A minhag has developed recently that the husband of a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy should open the aron hakodesh to take out the sefer Torah and close it after kerias haTorah. The idea that opening the aron is a segulah for a smooth and easy opening of the womb is recorded in kabbalistic authorities of the Eidot Hamizrah (Chida in Moreh Be'Etzba 3:90; Rav Chayim Falagi in Sefer Chayim 1:5).

To the best of my knowledge, this custom was unheard of among Ashkenazim until the last forty or so years. So, as I see it, this custom has value in that it ameliorates a husband's feelings since he is now doing something to assist his poor wife when she goes through highly uncomfortable contractions. And, it also makes his wife

feel that he did something for her, so there is a sholom bayis benefit.

Caring husband

At this point, let us address the second of our opening questions:

“My wife is due to give birth shortly, and I am saying kaddish for my father. On the days that the Torah is read, should I lead the davening (“daven before the amud”), open the aron hakodesh, or do both?”

Let me explain the question being asked. Well-established practice is that an aveil davens before the amud on days other than Shabbos or Yom Tov, as a merit for his late parent. (There are many variant practices concerning which days are considered a “Yom Tov” for this purpose; discussion of this issue will be left for another time.) Based on the above information, our very caring husband/son is asking: since he should not take both honors of leading the services and of opening the aron hakodesh, which honor should he take? Or perhaps he should do both?

In my opinion, he should lead the services, which is a custom going back hundreds of years, whereas the custom of taking the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh is mentioned much more recently, and was not even practiced by Ashkenazim until a few years ago. And, as we mentioned in the name of the Aruch Hashulchan, one person should not both lead the services and take the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh.

Berich She’mei

At this point, we can discuss the third of our opening questions: “When do I recite Berich She’mei?”

The Aramaic words of Berich She’mei are a prayer that is recorded in the Zohar (parshas Vayakheil). When we trace back the customs on which days this prayer is recited, we find many different practices:

1. Recite it only before Shabbos Mincha reading.
2. Recite it on Shabbos at both morning and Mincha readings.
3. Recite it not only on Shabbos, but also on Yom Tov.
4. Recite it on Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh, but not on weekdays or fast days (other than Yom Kippur).
5. Recite it whenever the Torah is read.
6. A completely opposite custom -- never recite it at all.

Allow me to explain the origins of these various practices.

1. Only Shabbos Mincha

Although I saw different sources mention this practice, I did not see any explanation.

I can humbly suggest two possible reasons for this custom. One is that, as we explained above, the kerias hatorah of Shabbos Mincha was not part of the original takkanah of Moshe, but was established subsequently to provide those who did not learn Torah during the week the opportunity to study some extra Torah while they were in shul for davening. Thus, this kerias hatorah represents the entire Jewish people studying Torah together, creating a level of kedusha that justifies recital of the beautiful prayer of Berich She’mei.

Another possible explanation: Shabbos has three levels of sanctity, Friday evening, Shabbos morning and Shabbos afternoon. There are several ramifications of these different levels, including that the central part of the three shemoneh esrei tefilos of Shabbos -- Maariv, Shacharis and Mincha -- are three completely different prayers (as opposed to all other days when the main parts of these three tefilos are identical). These three tefilos represent three historical Shabbosos and their spiritual ramifications. Maariv, or, more accurately, the Friday evening part of Shabbos, represents the Shabbos of creation, Shabbos morning represents the Shabbos of the giving of the Torah, and Shabbos afternoon represents the future Shabbos of the post-redemption world. These three aspects are also manifest in the three meals of Shabbos, and, for this reason, seudah shelishis is traditionally approached as having the pinnacle of spirituality. This would explain that Shabbos Mincha is the time that the prayer, Berich She’mei, addresses.

2. Only Shabbos, but both morning and Mincha

This approach is quoted in the name of the Arizal – presumably, it has to do with a certain level of kedusha that exists only on Shabbos. (See also Magen Avraham, introduction to 282).

3. Only Shabbos and Yom Tov and

4. Only Shabbos, Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh

These two customs are both based on the concept that Berich She’mei should not be recited on a weekday, but is meant for a day when there is special sanctity. This is based on the words in Berich She’mei, Berich kistrach, “May Your crown be blessed.” In kabbalistic concepts, we praise Hashem in this special way only on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim, and that is why the kedusha in

nusach Sefard for Musaf begins with the words *keser yitnu*, which refers to Hashem's crown.

I saw this practice quoted in the name of the Arizal and the Chida, and most Eidot Hamizrah siddurim mention Berich She'mei prior to the Shabbos and Yom Tov readings, but not prior to weekday reading.

Many authorities note that those who follow this practice regarding Berich She'mei should also recite it on Rosh Chodesh, since they recite the words *keser yitnu* also as part of the kedusha of Rosh Chodesh (Ben Ish Chai year II, parshas Tolados, #15).

5. Always

This is the common practice among Ashkenazim and in nusach Sefard (Elyah Rabbah, 141; Be'er Heiteiv, Pri Megadim, Machatzis Hashekel, Mishnah Berurah; all at beginning of 282).

The Seder Hayom, an early Sefardic kabbalist, mentions the laws of reciting Berich She'mei when he discusses the laws of reading the Torah on weekdays. From this, the Elyah Rabbah (134:4) suggests that the Seder Hayom holds that Berich She'mei is recited whenever the sefer Torah is taken out of the aron hakodesh. In other words, he disagrees with the approach followed by the other mekubalim mentioned, the Arizal and the Chida.

6. Not at all

In some communities in Germany, the practice was not to recite Berich She'mei. There appears to be a historical reason why not, based on the words of the prayer Berich She'mei itself, which states, *lo al bar elohin samichna*, "We do not rely on the 'sons of G-d.'" Apparently, some of Shabsai Tzvi's proponents claimed that the term "sons of G-d" alluded to Shabsai Tzvi, and, for this reason, it was decided to omit the entire prayer. (Those who recite Berich She'mei assume that this term *bar elohin* refers to angels.) Several sources quote this position in the name of the Noda BeYehudah, although I have been unable to find any place where he wrote this. It is certain that the Noda BeYehudah was strongly opposed to the introduction of kabbalistic ideas into our tefilos; for example, he attacks very stridently the custom, which he refers to as "recently introduced and very wrong," of reciting *lesheim yichud* prior to fulfilling mitzvos (Shu't Noda BeYehudah Orach Chayim 2:107; Yoreh Deah #93).

When to say it?

When is the best time to recite Berich She'mei? In a teshuvah on this subject, Rav Moshe Feinstein notes that

the words of the Zohar describing this beautiful prayer do not mention specifically whether it should be said before the Torah is removed from the aron hakodesh or afterward. However, the Shaar Efrayim, authored by Rav Efrayim Zalman Margoliyos, one of the great early nineteenth-century poskim, rules that the optimal time to recite Berich She'mei is after the sefer Torah has been removed from the aron hakodesh, and this is the conclusion that Rav Moshe reaches. In other words, it is preferred that the person being honored with taking the sefer Torah out of the aron hakodesh should do so as soon as practical, and then hold the sefer Torah while Berich She'mei is recited. Someone who was unable to recite Berich She'mei then can still say it until the sefer Torah is opened to lein (Seder Hayom, quoted by Elyah Rabbah 134:4).

This article will be continued next week.

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Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz

Beha'alotcha 5782 - What was the Ark of the Covenant Doing in a War Zone?

In this week's parasha, Beha'alotcha, we read a very mysterious verse that describes the journey of the Ark of the Covenant – the ark which contained the two tablets given on Mount Sinai – before the nation. From the Torah, it seems that the journey involved a war with an enemy, and the Ark was taken to war at the head of the fighting army. The Torah quotes what Moses would say when the Ark would go out to war ahead of the army: *So it was, whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, Arise, O Lord, may Your enemies be scattered and may those who hate You flee from You. (Numbers 10, 35)*

The ark setting out to war before the army is also described in the book of Samuel where we read about a war between the tribes of Israel and the Philistines, the inhabitants of the land before the children of Israel entered.

The book of Samuel tells us about this war in a place called Afek (near which there is now a city called Rosh Ha'ayin). In the first battle of the war, the Philistines were winning and about four-thousand soldiers from among

the children of Israel fell in battle. After the battle, the elders of the Jewish nation consulted with one another and decided to bring the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield, saying: “Let us take to us from Shiloh the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and He will come in our midst, and save us from the hand of our enemies” (Samuel 1 4, 3).

When the Ark was brought into the camp, “all Israel shouted a great shout” (Ibid Ibid, 5). The nation was certain that the presence of the Ark would bring them victory. The Philistines also saw the presence of the Ark as a determining factor against them and called out anxiously, “Woe is unto us! Who will save us from the hand of this mighty God?!” (Ibid Ibid, 8). But despite this, in the second round of battles, the Philistines won again and the losses to Israel were great – thirty thousand soldiers fell in battle! And if that wasn’t enough, the Ark of the Covenant itself was taken into captivity by the Philistines!

This turn of events doesn’t easily mesh with the verses we started with. From this week’s parasha, it seemed that the presence of the Ark would bring salvation to the nation and victory over its enemies. But the book of Samuel tells us about a crushing defeat that was not prevented by the presence of the Ark.

Some of the biblical commentators who dealt with this question focused on an important principle that arises from looking at these two stories. The presence of the Ark in the war is not a magical means with power to bring about victory. The role of the Ark in war is that the army carrying it will be influenced by it, that the army camp will be a holy place with the values and commandments of the Torah. When the nation is not influenced by the Ark, it becomes nothing more than pieces of wood coated in gold and the tablets become nothing more than pieces of stone etched with letters. The power of the Ark of the Covenant lies in people drawing from it the values of Torah, morality, and derech erez.

The Ark of the Covenant taken to war as described in the book of Samuel had no influence on the nation. They continued to worship idols, to practice incest and other social immoralities. They wanted to use the Ark as a magical means, and that is not its purpose. The purpose of the Ark is to cause a person to transcend and repair his ways, and only then does the Ark bring about victory in war.

We no longer have the Ark of the Covenant, but this discussion still applies to our lives. The mezuzah is an example – that same piece of parchment with texts from the Torah that is covered and attached to our doorposts. Many see the mezuzah as a means of protecting the home. There are sources for this in the literature of Chazal. But we must remember that that is not its purpose. The Rambam, Maimonides, writes about this in his typical decisiveness:

They, however, who write names of angels, holy names, a Biblical text...within the Mezuzah, are among those who have no portion in the world to come. For these fools not only fail to fulfill the commandment but they treat an important precept that expresses the Unity of God, the love of Him, and His worship, as if it were an amulet to promote their own personal interests... (Mishneh Torah, Mezuzah 5)

We put a mezuzah at the entrance to our home in order to remember the values written in it: the Unity of God, the love of Him, and keeping His commandments. If we remember that, the mezuzah indeed protects us from harm. But if we see the mezuzah as some sort of magical amulet, it loses its power. The Torah and commandments are not magical means of attaining victory and success. They are meant to influence us and elevate us from the quagmire of materialism and egocentrism to lofty peaks of spirituality and morality.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison

<chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

Rav Kook Torah

Shlach: Holiness of Earth and Air

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

It is probably the most commonly asked question about the account of the Twelve Spies: how could the leaders of the Israelite tribes, who knew God had promised to bring the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, fail so spectacularly in their mission? Why did they return with an evil report of the Land and frighten the people? Furthermore, do the sections that follow - the Temple wine libations and the mitzvah of Tzitzit - have any connection to the story of the Spies?

The Land’s Physical and Spiritual Powers

The psalmist writes that, since the Israelites rejected the Land of Israel, they were punished with exile and dispersion to other lands:

“They rejected the desirable land, and put no faith in His promise. They grumbled in their tents and disobeyed God. So He raised His hand in oath to make them fall in the wilderness, to disperse their descendants among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands.” (Psalms 106:24-27)

Why is the Land of Israel so special? Does it not say that “the whole earth is filled with His glory” (Isaiah 6:3)?

According to Rabbi Yochanan, the Flood in the time of Noah did not reach the Land of Israel (Zevachim 113a). The Land of Israel was not damaged by the waters of the Flood, but retained its pristine powers from the time of the world’s creation. Thus the spies encountered the ancient Nephilim, still roaming the Land.

Eretz Yisrael also retained its original spiritual qualities. It is thus the land of prophecy (Kuzari 2:14). The Talmud teaches that Ezekiel could only prophesy in Babylonia because he had already begun that prophecy in the Land of Israel (Moed Katan 25a).

God’s glory fills the entire universe, but He restricted His Shechinah to Jerusalem and the Holy of Holies. God similarly chose one people out of all the nations. There is a parallel between the special sanctity of the Land of Israel and that of the Jewish people. Just as the Jewish people are the ‘heart’ of all peoples,¹ so, too, the Land of Israel is the ‘soul’ of all lands.

Holiness of Earth and Air

The Sages ruled that all lands outside the Land of Israel are ritually impure. At first they ruled that the earth from other lands is impure. Then they ruled that even the air is impure (Shabbat 15).

The Land of Israel, by contrast, is blessed with two qualities of holiness: holiness of its earth, and holiness of its air. What does this mean?

The Land’s “holiness of earth” is revealed in the special mitzvot that can only be performed in the Land of Israel: tithes of agricultural produce, first-fruits, the Sabbatical year, and so on. This is a holiness that manifests itself with practical acts in the physical realm.

“Holiness of air,” on the other hand, refers to the Land’s special capacity for Divine inspiration, prophecy, and the Shechinah’s presence in the Temple.

Moses sought to gain both aspects of holiness. He was the greatest of all prophets, but he still pleaded with God to be allowed to enter the Land and experience the holiness of its mitzvot. “Let me cross over and see the good land” (Deut. 3:25). The Spies, on the other hand, thought that “holiness of air” is sufficient for the nation; this holiness is more spiritual and can accompany the Jewish people in any location. They sinned by rejecting the importance of the Land’s practical mitzvot - its “earth-holiness.”

After the sin of the Spies, God accepted Moses’ prayers. “I have forgiven as you asked. However,” God added, “as I live, God’s glory will fill all the world” (Num. 14:20-21). Since you have rejected the concentration of holiness in the Land of Israel and the Jewish people, God’s glory will spread throughout the world. The Jewish people will be scattered to other lands; and due to their dispersion, “many peoples will attach themselves to God” (Zech. 2:15). As the Sages taught, the function of exile is to enable converts to join the Jewish people (Pesachim 87b). However, as Zechariah’s prophecy continues, וְבָחַר עוֹד בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם - “He will choose Jerusalem once more” (2:16). The Jewish people and those who join them will witness God’s selection of Jerusalem. They will reconnect with the Land of Israel and its special holiness. The sin of the Spies will be forgiven, and the exile of Israel will come to an end.

Combining Both Forms of Holiness

We can identify these two aspects of holiness in the mitzvot mentioned in the sections that follow. The Temple offerings are called “My bread” (Num. 28:2). They are the staple, the tangible part of the offerings, corresponding to the “earth-holiness” of the Land. But that is not enough. The Torah commands that wine libations (nesachim) must accompany the offerings, adding an additional level of holiness, one of joy and higher spirit. The libations correspond to the Land’s “air-holiness.” Our Temple offerings must include both aspects of holiness.

The mitzvah of Tzitzit also has two parts. There are white strings, corresponding to the “earth-holiness” of the Land. And there is a string of Tekhelet-blue, corresponding to the holiness of the air and the sky. We are commanded to combine both forms of holiness in our lives, the practical and the atmospheric: “They shall include a twist of sky-blue wool in the corner tassels” (Num. 15:38).

(Adapted from Shemu'ot HaRe'iyah II, pp. 199-202).

1 Kuzari 2:36. "The metaphor of the heart and body stresses the centrality of the Jewish people in the cosmic plan. However, it equally emphasizes an organic, holistic view of the world... the heart itself would be rendered meaningless without its constant interaction with the other organs, despite its functional importance" (Prof. Shalom Rosenberg, 'In the Footsteps of the Kuzari')
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Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Ohr Somayach Insights into Halacha

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Weighty Waiting Options

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

We often find that the Torah's description of even simple actions of our great forefathers impart to us a treasure trove of hanhaga, hashkafa, and even halacha. Sometimes though, it is the exact opposite: a halacha is gleaned from the acts of those far from being paragons of virtue or exemplars of excellence. Indeed, sometimes we learn fascinating halachic insights from people whom we would not consider role models by any stretch of the imagination.

Double Agents

Every Tisha B'Av, and every time we read Parashas Shlach, we are reminded of the grave sin of the Meraglim, the spies whose evil report about Eretz Yisrael still echoes, with repercussions felt until today.[1] Of the twelve spies sent, only two remained loyal to Hashem: Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh.[2] The other ten chose to slander Eretz Yisrael instead and consequently suffered immediate and terrible deaths. Due to their vile report, the Jewish People were forced to remain in the desert an additional forty years, and eventually die out before their children ultimately were allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael.

Hashem called this rogues' gallery of spies an "eidah,"[3] literally, "a congregation." The Gemara[4] famously derives from this incident that the minimum requirement for a minyan is a quorum of ten men, since there were ten turncoat "double-agents" who were contemptuously called "a congregation." If ten men can get together to conspire and hatch malevolent schemes, then ten men can assemble to form a congregation for devarim shebekedusha, sanctified matters. This exegesis is duly codified in halacha,[5] and all because of the dastardly deeds of ten misguided men.[6]

Covetous Carnivores

Another prime example of halacha being set by the actions of those less than virtuous,[7] [8] is the tragic chapter of the rabble-rousers who lusted after meat, and disparaged Hashem's gift of the Heavenly bread called manna (mun), chronicled at the end of Parashas Beha'aloscha.[9] The pasuk states that "the meat was still between their teeth" when these sinners met their untimely and dreadful demise.[10] The Gemara extrapolates that since the Torah stressed that there was meat between their teeth, it means to show us that meat between the teeth is still considered tangible meat and requires one to wait before having a dairy meal afterward.[11]

There are actually several different ways to understand the Gemara's intent, chief among them Rashi's and the Rambam's differing opinions:[12]

The Rambam writes that meat tends to get stuck between the teeth and is still considered meat for quite some time afterward.[13]

Rashi however, doesn't seem to be perturbed about actual meat residue stuck in the teeth, but simply explains that since meat is fatty by nature, its taste lingers for a long time after eating.[14]

In any case, regarding the general separation necessary between meat and milk, the Gemara itself does not inform us what the mandated waiting period is. Rather, it gives us several guideposts that the Rishonim use to set the halacha. The Gemara informs us that Mar Ukva's father would not eat dairy items on the same day that he had partaken of meat, but Mar Ukva himself (calling himself "vinegar the son of wine") would only wait "m'seudasa l'seudasa achrina - from one meal until a different meal." [15] [16] The various variant minhagim that Klal Yisrael keep related to waiting after eating meat are actually based on how the Rishonim understood this cryptic comment.

Six Hours

This, the most common custom, was first codified by the Rambam. He writes that meat stuck in the teeth remains "meat" for up to six hours, and mandates waiting that amount. This is the halacha as codified by the Tur and Shulchan Aruch,[17] as well as the vast majority of authorities. The Rashal, Chochmas Adam, and Aruch Hashulchan[18] all write very strongly that one should wait six hours. The mandated six hours seemingly comes

from the many places in Rabbinic literature where it mentions that the “meals of a Torah scholar” are six hours apart.[19] Therefore, this fits well with Mar Ukva’s statement that he would wait from one meal until the next after eating meat, meaning six hours.

Five Hours and Change

The idea of waiting five hours and a bit, or five and a half hours, is actually based on the choice of words of several Rishonim, including the Rambam and Meiri, when they rule to wait six hours. They write that one should keep “k’mosheish sha’os,” approximately six hours.[20] Several contemporary authorities maintain that “six hours” does not have to be an exact six hours - that waiting five and a half or the majority of the sixth hour (or according to some even five hours and one minute) is sufficient, as it is almost six hours.[21] However, it should be noted that not everyone agrees to this, and many maintain that the six hours must be exact.[22]

Four Hours

Waiting four hours is first opined by the Pri Chodosh, who comments that the six hours mandated are not referring to regular “sixty-minute” hours, but rather halachic hours, known colloquially as “sha’os zmanios.” This complicated halachic calculation is arrived at by dividing the amount of time between sunrise and sunset into twelve equal parts. Each of these new “hours” are halachic hours and are used to calculate the various zmanim throughout the day. The Pri Chodosh asserts that in the height of winter when days are extremely short, it is possible that six halachic hours can turn into a mere four actual hours![23] Although several authorities rule this way, and others say one may rely on this exclusively in times of great need,[24] nevertheless, his opinion here is rejected out of hand by the vast majority of authorities, who maintain that the halacha follows six true hours.[25] The Yad Efraim points out that if one follows “sha’os zmanios” in the winter, then he must also follow it during the summer, possibly needing to wait up to eight hours!

One Hour

Waiting only one hour between meat and dairy, mainly germane among Jews in and/or from Amsterdam, is codified by the Rema, citing common custom, based on several great Ashkenazic Rishonim, including the Maharil and Maharai (author of the Terumas Hadeshen).[26] The Rema himself, though, concludes that it is nevertheless proper to wait six hours.

Three Hours

Interestingly, and shocking to some, the common German custom of waiting three hours does not seem to have an explicit halachic source.[27] In fact, one who delves into the sefarim of great Rabbanim who served throughout Germany, from Rav Yonason Eibeshutz to Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, will find that they all recommended keeping the full six hours! Yet, there are several theories explaining how such a widespread custom came about:[28]

One, by the Mizmor L’Dovid, is that it is possibly based on the Pri Chodosh’s opinion of sha’os zmanios. He posits that if in the middle of winter, three hours is deemed sufficient waiting time, it stands to reason that it should suffice year-round as well.

Another hypothesis, by Rav Binyomin Hamburger, author of Shorshei Minhag Ashkenaz and head of Machon Moreshe Ashkenaz, is that their original custom was to wait only one hour like the basic halacha cited by the Rema, following the majority of Ashkenazic Rishonim. Yet, when the six hours mandated by the Rambam and other Rishonim became more widespread, those in Ashkenaz decided to meet the rest of the world halfway, as a sort of compromise. According to this explanation, it turns out that waiting three hours is intrinsically a chumrah on waiting one hour.

An additional possible theory is that since many in Germany were accustomed to eating five light meals throughout the day, as opposed to the current common three large ones, their interpretation of “m’sudasa l’sudasa achrina” would be waiting the three hours they were accustomed to between their meals.[29]

Bentch and Go

Another opinion, and one not accepted lemaaseh, is that of Tosafos,[30] who posits that “from one meal to another” means exactly that. As soon as one finishes his meat meal, clears off the table and recites Birkas Hamazon, he may start a new dairy meal. Some add that this includes washing out the mouth and cleansing the palate (kinuach and hadacha). This is actually even more stringent than Rabbeinu Tam’s opinion, that all one needs is kinuach and hadacha, and then one may eat dairy - even while part of the same meal![31] It is important to realize that his opinion here is categorically rejected lemaaseh by almost all later authorities.

A Day Away

The most stringent opinion is not to eat meat and milk on the same day (some call this a full twenty-four hours, but it seems a misnomer according to most authorities' understanding). First mentioned by Mar Ukva as his father's personal hanhaga, several great Rabbanim through the ages, including the Arizal, have been known to keep this. Interestingly, this custom is cited by Rav Chaim Palaji[32] as the proper one, and in his opinion, only those who are not able to stick to it can rely upon a "mere" six hours.

Just Sleep on It

Another remarkable, albeit not-widely accepted custom is that of sleeping after eating a meat meal. The proponents of this, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Rav Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman, Rosh Yeshivas Ner Yisrael, maintain that sleeping causes the food to digest quicker, thereby lessening the required waiting period.[33] It is told that the Chasam Sofer wanted to start relying on this leniency, but upon awakening, every time he tried drinking his coffee (presumably with milk) it would spill. He concluded that this hetter must not have been accepted in Heaven.[34] The majority of contemporary authorities as well do not rely on sleeping as a way of lessening the waiting time.[35] The Steipler Gaon is quoted as remarking that this leniency was the exclusive domain of Rav Elyashiv, as most people sleep six hours a night and he only slept three hours nightly.

Although there are many different and widespread opinions about the proper amount of time one is required to wait after eating meat, and everyone should follow his or her proper family minhag as per the dictum "minhag avoseinu Torah hi,"[36] nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the core requirement of waiting is based on the actions of those with less than perfect intentions. As it states in Pirkei Avos, "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone." [37]

Postscript: Children's Waiting: Although waiting six hours is indeed the most common minhag, nonetheless, most contemporary Poskim are of the opinion that this is not obligatory for children, following the lead of several Rishonim, including the Terumas Hadeshen (Leket Yosher vol. 1, pg. 69 s.v. v'nahag; thanks are due to Rabbi Avromy Kaplan for pointing this out) and the Meiri (Chullin 105a), who briefly mention that children are not mandated to keep the full waiting period. Several authorities, including the Chelkas Yaakov (Shu"t vol.

2:88-89 and vol. 3:147), Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov on Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Y.D. 89, footnote 36), and Rav Nissim Karelitz Chut Shani (Shabbos vol. 4, end 343, pg. 309-310), maintain that young children need only wait an hour, and only once they reach nine years old should they start waiting longer. Rav Ovadiah Yosef (Shu"t Yechaveh Daas vol. 3:58) is more lenient, ruling that children only need to start waiting the full amount from a year before their Bar or Bas Mitzvah.

Other Poskim, including the Debreciner Rav (Shu"t Ba'er Moshe vol. 8:36, 5), Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (cited in Piskei Halachos pg. 53:4-5), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos vol. 1:434) prefer a staggered approach. Once a child reaches age two-three, he should wait an hour. When he turns five-six, he should wait three hours, and from age nine-ten, he should wait the full six hours.

Others, including the Ponovezh Rosh Yeshiva Rav Elazar Menachem Mann Shach (Michtavim U'Maamarim vol. 4:332), Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in Va'aleihu Lo Yibol vol. 2, pg. 64:3 and Maadanei Shlomo on Dalet Chelkei Shulchan Aruch pg. 241-242), and Rav Shmuel Halevi Wosner (Shu"t Shevet Halevi vol. 4:84 and Kovetz M'Beis Levi vol. 9, pg. 23:9 and vol. Y.D. pg. 36:13, footnote 14) maintain that there is no specific set age, but rather depends on each individual child, his needs, and specific situation. All agree that the child should be educated and trained to gradually wait longer, building up to the full waiting period. See also Shu"t She'aris Yisrael (Y.D. 3), Shu"t Eimek Hateshuva (vol. 6:314), and Shu"t Shulchan Halevi (Ch. 22:10, 3). Many stress that this leniency for children is only applicable to real food or milk, as they are satiating and nutritional, as opposed to milchig candies and chocolates, etc. which are decidedly not, and for which no dispensation should be given. See Shu"t Yabia Omer (vol. 1, Y.D. 4 and vol. 3, Y.D. 3), Shu"t Maadanei Melachim (83:2), and Chinuch Habanim L'Mitzvos (Tzorchei Kattan 47 and footnote 183).

On the other hand, and contrary to all the above, there is the minority noteworthy opinion of the Steipler Gaon (Orchos Rabbeinu, new edition, vol. 4, pg. 25:2) who held that all minors should still keep the full six hours. His son, Rav Chaim Kanievsky holds this way as well (cited in Moadei HaGra"ch vol. 1:189-190). As with all inyanei halacha, one should ask his personal local

halachic authority for guidance as to which opinion he should follow.
