

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“Do not eat any meat of [even a kosher] animal that has not been ritually slaughtered; give it to the [non-Jewish] non-idol worshipper that lives within your gates [so that] he can eat it, or sell it to a non-Jewish [idol worshipper that lives elsewhere], for you are a holy nation to Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 14:21). Sounds pretty straightforward—due to your distinct and holy status, there are foods that you can't eat which non-Jews can. Rashi, however, explains the latter part of the verse very differently.

“For you are a holy nation to G-d' [means] make yourself holy with things that are permitted for you—things that are permitted which others treated as if they were forbidden, do not permit them in their presence.” Mizrahi says that Rashi didn't follow the seemingly obvious understanding of the verse because keeping kosher would be appropriate and necessary even without having that extra level of distinction and holiness (see Gur Aryeh for a similar approach).

Even so, Rashi's explanation seems to come completely out of left field. For one thing, the Torah very clearly connects the two, with one being the cause of the other. It is “because” you are holy that you can't eat things that non-Jews can eat (non-Jews are prohibited from eating certain things too, such as blood, or meat that was severed before the animal died). If our being holy and distinct refers to something totally different (i.e. treating things that aren't forbidden as if they are), why is it linked to the prohibition of eating the meat of an animal that did not undergo ritual slaughtering?

Additionally, they are both in the same verse! Why would the Torah put a reference to a totally separate commandment together with the prohibition against eating non-kosher meat?

The commandment that Rashi quotes is referenced several times in the Talmud (see Pesachim 50b/51a and Nedarim 81b). From the context, it is apparent that the reason to treat something that is intrinsically permitted as prohibited (once others have treated it as such) is to avoid causing those others to stop treating it as being prohibited. (One explanation given is so that they won't stop treating other things that really are prohibited as if they are permissible. Another is that the extra prohibition was intended as a means of ensuring that a real (related) prohibition is not violated,

and undoing it will remove that protection.) The wording in Nedarim is actually “things that are permitted that others treated as forbidden, you are not allowed to treat them as permitted in order to negate [their stringency].” So Rashi is not explaining our verse to mean that we should just add on extra stringencies or prohibitions, but that we should avoid doing otherwise permitted actions that might cause others to make a detrimental change in their behavior.

Let's re-examine our verse now. We are told that we are not allowed to eat the meat of a kosher animal that has not been slaughtered properly, but we can give it to a non-Jew to eat. Wait a minute, though! Aren't we afraid that this will influence us, and we will come to eat this same kind of meat? No, we're not, “because you are a distinct and holy nation,” and the non-Jew chowing down on such meat will not be misconstrued as something Jews can do. The verse can refer to becoming holier by prohibiting things that aren't intrinsically prohibited, while still being linked to our ability to give our non-kosher meat to a non-Jew. We will not do things that are prohibited just because we see non-Jews doing them, but seeing fellow Jews doing things that are prohibited may affect us. Therefore, you can give non-kosher meat to a non-Jew to eat, but you can't do things that other Jews have treated as prohibited (at least not in front of them).

The Talmud (Shabbos 108a) records a conversation between a non-believer and Rabbi Yehoshua HaGarsi regarding the parchment Tefilin (and, by extension, Torah scrolls) are written on. After explaining that non-kosher animals are disqualified because it says (Shemos 13:9, referring to wearing Tefilin), “in order that G-d's Torah should be in your mouth,” i.e. written on something permitted to be put in your mouth, Rabbi Yehoshua was asked why they can be written on skins of kosher animals that were not ritually slaughtered, as they are not kosher either. He answered by giving a parable of two men that had to be executed; one was killed by the king himself, while the other was killed by the king's executioner. Just as the former is considered more important, so would an animal killed by G-d Himself be considered more worthy than one killed by G-d's messenger (the shochet, who slaughtered the animal). Therefore, if a slaughtered animal is valid for Tefilin, certainly an animal that died by G-d's hand (before the shochet had a chance to) is valid. Rabbi Yehoshua was then asked why we can't eat

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such "worthy" meat, to which he responded that the Torah explicitly prohibited it. (The non-believer then praised Rabbi Yehoshua for his answers.)

The truth is, though, that the second part of the conversation was only meant for this non-believer. As the Or Zarua writes (Hilchos Tefilin #536) in the name of his Rebbe, Rabbeinu Simcha, the real answer (as given in the Yerushalmi, Megillah 1:9) is that the Torah means we must use the kind (species) of animal permitted to be eaten, not a specific animal that could have actually been eaten. Based on the Jewish perspective of how G-d runs the world, the parable of the king and his executioner would really not apply to how the animal died anyway.

The Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:17) lists 4 heretical approaches to how G-d runs the world, and then the Torah's approach. According to the third heretical approach, every single thing that happens is the result of a direct, specific decree from the Creator, including what happens to each and every animal in the world. According to the Jewish perspective, however, although G-d runs the entire world completely, his decrees are only specific for humans; what happens to any other creature is the result of the combination of His "general" decrees (i.e. the laws of nature) the free will exercised by man, and collateral damage from decrees issued against man. (This is by no means a controversial approach, as it is echoed by many others, including the Ramban, Rabbeinu Bachye, the Sefornu, etc.)

Therefore, an animal that dies of its own cannot be said to have been killed directly by G-d, only as a consequence of divine decrees that were not specifically intended for that animal. On the other hand, if a shochet takes an animal and performs the commanded ritual slaughter, he can certainly be said to have killed this animal specifically to do G-d's will. Which death is more "worthy," an execution mandated by G-d (ritual slaughter) or death by natural causes? It would seem that the slaughtered animal has a more direct link to G-d than the animal that died via "happenstance," without any specific decree intended for it—just the opposite of Rabbi Yehoshua's parable.

Now let's read our verse again. We cannot eat the meat of a kosher animal that was not slaughtered properly, even though it can be given to a non-Jew to eat. Why is ritually slaughtered meat more appropriate?

"Because you are a holy nation," and by fulfilling the commandment of shechita (ritual slaughter), you have imbued the meat with holiness, giving it a more direct link to G-d. And eating meat less worthy is inappropriate for a distinct and holy nation. © 2005 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The first word in our portion re-eh is one of the most powerful terms found in the Torah. In fact, G-d is described as a ro-eh on three different levels.

The first time the word is found in the Torah, the Torah states that after creating light or energy, "vayar Elokim ki tov, G-d saw it was good." (Genesis 1:4) Obviously an anthropomorphism. Still, as G-d saw, so do we have the power to see.

On a deeper level, re-eh means to see in the sense of empathizing for the other. Note the description just prior to the deluge in the time of Noah. There the Torah states, "and the Lord saw (vayar Hashem) that the wickedness of man was great on the earth." (Genesis 6:5) This could mean that G-d saw with the sense of feeling the pain and horror which was unfolding—the wickedness of man whom he had created. As G-d felt the pain of humankind, so too should all people created in G-d's image empathize with the other.

There is yet another understanding of ra-ah. Ra-ah could have covenantal connotations—that is G-d seen with an eye on establishing and fulfilling His covenant with His people. Indeed, the first time ra-ah appears after Avraham (Abraham) and Sarah were chosen, the Torah states "and the Lord appeared (veyera) to Avraham and said 'to your seed I will give this land.'" (Genesis 12:7)

Re-eh as used in our portion seems to echo the covenantal approach. Note that when G-d covenantally chooses Avraham, the Torah states, "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you." (Genesis 12:3) Similarly in our portion, the Torah states—"see (re-eh), I have placed before you a blessing and a curse." (Deuteronomy 11:26)

And just as Avraham first built an altar to G-d in Shechem-Elon Moreh (Genesis 12:6) and his rendezvous with G-d reaches a crescendo in Yerushalayim, (Genesis 12:9) so in our parsha is there discussion of how the blessing and curse would be put forth on Har Gerizim and Har Eyzal which are in the area of Shechem. (Deuteronomy 11:29) Not coincidentally, the parsha proceeds to discuss our obligations once we enter the land and come to Yerushalayim. (Deuteronomy 12:1-19)

Thus, ra-ah has a threefold meaning. To see, to empathize, to covenantalize. However, when Avraham and Sarah were chosen, ra-ah was in the context of the promised covenant. G-d was the ro-eh. Here, in our portion, as the Jews prepare to enter Israel, it is in the context of the covenant for the first time soon being

realized. Re-eh, therefore, refers to the Jewish people achieving their covenant mission.

No matter what political leaning, this has been possibly one of the most challenging chapters in the progression of this covenant. However, we must continue to remember that we are fortunate to live in the era of the establishment of the State of Israel we are all a bit closer to the covenant's ultimate fulfillment. © 2005 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND

RavFrاند

“For you shall surely open your hand to him.”
(Devarim 15:8)

First, the Torah tells us (15:7), "If there be a pauper among you, one of your brethren, in one of your gateways in your land that G-d your Lord has given you, do not harden your heart nor close your hand tight against your impoverished brother." This is clearly telling us to give charity to the poor person. Then the Torah continues, "For you shall surely open your hand to him and provide him with the necessities he is missing." This seems to call for a higher level of charity not covered by the first commandment.

There was once a Jew in Vilna who took a great interest in local history. In the course of his research, he would often go out to the old cemetery and read the inscriptions on the tombstones. He was able to gather a surprising amount of information in this fashion.

One day, he came across two adjacent graves. According to the inscriptions, the two men were brothers, both talmidei chachamim, both extraordinary baalei tzedakah, philanthropists. Strangely, the two tombstones shared an inscription from Eishes Chayil, the last chapter of Mishlei (31:20). The inscription began on one tombstone with "she extended her palm (kappah) to the poor" and was completed on the other with "and she stretched out her hand (yadeha) to the pauper."

The man was puzzled. First of all, he had never seen an inscription shared by two tombstones. Second, inscriptions from Eishes Chayil were used almost exclusively for women. There was obviously a story behind all this, and by all appearances, an interesting story. The man sought out one of the oldest men in the Vilna community and asked him about the inscription. The old man indeed had a story to tell.

These two brothers were Torah scholars of the highest order, and they were also wealthy and extremely generous in their charities. They were much respected and admired in the community.

Suddenly, their fortunes took a turn for the worse. Some of their businesses failed. Their investments stagnated. People began to wonder and whisper. Why would such a thing happen to such sterling people?

The Rabbinical Court of Vilna also heard the stories and took the matter under advisement. "How can this be," declared one of the judges, "that two such exemplary talmidei chachamim should be going bankrupt? It is a chillul Hashem! We have to do something about it."

"But what can we do about it?" asked another judge. "Should we give them a loan?"

"No, of course not," said the first judge. "We have to get to the bottom of this and correct it."

"But how?" said the second judge.

"There is a simple way," offered a third judge. "We have to summon the brothers to court and interrogate them about everything they've done for the past few years. I have no doubt they will answer our questions truthfully."

The Rabbinical Court questioned the brothers for hours and discovered only one instance of wrongdoing. The Halachah demands (Kesubos 50a) that a person should not give away more than a fifth of his wealth to charity, but the brothers often exceeded this limit. Their only crime was that they gave too much charity!

What was to be done about this? The Rabbinical Court decided that the brothers could not be trusted to stay within the prescribed limits. Therefore, they themselves took control of the finances and decreed that anyone approaching the brothers for charitable donations should come to the Rabbinical Court's appointed administrator of the brothers' accounts.

The poor appeared on the doorstep of the brothers, and they duly directed them to the court-appointed administrator of their accounts.

"We've been to him already," they protested, "and he is not nearly as generous as you've always been. We'll never feed our children on what the administrator gives us."

The brothers' hearts melted, but what could they do? They didn't have control of their money. So they began to give away the silver in their cabinets to the poor. Eventually, this trove was also depleted, and they were left with one silver spoon between them.

The next day, when a beggar approached each of the brothers, they broke the last spoon in half. One took the spoon part and gave it to a beggar, and the other took the handle and gave it to a beggar.

This wonderful act of charity was memorialized on their tombstones, relying on a wordplay. The beginning of the verse, "She extended her palm (kappah) to the poor"-kappah also meaning "her spoon"-appeared on the first tombstone. The completion of the verse, "And she stretched out her hand (yadeha) to the pauper"-yadeha also meaning "her handle"-appeared on the other.

This is an example of "opening the hand" of the highest order. © 2005 Rabbi Y. Frand & torah.org

RABBI JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

If you seek to understand Judaism's social vision, look at its anti-poverty legislation. "If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your G-d is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother. Rather be open-handed and freely lend him sufficient for his needs in that which he lacks. Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the Lord against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your G-d will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." (Deut 15: 7-11)

Ostensibly the passage is about the cancellation of debts in the seventh year (shemittah, the year of "release"). The oral tradition, however, extended it to the laws of tzedakah-the word usually translated as "charity" but which also means "distributive justice, equity". The rabbis interpreted the phrase "sufficient for his needs" to mean the basic requirements of existence: food, clothing, shelter and so on. "That which he lacks" was understood as referring to a person who was previously wealthy but has now become impoverished. He too must be helped to recover his dignity:

"It is related about Hillel the Elder that, for a certain poor man who was of good family, he bought a horse to ride on and a slave to run before him. When on one occasion he could not find a slave to run before the man, he himself ran before him." (Ketubot 67b)

The force of this passage lies in the fact that Hillel himself was notoriously poor, yet he gave of his money and time to help a rich man who had lost his money regain his self-respect.

This double aspect is evident throughout the laws of tzedakah. On the one hand, they are directed to the brute fact of poverty. No one must be deprived of basic physical necessities. On the other, they address with astonishing sensitivity the psychology of poverty. It demeans, embarrasses, humiliates, shames. Tzedakah, ruled the rabbis, must be given in such a way as to minimize these feelings:

"When Rabbi Yannai saw a certain man giving a coin to a poor person in front of everyone, he said: It would have been better not to have given it to him than to have given it and put him to shame." (Hagigah 5b)

In a famous passage, Maimonides describes the eight levels of charity: "There are eight degrees of

charity, one higher than the other. "The highest degree, exceeded by none, is that of one who assists a poor person by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him find employment-in a word by putting him in a situation where he can dispense with other people's aid. With reference to such aid it is said, 'You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you' (Lev. 25: 35), which means: strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented.

"A step below this is the one who gives alms to the needy in such a way that the giver does not know to whom he gives and the recipient does not know from whom he takes. This exemplifies doing a good deed for its own sake. One example was the Hall of Secrecy in the Temple, where the righteous would place their gift clandestinely and where poor people from noble families could come and secretly help themselves to aid. Close to this is dropping money in a charity box...

"One step lower is where the giver knows to whom he gives, but the poor person does not know from whom he receives. Thus the great sages would go and secretly put money into poor people's doorways...

"A step lower is the case where the poor person knows from whom he is taking, but the giver does not know to whom he is giving. Thus the great sages would tie coins in their scarves, which they would fling over their shoulders, so that the poor could help themselves without suffering shame.

"Lower than this, is where someone gives the poor person a gift before he asks.

"Lower still is one who gives only after the poor person asks.

"Lower than this is one who gives less than is fitting, but does so with a friendly countenance.

"The lowest level is one who gives ungraciously." (Mattenot Ani'im 10: 7-14)

This exquisitely calibrated ethic is shot through with psychological insight. What matters is not only how much you give, but also how you do so. Anonymity in the giving of aid is essential to dignity. The poor must not be embarrassed. The rich must not be allowed to feel superior. We give, not to take pride in our generosity, still less to emphasise the dependency of others, but because we belong to a covenant of human solidarity, and because that is what G-d wants us to do, honouring the trust through which he has temporarily lent us wealth in the first place.

Especially noteworthy is Maimonides' insistence that giving somebody a job, or the means to start a business, is the highest charity of all. What is humiliating about poverty is dependence itself: the feeling of being beholden to others. One of the sharpest expressions of this is to be found in the Grace after Meals, when we say, "We beseech You, G-d our Lord, let us not be in need of the gifts of men or of their loans, but only of Your helping hand... so that we may not be

put to shame nor humiliated for ever and ever." The greatest act of tzedakah is one that allows the individual to become self-sufficient. The highest form of charity is one that enables the individual to dispense with charity. From the point of view of the giver, this is one of the least financially demanding forms of giving. It may not cost him anything at all. But from the point of view of the recipient, it is the most dignifying, because it removes the shame of receiving. Humanitarian relief is essential in the short-term, but in the long-run, job creation and economic policies that promote full employment are more important.

One detail of Jewish law is particularly noteworthy: even a person dependent on tzedakah must himself or herself give tzedakah. On the face of it, the rule is absurd. Why give X enough money so that he can give to Y? Giving to Y directly is more logical and efficient. What the rabbis understood, however, is that giving is an essential part of human dignity. The rabbinic insistence that the community provide the poor with enough money so that they themselves can give is a profound insight into the human condition.

Jewry has had many distinguished economists, from David Ricardo (whom Keynes called the greatest mind that ever addressed itself to economics), to John von Neumann (a physicist who, in his spare time, invented Game Theory), to Paul Samuelson, Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan. They have won an astonishing 38% of Nobel prizes in the field. Why should this have been so? Perhaps because Jews have long known that economics is one of the fundamental determinants of a society; that economic systems are not written into the structure of the universe, but are constructed by human beings and can be changed by human beings; and thus that poverty is not a fact of nature but can be alleviated, minimized, reduced. Economics is not a religious discipline. It is a secular art and science. Yet, deeply underlying the Jewish passion for economics is a religious imperative: "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land."

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

“If there will arise in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and he gives you a sign or a convincing manifestation, and this sign or convincing manifestation which he had announced to you occurred; (And he utilized what appeared to be this miraculous occurrence) to say 'Let us follow after other G-ds...,' you must not hearken to the words of that "prophet"... After your G-d shall you walk, Him shall you revere, keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him and cleave unto Him..." (Deuteronomy 13:2-5).

From the earliest Biblical times, Judaism—a moral and enlightened religion based upon an ethical monotheism which taught justice, compassion and peace—was forced to struggle against idolatrous voodoo and magic. Apparently the more mysterious, uncertain and fragile life appeared to be, the greater the attraction wonder-working, prophecy-speaking individuals who claimed a "local telephone" relationship to the Divine or the various divinities in which they believed and claimed the power to read the future and thereby move aside the curtain of uncertainty.

Fascinatingly enough, the twelfth century Commentary Ramban (Nachmanides) admits of the possibility that there do exist gifted individuals with what we would consider to be prophetic powers: "Possibly the Biblical text is hinting at a true phenomenon, that souls of several individuals have the prophetic power to know the future, and not one really knows the source of that power... an inner spirit comes to that individual saying that such and such will occur in the future to a certain object... and the matter proves to be true to those who see it happen..." (Ramban, ad loc). Nevertheless, if such a prophecy is used to turn someone away from the laws of Torah, the soothsayer is considered to be a malevolent idolater. Indeed, the entire introduction to this description of a false prophet is the Biblical insistence upon the ultimate truth of our Torah, "a Judicial code which dare not be compromised, not even by abilities to predict future events on the basis of heavenly voices: "Every word which I have commanded you, you must observe to perform; do not add to it and do not distract from it" (Deut 13:1). No one, not even the most gifted oracle, can rise above the authority and supremacy of our Torah!

Maimonides is likewise very stringent in defining all forms of idolatry. Our Bible insists that "there shall not be found among you... any soothsayer (Kosem), astrologer, enchanter or sorcerer" (Deut 18:10), and our great Spanish legalist-philosopher explains a Kosem as "one who does an act in order to free his mind from all distractions so that he can predict future events, and he says that something will occur or will not occur" (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry, 11,6). Indeed, there may be individuals with such abilities, but that does not necessarily mean that such soothsayers have proper moral judgment or give wise halakhic counsel.

From this perspective we can readily understand why our tradition insists that "the Torah is no longer in heaven," so we do not listen to heavenly voices (B.T. Bava Metzia 59b) and "the Sage is to be preferred over the prophet" (Bava Batra 12b); our religio-legal system, albeit based upon a law which we believe to be the word of the Living G-d, nevertheless is interpreted and developed in each generation predicated upon logically sound principles and analytically sound explications. Reasoned Responsa are open to scholarly debate, and no one can claim the

forensic edge because he heard a voice from Heaven. Hence the continuity of our tradition remains insured, with advance based upon traditionally ordained logic and with no one having the ability to undermine our sacred texts by a newly revealed addendum or substitute.

I believe that there is an even more profound reason for our rejection of fortune tellers, even deeply religious fortune tellers who do not use their "gifts" to undermine our tradition. The Bible itself teaches "the secrets are for the Lord our G-d and that which is revealed is for us and our descendants forever to perform all the words of this Torah" (Deut. 29:28). Our task is not to second-guess G-d, or to use our religion or our religious leaders to make our lives easier or more certain, to remove human doubt or vulnerability. The commandments are here for us to serve G-d, not in order to attempt to have G-d serve us. Hence the Mishnah teaches that "we are to serve our Master not in order to receive a reward" (Avot 1), but because it is right to serve Him and will ultimately make for a better world-not necessarily an easier individual life. Faith is not a guarantee that my life will be comfortable and cancer-free, if I do what the Torah commands; faith rather demands faithfulness to G-d's desired life-style no matter how difficult or challenging my individual life may be. As Yossile Rakover, supposed victim of the Warsaw Ghetto poignantly writes in his last Will and Testament: "You have done everything possible to make me stop believing You and maintaining your commandments. But, my wrathful G-d, it will not avail You in the least. I will never stop believing you, never stop loving You. Who then shall I believe in, the cruel G-d (or non-G-d) of my enemies? Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokenu, Hashem Ehad."

Similar to this must be our attitude to Prayer. We believe in a Higher Being who can certainly make the miraculous occur, but who only guaranteed that the Jewish people would never be completely destroyed, and that eventually the world will accept a G-d of peace through a message emanating from Jerusalem. Otherwise in large measure, the world operates according to its natural design. Yes, "even if a sword is dangling at your throat, do not despair of G-d's compassion," but-at that same time-"do not rely on miracles." Pray for the best, but prepare for the worst.

The very practical Talmudic passage in Berachot (B.T. 32b.) teaches us that "one who prays too long and intensively will come to a pained heart," and the Tosafot commentary interprets this to apply to an individual who expects his prayer to be answered. What is the repair for such a broken heart?, queries the Talmud. Occupy yourself in the performance of the commandments to serve G-d and try to improve society.

Our religious community must close its ears to future predictions of all sorts, no matter how pious the source. Ultimately we have but one Source, and He

teaches us that "the secrets are for the Lord our G-d alone, and that which is revealed-to perform all the words of this Torah-is for us and our children". © 2005 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

In Chapter 13 of Devarim, Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael about two kinds of instigators. The first is a false prophet, one who is capable of performing a miraculous sign in order to establish his credentials. The people are required to pass a great test of faith to determine whether they will be taken in by the words of the "prophet" and his miracles. To strengthen the people against this danger, Moshe explains why a false prophet should not be trusted. "For G-d is testing you, to determine if you love your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul" [Devarim 13:4]. This is very significant, since usually the basis for testing the truth of a prophet is miracles and wondrous actions that he performs, as is written further on: "But if you will say in your heart, how will we know what G-d has said? If the prophet predicts something that does not happen, it is something that was not spoken by G-d." [18:21-22]. This implies that miracles and wonders have a limited scope. While they can be used as a proof that the one showing them should be believed, they cannot be used to support idol worship. In the case of idol worship, their only purpose is as a test of the faith of the listeners. Thus, Bnei Yisrael have been asked to be ready for this complicated situation.

Further on in the chapter, we are told that there is an even greater danger than that of a false prophet. "If your brother, son of your mother, or your son or daughter, or your beloved wife, or your close friend entice you in secret, saying, let us worship other G-ds..." [13:7]. Evidently, a relative or close friend do not show a miracle as is expected of a false prophet, but they can have an even greater effect. This corresponds to the difference between the warnings about these people. With respect to a false prophet, Moshe gives a simple warning, "Do not listen to the words of that prophet" [13:4]. However, with respect to a relative or a close friend, he says, "Do not accede to him and do not listen to him..." [13:9]. In addition, the punishment of a false prophet is that "he shall die" [13:6], while the punishment for a relative or a friend is described in much more detail: "Throw stones at him, and he will die... And all of Yisrael will hear and be afraid" [13:11-12]. There seems to be a clear danger that even if a person is not convinced, he will have pity on the inciter who is close to him and he will not publicize his deed. For this reason, the Torah warns, "Do not turn your eyes away from him, and do not have pity on him or protect him. For you must kill him, let your hand be the

first one to strike him dead, and let all the other hands follow." [13:9-10].

There is another element about the beloved inciter that is not emphasized with respect to the false prophet. The prophet is quoted as saying, "Let us follow other G-ds which you did not know" [13:3], while the close or beloved inciter says, "Let us worship other G-ds which you did not know, both you and your fathers" [13:7]. When the inciter comes from within the close circle of friends and relatives, it is emphasized that leaving the proper path causes damage not only to the Almighty but also to the family and to the traditions brought down from past generations.

THE SALANT FOUNDATION

Parsha Insights

by Rabbi Zvi Miller

There are two aspects that comprise the act of giving charity: 1) the actual giving of the gift; and, 2) the willingness of the heart to give. The Torah (Devarim 15:10) teaches the importance of giving charity with positive feelings: "You shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him..." Rashi comments (Devarim 15:7) that there are some people who give charity, yet struggle in their hearts over parting with their money. Hence, although they give, they do not give with an open, generous heart.

The manner of giving of a person whose heart is troubled over giving is marked by delays. Therefore, even if he grants a gift or performs an act of kindness for another person it will stumble forth with delays and limitations. Whereas, a gift that is given by a person with a good heart flows forth in great abundance, i.e., he gives generously and desires to bestow much benefit upon the recipient.

Moreover, the sign of a 'good heart' is manifest in the benefactor's desire to give generously, i.e., the giver performs his kindness without a trace of resentment. Therefore, there are no interruptions in his giving because he desires to continuously give and help.

The desire to give more and more is the essence of Divine kindness. The loving kindness of HaShem for his creations flows forth continuously without any limitation. Like the roaring current of a mighty river, the kindness of HaShem constantly grows and increases. Hence, the Divine kindness flows unbounded and uninterrupted. Our liturgy in the Grace After Meals expresses this goodly attribute of HaShem: And through His great goodness we have never lacked.

The Torah teaches us that the primary component of giving is not in the actual gift, rather, in the good feelings and desire to give-to give with one's full heart. Our religion was founded by Avraham, who was a master of compassion and loving kindness of the heart. May we follow in Avraham's footsteps and give abundantly and without bounds.

Implement: Do a kind deed for someone today-and put your heart into it. [Based on Da'as Torah of Rabenu Yerucham HaLevi] © 2005 Rabbi Z. Miller & The Salant Foundation

RABBI LABEL LAM

Devar Torah

“You shall follow after HASHEM your G-d, and Him you shall fear and His Mitzvos you shall keep and to His voice you should hearken and Him shall you serve and to Him you should cleave." (Devarim 13:5)

"To Him shall you cleave': Cleave to His ways; Acts of Kindliness, burying the dead, visiting the sick, like The Holy One Blessed Be He does." (Rashi)

Rashi is troubled by the problem of how we are to attach ourselves to HASHEM. Obviously it is not a physical attachment but a matter of emulation. Rashi offers a short list and a general heading that we should do as HASHEM does. Therefore we can look for other areas that are listed as doings and characteristics of The Almighty.

In the Siddur-Prayer book we find multiple examples of extra ways that we can try to emulate: Healer of the sick, teacher of Torah to Israel, dresses the naked, taking care of needs, good to all, patient, merciful, loves the righteous, gives bread to the hungry, supports the fallen, protects widows, orphans and strangers, chooses His people Israel with love, gracious to forgive, gathers together the pushed off of His people Israel, loves charity and justice, supports the righteous, builds Jerusalem, listens to sincere petitions, returns the Shechinah to Zion, shines His face, makes peace, does what He says, pays well those who fear G-d, redeems and saves and protects, provides for all graciously.

A story is told about a professor who was walking down Madison Avenue while feeling more than a little blue when he saw a shingle for a psychiatrist's office. He entered and was confronted by two doors. A sign by one read "introvert" and the other "extrovert" after a brief moment of introspective reflection he entered the door marked "introvert". Then he was confronted by another series of choices. One door was titled, "Makes over \$100,000.00" the other "Makes less than \$100,000.00". That was much easier to figure. A teacher doesn't make that much so he went through the door marked "under \$100,000." and found himself back on Madison Avenue.

HAHSEM nourishes the entire world "with His goodness, with favor, with kindness and with mercy" and ostensibly for free. What an abundance of opportunities we have! Whatever we are already doing, if it is done with the intention of emulating HASHEM there's a chance to add an extra dimension of depth to our lives. A mother who is already dressing her baby or a feeding her young, a teacher who is exercising

patience, or supporter of Israel who is writing checks might want to have in mind some part of the partial list above and to see if there is some way to add some zesty flavor to already good living.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztl. pointed out that two places in the Torah we are commanded to "cleave". "Therefore a man should leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife..." (Breishis 3:24) And here we are bidden to cleave to HASHEM. He asks a question of dual loyalty. How can we have two full time jobs of 24/7? How can we be so absolutely dutiful and committed to a spouse and at the same time devoted to HASHEM?

The answer will be made obvious. The Hebrew words "ish" and "isha" for man and woman have two common letters. Alef and Shin. They each have two different letters. Yud and Heh. The Talmud tells us that when there is peace between them the Shechina (Divine Presence) resides between them. The Yud and Heh spell HASHEM's name. When there is no peace G-dliness escapes. What remains is aleph-shin-AISH/fire. Therefore the attachment that they both have to HASHEM is the real glue that binds them together. By emulating The Almighty one can hope to grow nearer to another while drawing even closer to HASHEM. © 2005 by Rabbi L. Lam & Torah.org

RABBI NOSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

The blessing, that you heed the commandments of Hashem, your G-d, that I command you today." (Deuteronomy 11:27) "The blessing"- RASHI: "On condition that you heed."

This short comment is, what I call, a Type II Rashi comment. That means that Rashi has inserted just a few of his own words in between the Torah's words. In such cases, Rashi usually is not bothered by something in the verse; rather, he wants to guide us around a possible misunderstanding. But, I would say here that in spite of the style, Rashi is bothered by something. What would you ask here?

A Question: What has Rashi told us here and why the need to comment at all? What prompted his comment? Hint: Compare our verse with the next verse.

An Answer: Verses 27 and 28 speak of the blessing and the curse that will follow as a consequence to those who follow G-d's word and those who do not.

Do you see the difference between the wording of these verses? Verse 27: "The blessing: That you heed the commandments of Hashem..."

Verse 28: "The curse: If you do not heed the commandments of Hashem..."

We have highlighted the difference between the two verses. "The blessing that you will heed..."

"And the curse if you do not heed..."

Why does our verse use the word "that" (Hebrew "asher")? The conditional "if" (Hebrew "im")

would seem more fitting. This is what we have in the next verse. This is what Rashi is responding to.

How does his two-word comment help matters?

An Answer: Rashi's use of the words "on condition" (Hebrew "al menas") has a precise meaning in the Talmud. The Sages tell us that whoever says "on condition that" is as if he said "from now."

This can be illustrated when we compare two sentences. If I say to a car mechanic: "You have \$100 on the condition that you repair my car." Or if I say: "I will pay you \$100 if you repair my car."

In the first case the money is given up front with the condition that the mechanic do the work. In the second case, no money is given unless and until the work is done.

With this in mind, let us look at these verses and see what difference this verbal nuance makes. What difference do you see?

An Answer: The blessing is given "on condition," says Rashi. This means that G-d gives His blessing even before we have fulfilled His conditions. G-d is willing to give us of His bounty on credit; on the understanding that we will, in the future, fulfill His conditions. The curse, on the other hand, is not given "on condition"; it is not inflicted unless and until the people transgress G-d's commandments.

This is an encouraging and benevolent picture of G-d's ways in this world. His blessings of food, shelter and security are basic givens of this world. He placed them here for us to enjoy. Only if and when we transgress his Torah- which is a Torah of Life- are we in danger of losing these blessings. The punishments, on the other hand, come only if (when) we don't follow His ways. We could say the punishments are inherent, natural, outcomes of straying from His path, from His Torah of Life.

This idea is, in fact, built into these verses. You may have noticed that even though we are talking about conditional phrases, nowhere are the consequences mentioned. "The blessing, that you will heed the commandments of Hashem, your G-d..."

Notice that the blessing is nothing extrinsic (for example: becoming rich) to fulfilling G-d's word; it is identified with "heeding the commandments of Hashem." It is as if the Torah says: Doing good is its own reward.

Likewise, as regards the curse. The Torah says: "And the curse, if you do not heed the commandments of Hashem..."

The curse, itself, is identified with not heeding the commandments. Again, the message is that doing evil is its own punishment. The Sages in Pirkei Avos put it succinctly: "The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah; the reward of sin is sin." © 2005 Rabbi N.C. Leff & torah.org

