

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

Our Parasha begins with Moshe relating how he beseeched G-d to let him enter the Land of Israel.

The previous Parasha ended with the nation conquering the lands of Sichon and Og, so Moshe thought that if he was able to lead them at the beginning of their conquest, perhaps G-d would relent (or already had) and let Moshe enter (see Rashi on Devarim 3:23). Unfortunately (for Moshe), G-d did not give in, and told Moshe to stop asking.

There is a second time in our Parasha that Moshe tells the nation that G-d did not allow him to enter the land. After reminding them that when they witnessed G-d's public revelation they saw that G-d had no form (4:15), Moshe urged them not to worship anything but G-d, adding that the celestial bodies are there not for us to worship, but for other nations (see Rashi on 4:19). Punctuating how we are different than those other nations, Moshe says, "and G-d took you [for Himself], and He brought you out of the iron furnace, Egypt, to be His nation of inheritance" (4:20). Moshe then adds, "and G-d became angry with me because of your words, and He swore that He would not let me cross over the Jordan [River], and would not let me come into the good land which Hashem your G-d is giving to you as an inheritance" (4:21). Although we certainly can understand the context of the first mention of Moshe not being allowed to enter Israel, what connection is there between his not going in and the nation avoiding worshipping false deities, or with the contrast between other nations and the nation of Israel, or with G-d taking us out of Egypt?

After further warnings against worshipping idols and urging them to keep G-d's commandments (4:25-40), we are told that Moshe then designated the three cities of refuge for the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River (4:41-43). Why was it specifically now that Moshe did so? The rest of this "interruption" of Moshe's words - the only "interruption" from when he started

(Devarim 1:6) until the middle of Parashas Ki Savo (27:1) - also seems disconnected with what is said before it and after it. After the names of the cities of refuge are given, we are told that "this is the Torah that Moshe put before the Children of Israel" (4:44). What was the Torah Moshe placed before us? The cities chosen to be cities of refuge? The previous things Moshe told the nation? The words he is about to tell them? Why would the first part of his final words to the nation be considered "the Torah" more than the last part, or vice versa? What is this verse telling us?

Similarly, before Moshe's words continue, the Torah reintroduces the fact that this is what Moshe told the nation (4:45), and then reiterates that it occurred on the lands conquered from Sichon and Og, detailing where this area was (4:46-49). But don't we know this already? Why is the Torah repeating it here?

Before attempting to answer these questions, I would like to bring up another difficulty, this one in the wording of the Midrash Tanchuma (6, echoed in Yalkut Shimoni 821). Moshe tried everything he could to convince G-d to let him enter the Land of Israel, until finally G-d gave Moshe a choice: either he has to die, or the nation had to be destroyed. Putting aside why this was the choice given (one possibility is that had Moshe entered the land, the Temple he would have built could not have been destroyed and when the nation sinned, instead of G-d taking out his anger on "wood and stone," He would have had to take it out on the real culprits, and destroyed the nation), what caught my attention was Moshe's answer. We should not be surprised that Moshe chose to die rather than allowing G-d to destroy the nation. However, the Midrash tells us that Moshe responded by saying that "it's better if Moshe and a thousand like him died than even one member of [the Nation] of Israel being lost." But wasn't Moshe part of the "Nation of Israel?" His mother was Levi's daughter, and his father was Levi's great grandson, so he certainly was, as would be the "thousand like him." Why would Moshe say that it's better that 1,000 like him should die rather than one member of the nation, if they were all members of the same nation? And while we know that Moshe was on a higher level than everybody else, it's hard to imagine that Moshe meant that he was above others - not just because of his humility, but because if he (and the thousand others) were above the rest of the nation, it would be a reason to save them, not sacrifice them for

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others. Besides, Moshe didn't specify which members of the nation would be worth saving for others, but implied that each and every member was so important that it would be better if he and 1,000 like him died rather than losing *any* member of the nation.

It would therefore seem that Moshe felt as if he was not really part of the nation (as would be the case for the 1,000 like him). The question is why did Moshe consider himself an outsider, and not really worthy of being considered part of the Nation of Israel.

Although I am hesitant to assign an emotion to a Biblical figure, especially the master of all prophets, suggesting this possibility might explain the above issues. This does not mean that it is an accurate portrayal of such a towering figure, merely a possibility that, if true, could answer these questions.

Moshe never experienced the hardships of the slavery in Egypt. He grew up in the king's palace, and escaped when he was young, returning when he was 80 years old. Even when he returned, he didn't do any hard labor, but went in and out of Pharaoh's courtyard at will. When did the descendents of our forefathers become a nation? Through the experience of the slavery. It was the "iron furnace" of the Egyptian slavery that forged the new nation, an experience that Moshe never shared. Because of this, perhaps Moshe always felt as if he were an outsider, not really part of the nation. His unique relationship with G-d may have made him feel even more separate than everyone else. This feeling of being disconnected from the nation may have been compounded by his inability to cross over the Jordan River into Israel, being buried instead by himself, in a grave whose whereabouts no one would ever know. This may be why he didn't consider himself as part of the nation, and said that it's better that he and a thousand like him died rather than one member of the special nation of Israel being destroyed.

After telling the nation how special they were, and why they must therefore avoid worshipping the deities that other nations follow, and especially after referencing their nation-forging experience of the "iron furnace" of Egypt, Moshe added another aspect of his feeling disconnected: his not entering Israel. Not only was he not part of the nation when it became a nation, he wasn't going to end up where they were either. Perhaps this is why he designated the 3 cities of refuge

at this point (even though they would not be active until the 3 on the western side of the Jordan were designated), in an attempt to somewhat "connect" to the nation through the land he helped conquer, setting up on that land the equivalent of what would be set up on the western side. Or it may have been the Torah countering Moshe's feeling of being disconnected, showing that he designated 3 of the 6 cities of refuge.

This could explain why the Torah makes a point of telling us that "this was the Torah that Moshe placed before the Children of Israel," as Moshe was more than just connected to the nation; he had a share in all of the commandments they kept, as he was the lawgiver. And he gave his final words in the land that he helped conquer, land that became part of the Land of Israel.

On the one hand, Moshe may have felt disconnected from the Nation of Israel. In reality, he is at least as much a part of the nation as anyone else. The Torah, G-d and Israel are one, and the Torah is referred to as Moshe's Torah. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The repetition of the aseret hadvarim - the Ten Commandments - is one of the highlights of this week's parsha. Why does Moshe feel impelled to repeat the Decalogue? Some commentators are of the opinion that the repetition is in order to highlight the nuances of difference in the text of this version of the aseret hadvarim from the text that appears in parshat Yitro. Since both texts are from Sinai and were uttered, so to speak, simultaneously, something which is not possible to convey in writing, Moshe was impelled therefore to repeat the Decalogue in order to inform us of the differences in the text - differences that the Oral Law will explain and expand upon.

The repetition of the text emphasizes for us the basic principle of Judaism throughout the ages, that the Written Torah is not understandable nor truly instructive without the traditions and teachings of the Oral Law that accompany and elucidate it. The Torah purposely presents us with a different text to make us aware of the necessity of understanding and reconciling the texts according to the explanations of Sinai - the Oral Law. The discrepancies and apparent "mistakes" in the text are the keys to understanding the Torah through the study and appreciation of the Oral Law. This is an understanding of Torah that has somehow escaped all of the Bible critics and other "scientific" studies of the biblical text. It is the Oral Law that differentiates the Jewish bible from the Christian bible and from the biblical study courses of those who do not know nor appreciate that Oral Law.

The major difference between the texts that is most noticeable in its halachic conclusions refers to the commandment regarding the observance of Shabat.

The text in Yitro reads zachor - remember the Shabat to keep it holy - while the text here in Vaetchanan reads shamor - guard, watch, observe the Shabat to keep it holy. Zachor indicates the positive, attractive side of Shabat. It is accomplished through delicious meals, Kiddush on wine, rest and sleep, companionship and hospitality. Shamor represents the more restrictive aspect of Shabat. It is the commandment that forbids thirty-nine types of "work" and circumscribes our activities on that holy day.

Over the long run of Jewish history many individuals and groups have attempted to retain the beauty of the zachor of Shabat while disregarding the seeming stringencies imposed by shamor. All such efforts and formulae have proven to be worthless and disastrous. In our time, the Shabat of Conservative Jews was not enhanced when they were allowed to drive their automobiles on Shabat, ostensibly only to synagogue services. The laity did not understand the difference between driving to the synagogue and driving to the golf course. And thus the long descent of Conservative synagogues into the pool of non-observance of Torah, intermarriage and loss of Jewish values proved itself to be inexorable.

The rabbis taught us that shamor and zachor were uttered, so to speak, as one word, simultaneously. The Oral Law teaches us how that impossibility is truly the reality and the means of preservation of Shabat and of the Jewish people. © 2006 Rabbi Berel Wein- Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com/jewishhistory.

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Two of the most famous passages in the entire Bible which refer to G-d are to be found in this week's Biblical portion: "I am the Lord your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage," the first of the Ten Commandments, and "Hear o' Israel the Lord our G-d the Lord is one," the opening verse of the Shema, the watchword of our faith. Neither of these verses express a frontal commandment to believe in G-d, and nor is there any such verse of commandment to believe anywhere in the Bible. Why not, and what is the significance of what these particular verses do teach us about G-d?

I believe that the Bible neglects to specifically command Divine belief because belief in G-d alone is not what really matters; witness all of the fanatical wars which have been fought in name of G-d, and how Islamic Fundamentalists brainwash and train their youth to blow themselves up together with innocent citizens in the name of a G-d of Jihad! What good is "pure

monotheism" if Allah has been transformed into Satan?!

Notwithstanding whatever has been written heretofore, the great philosopher-legalist Maimonides (1135 - 1204) does derive a commandment to believe in G-d from the first of the Ten Commandments, "I am the Lord your G-d who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage." He begins his magnum Mishneh Torah with the laws of the (Theological) Foundations of the Torah (1,1-6): "The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdoms is to know that there is a First Cause who produced everything that exists ... This cause is the Lord of the world and the master over the entire earth... to know this (fundamental fact) is a positive commandment, as it is written, 'I am the Lord your G-d' (Exodus 20:1, Deut 5:6)."

Apparently, Maimonides is taking this verse to be read, "I am (to be accepted by you as) your Lord..." And Maimonides utilizes this very foundation-stone of our Jewish faith to emphasize the universalist component of Judaism. Since everything and every one in the universe was created by the one G-d, the first Cause Creator who is responsible for every creation, this great Sage concludes the Mishneh Torah with a picture of universal harmony and peace under G-d:

"... And that which is written in Isaiah (concerning the "end of the days") how 'The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the lion will graze with the kid' (Isaiah 11:6) is merely an allegory and analogy. The substantive meaning of this is that Israel will dwell peacefully with the (heretofore) wicked nations of the world.... and everyone will return to the true religion. There will be no looting and no destruction, but humanity will eat only that which is permissible in harmony as do the Israelites..." (Laws of Kings 12,1).

Maimonides universalistic world view - based on the one G-d of all humanity - is perhaps given clearest expression when he exhorts the Israelites to treat their gentile slaves with special consideration and concern: "The Israelite must be a compassionate human being who pursues righteousness and neither lays a heavy yoke upon his servant nor causes him pain; he rather gives him to eat and to drink from whatever food and drink is in the household.... and speaks to him with kindness. He must listen to (his servant's) complaints, as it is written in Job, "If I despise the fair judgments of my servants in their arguments with me, what will I do when the Almighty will rise up (against me); what will I respond? Is it not the same innards that made me which also made them, and were we all not prepared by the same womb? (Job 31: 13-15)" (Laws of Servants, end of ninth chapter).

What is strange is why Maimonides derives belief in a universalist G-d of humanity from a verse which seems so very particularistic, which specifies how G-d took His chosen Israelites out of Egyptian

bondage. Indeed, R. Yehudah Ha Levei (1080-1145) the author of the famous philosophical treatise Kuzari, derives from this very verse the unique relationship between G-d and Israel, and the qualitatively different and exalted position Israel enjoys within the world (Kuzari 1, 11 and 25).

I would argue that Maimonides chose this verse for two reasons: firstly, because it precedes the negative commandment against idolatry, "You shall have no other G-ds before Me," so that it is only logical that this first commandment deals with the positive command to accept G-d; secondly, because Maimonides truly believes that the exodus from Egypt also provides a universal teaching! The great philosopher may well have taken his cue from the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, the Sabbath commandment, which was given both as a remembrance of the creation of the world (Exodus 20) as well as a remembrance of the exodus from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5). What links these two phenomena - the creation and the exodus? The exodus is the corollary of the creation: If indeed G-d created every human in His Divine image, then every human being must be free and no other human being dare violate another's person or property. The Divine Creation of humanity set the stage for human freedom and human inviolability, the Divine creation necessitated the destruction of "Pharaohic" totalitarianism and despotism as well as the formulation of a universal code of morality: thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery.

No wonder Maimonides insists that everyone must accept - even by coercion, if necessary - the seven Noahide laws of morality (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 8,10), and defines the Messianic Age as a period in which the entire world will live in peace and harmony. No wonder the major commentaries like the Ramban and Ibn Ezra see the exodus as having established G-d as the only Ruler of the Universe - as He demonstrated by deposing Pharaoh, the prototypical despot - and thereby claiming His right to legislate morality for all. No wonder the Bible - in its prelude to the Decalogue - assigns the Israelites the task of being a "Kingdom of Priest - teachers and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6), which is defined by the S'forno to mean "to teach the entire human species to all call out in the name of G-d and to serve Him shoulder to shoulder ..., since 'from Zion shall come forth the Torah' (to the world) " (Ad loc). And no wonder the second version of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy, when it presents the exodus as the reason for the Sabbath, explains that the purpose of this second day "is in order for your Gentile man and maid servant to rest lie you" (Deut 5:14).

This likewise explains the connection in our Biblical portion between the Decalogue and the Shema. There is no more universal expression of our faith than

"Hear o' Israel the Lord our G-d the Lord is One," which means, as explained by Rashi, that although the G-d of love (Hashem) and morality (Elohim) is now only accepted by us, ultimately He will be accepted by everyone in the world, by the whole of humanity which He created as one.

Even more: the numerical equivalent of Ehad (one) is 13, the numerical equivalent of ahavah (love) is 13; our G-d who is One is love. And since the numerical equivalent of J-H-V-H (the Ineffable Name) is 26, J-H-V-H is the One G-d Love. Moreover, there is no greater expression of G-d's love than His having freed the Hebrew slaves from totalitarian domination. Hence part of our twice-daily obligation to recite the Shema includes our mention of the Exodus from Egypt. © 2006 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Moshe (Moses) in this weeks' portion implores G-d for permission to enter into Israel. In the end, the request is denied. Even as Moshe uses every possible argument, G-d declares that He would never ever step foot into the Holy Land.

Not only is Moshe destined never to come to Israel, even his remains, his bones, would not be buried there. This in glaring contrast to Yosef (Joseph). Although Yosef died in Egypt, when the Jews leave that country, they carry Yosef's bones for burial in Israel.

One wonders why? Why is Yosef buried in Israel while Moshe is not. The Midrash takes up this question and responds: Yosef while in Egypt was always identified as a Jew. Note that when the butler suggests to Pharaoh that Yosef could interpret his dreams, he refers to Yosef as the na'ar ivri-the Hebrew lad. (Genesis 41:12) Having been identified as a Jew, Yosef was deemed worthy for burial in Israel.

Moshe on the other hand was not identified as a Jew. In fact, Yitro's (Jethro) daughters tell their father that ish Mitzri - an Egyptian man, saved us from the shepherds who were harassing us. (Exodus 2:19) Not being identified as a Jew, Moshe is denied burial in the Holy Land.

For me this Midrash brings to mind the days I spent visiting Israeli soldiers during the 1982 Lebanon War. One soldier, Shimon ben Tzion from Kiryat Arba was burnt from head to toe. Every day when visiting, I'd ask him to share a dvar Torah with me. Finally, on the last day there, he offered to me the Midrash cited above.

Looking into my eyes between his bandages, he asked: "but why should Moshe have been punished for telling the truth? Unlike Yosef who was born in Israel and, therefore, is identified as a Hebrew, Moshe was born in Egypt. Thus, Moshe being identified as an Egyptian should not cast poor light upon him."

Turning himself even more to me, Shimon quoted Rabbi Kook of blessed memory, that no matter where a Jew is born, he is born in Israel. This was Moshe's mistake. Although born in Egypt, he was existentially a sabra, born in Israel. Here was this courageous soldier's way of telling me as I was about ready to leave for the United States, to remain connected to Israel.

Years later, our son Dov interviewed Avital Sharansky for his elementary school class report. Avital spent her Sabbath with our family during the days when she advocated on behalf of her imprisoned husband Natan. Dov asked Avital, "Where were you born?" Avital answered, "Israel." My young Dov was flabbergasted. "But you're from Russia, everyone knows that." Avital answered, "every Jew, no matter where born, was born in Israel. And every Jew, no matter where that Jew is, is in Israel."

An important message to consider, especially these days, when so many of our people feel disconnected from Israel, afraid to travel to the Holy Land. It reminds us of our challenge, to remain linked, to remain meshed with Israel, our homeland, forever especially during these difficult times. © 2006 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI LEVI COOPER

Adding a Personal Prayer

The communal tenor of our set prayers is clearly expressed by the shared endeavor of the prayer service and by the use of the plural in almost all passages. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find the concluding paragraph of the central Amida phrased in the singular: "My G-d, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking falsehood. May my soul be silent to those who insult me, and may my soul be lowly like dust before all. Open my heart to Your Torah, and may my soul pursue your commandments. And all who plot evil against me, may You hastily thwart their counsel and upset their design."

This prayer is bracketed by a biblical verse, also in the first-person-singular: "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, G-d, my Stronghold and my Redeemer" (Psalms 19:15).

The source of this final paragraph of the Amida sheds light on the language employed. The Talmud records individual supplications that various sages would add before concluding their prayers (B. Berachot 16b-17a). In these passages, the sages gave voice to their personal challenges or wishes and hence used singular forms. Included in this list is the personal prayer of Mar the son of Ravina, which forms the basis

of the accepted concluding paragraph of the Amida cited above.

Drawing on other talmudic material, we can at times surmise what leads our sages to intone these particular supplications. Thus Rabbi Zeira, who was known for trying to influence wayward sinners to forsake their evil ways, added a prayer for Divine assistance in resisting their enticements and not learning from their ways: "May it be Your will, Lord, our G-d, that we not sin, nor be ashamed or disgraced before our ancestors" (Rabbi Ya'acov Reisher, 17th-18th centuries, central Europe).

This entreaty may have even greater significance considering that Rabbi Zeira's attempts did not benefit from the approval of his scholarly colleagues (B. Sanhedrin 37a). The Talmud relates that there were a group of thugs in the neighborhood of Rabbi Zeira. Contrary to the approach of the sages, Rabbi Zeira befriended these uncouth neighbors. Upon Rabbi Zeira's demise, these hooligans said: "Until now the short man with singed legs - referring to the diminutive Rabbi Zeira - prayed for mercy on our behalf. Now, who will entreat G-d for such clemency on our behalf?" With that, the ruffians meditated in their hearts and resolved to repent.

To cite another example where the Talmud provides a window into the personal prayer of a sage - Rabbi Yohanan, upon concluding his Amida prayer, would add: "May it be Your will, Lord, our G-d, that You look upon our shame and behold our unfortunate plight, and consequently attire Yourself with Your mercy and cover Yourself with Your strength and wrap Yourself with Your kindness and gird Yourself with Your graciousness, and may the attribute of Your goodness and humility come before You."

Knowing what we do about Rabbi Yohanan, we can understand why he beseeched the Almighty to look upon his ill-fated existence. Rabbi Yohanan's 10 sons all predeceased their father. Rabbi Yohanan was so distraught by this loss that he could not bear the finality of parting from his children. Thus he would carry the bone of his 10th son with him wherever he went as a reminder of his bereavement (B. Berachot 5b and Rashi).

Even his own health was unenviable as he was plagued by serious illness, such that he was strong enough to wear tefillin properly only during winter. During summer, when his head was not sufficiently strong, he donned tefillin on his arm but not on his head (Y. Berachot 4c). Rabbi Yohanan suffered from the life-threatening disease tzafidna. This scurvy-like condition involved bleeding from the gums and spread from the mouth to the intestines (B. Yoma 84a; B. Avoda Zara 28a).

With these hardships we can understand Rabbi Yohanan's heartfelt beseeching that G-d should look

upon his miserable plight and mercifully put an end to his troubles.

It is somewhat ironic that some of the supplications recorded in the Talmud, albeit with minor syntax changes, have become institutionalized as part of our set prayer service. As we noted, one passage serves as the final paragraph of the thrice daily Amida, and there are other examples: Another personal prayer is recited daily in the morning service, one supplication forms part of the additional Shabbat blessing that precedes a new month, while a fourth passage is added to the end of the Amida on Yom Kippur. What can be said about this incongruous situation where personal prayers giving voice to an individual's predicament become part of our established and standard prayer service?

The inclusion of such prayers may reveal the insightful abilities of our sages to author personal prayers that seem to express our own individual experiences. Who today could say that a prayer asking G-d to guard our mouths from falsehood is no longer relevant? Could we claim that an entreaty for G-d to mercifully consider our troubles has no currency in our world? Clearly these prayers are still relevant.

Moreover, these personal prayers may remind us of the timeless nature of human experience. The challenges faced by our sages in days gone-by are distant only in chronology, not in essence. We, too, hope that our stone hearts can be pried open so the gems of our tradition can enrich our existence. We, too, wish the Almighty will frustrate the evil designs of our adversaries. We, too, want to meet G-d wrapped in mercy and kindness.

Perhaps the institutionalization of these prayers in the first-person-singular has an operative lesson as well, as they remind us that in addition to what appears in our prayer books, a personal element should most definitely be included. This private, individual prayer should give voice to our own needs, hopes and desires as reflected by our own unique personal journey; an addendum akin to the additions of our sages. © 2006 Rabbi L Cooper. Rabbi Levi Cooper is Director of Advanced Programs at Pardes. His column appears weekly in the Jerusalem Post "Upfront" Magazine. Each column analyses a passage from the first tractate, of the Talmud, Brachot, citing classic commentators and adding an innovative perspective to these timeless texts.

RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

This Shabbat is commonly known as "Shabbat Nachamu" after the opening word of the haftarah: "Nachamu, nachamu ami / Comfort, comfort My people -- says your G-d. Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and proclaim to her that her time [of exile] has been fulfilled, that her iniquity has been

conciliated, for she has received from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins." (Yishayah 40:1-2)

Chazal note a parallel between the beginning and end of this passage, and they comment: "She sinned doubly, she was punished doubly, and she will be comforted doubly." What does this mean? R' Shmuel M. Fine z"l (rabbi in Lithuania, Moscow and Detroit, Michigan; died 1938) offers the following explanation:

The Torah makes seemingly conflicting demands on us. On the one hand, the Torah teaches us to be humble, merciful and low-key. On the other hand, one must serve Hashem with pride, one must feel uplifted, and one must recognize his own spiritual stature. [Ed. note: See Divrei Hayamim II 17:6.] How can these demands be reconciled?

The answer is that when we deal with our fellow Jew, for example, when we give charity or perform acts of chessed, the proper attitude is humility. One should not make the pauper feel like the recipient of a favor; indeed, the Sages teach: "More than the benefactor does for the pauper, the pauper does for his benefactor." [The pauper receives a material benefit which will soon be gone, while the benefactor receives an eternal spiritual reward.] On the other hand, when one is threatened from the outside, one must stand his ground and stand up with pride for his Judaism.

The gemara states that the second Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because of sinat chinam / baseless hatred. Clearly, then, Jews were not relating to each other with humility and mercy. Likewise, the Jews did not stand up to the Roman intruders; worse, many Jews willingly assimilated into Roman culture. Thus they sinned doubly -- they related improperly both to their fellow Jews and to those who attacked their way of life. Likewise, we have been punished doubly -- we lost control of Eretz Yisrael and we have been abused at the hands of our hosts in exile. May we soon be comforted doubly! (Eitan Shmuel p. 110) © 2001 Rabbi S. Katz & Project Genesis, Inc.

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Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi David Rose, Edinburgh Synagogue

The first two aliyot of Va'etchanan are quite difficult to understand. While the words are simple and majestic, the theme connecting them is not. The Sidrah begins with Moses' plea to G-d to be allowed to go into the Land and the rejection of that plea. Moses then goes on to expound upon the lesson of the Revelation at Sinai, again ending with the fact that he is barred from entering the Land. We then proceed to the section which also forms the Torah reading for Tisha B'av. This is a mini version of both the tochecha or reproof section in Parshat Ki-Tavo and the promise of redemption that follows in Parshat Nitzavim. This section then ends with another plea to learn the

lessons of the Exodus and the Revelation at Sinai. How are we to understand this as a coherent whole?

A hint is given by the Ramban (Nachmanides) and others. They have difficulty in the relation between the two halves of the section read on Tisha B'Av mentioned above, the reproof and the historical overview of the Exodus. They explain that the second section sheds light on the first.

The reason G-d reacts so strongly to the apostasy of the Israelites, exiling them and scattering them among the nations, is precisely because He has uniquely redeemed them from Egypt and personally spoken to them on Mt Sinai. This is reminiscent of the famous statement of the prophet Amos that 'You alone have I known from among the nations; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities'. Israel has experienced G-d's power and presence and therefore is more accountable than others for their actions.

This idea is reinforced at the beginning of the our Sidrah, which is now more comprehensible. Moses, who alone has spoken to G-d directly, is held more accountable than others for his actions. Therefore, G-d bars him from the Land. His experience should thus serve as an object lesson to the Jewish people of the fate that will befall them if they turn away from G-d. Jews are not chosen because they are better than others; we are chosen to be better than others. This is the lesson of Tisha B'av. Our special status means not that we have necessarily any guarantees against misfortune but that G-d has a special claim on our behaviour. This is not always an easy lesson, but one we need to be mindful of.

Yet the story doesn't end there. The Seforno has a different interpretation on the connection between these passages. He connects it not with the reproof but with the promise of redemption. By remembering the Exodus and Revelation at Sinai we will know that G-d will never abandon us.

Because He has uniquely done all this for us, despite us often not being worthy, He will, notwithstanding our sins, never totally abandon us and in the end He will redeem us. That is, indeed, a worthy message for this Sabbath of Comfort. © 2006 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

YOUNG ISRAEL OF PASSAIC-CLIFTON

For These Do I Weep

by Rabbi JB Love

Granted, says the Gemara, in the first Temple there were idolatry, immorality and bloodshed. "But the second Temple, where they were occupied with Torah, *mitzvos*¹ and charitable deeds;

¹ There are manuscripts where "mitzvos" is missing. This is also the case in a midrash brought in Otzar Hamidrashim (78:20) though it was probably transcribed from the compiler's text of the Gemara. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Yoma 1:1) reads, "... the second Temple,

why was it destroyed? For there was gratuitous hatred (*sinas chinam*). This should teach you that gratuitous hatred is equal in gravity to the three cardinal sins."²

It would seem that the occupation with Torah, *mitzvos* and charitable deeds preclude the sins of the first Temple. Theoretically where there is occupation with Torah there would be no immorality since the Torah is the "medicine" for the *yetzer hara*. Being occupied in fulfilling *mitzvos* should preclude idolatry and murder is rather incongruous, to say the least, with charity toward others. Nevertheless, the Gemara is telling us that none of these three nor the combination thereof stood in the way of gratuitous hatred.

We learn that was one to have the choice of assisting someone he likes in unloading his animal or assisting someone he hates in loading his animal, preference is given the latter. Although in the first case one would be aiding both the person in need and the fallen animal, nonetheless, it is preferable to overcome the evil (*yetzer hara*) of hatred and help the adversary.³

Elsewhere in the Talmud, though, the very premise that Halacha would condone one's having an adversarial relationship with another Jew is called into question.⁴ The adversary (in the above *mitzva*) must be a Gentile, suggests the Gemara. Not necessarily is the retort, The hated one may well be a Jew. It is someone whom the passerby had seen being immoral. Since only he had witnessed the trespass and thus has no recourse to the courts in order to have the offender punished, he may treat him with disdain. In fact, says the Gemara, it is a *mitzva* to hate⁵ such a person.

Well, asks Tosafos,⁶ if the fellow referred to in the *mitzvah* is required to hate the other, why, then must he help him first in order to **overcome the evil of hatred**? Tosafos, to answer, quotes Mishlei,⁷ "Like water, which faces [back at] the face, so it the heart of man toward man."

The hated fellow, seeing that he is hated (although legitimately) will return the feeling (in keeping with the above verse from Mishlei). The hater, now

where we know they were occupied with torah, diligent in mitzvos and tithes, and had every sort of good habit (veset tova)." The triad is also supported by the reasoning brought in the text.

² B. Yoma 9b

³ B. Bava Metzria, 32b.

⁴ B. P'sachim 113b. Vayikra 19:17 specifically prohibits such feelings toward a fellow Jew. The two ensuing verses prescribe reparatory actions leading to actual love for this person. The latter, love for a fellow Jew is normative.

⁵ The word *sina* when used in its biblical context is a comparative word and represents a lack of, or a lesser measure of *ahava*, commonly translated as love. (V. and cf. B'raishis 29: 30,31. V. also D'vorim 21:15.) The "hatred" condoned here by the Talmud is just such a lack of the *ahava* which one Jew should normally have for another. This is also obvious from the position of the Tosafos quoted in the text.

⁶ P'sachim, loc cit s.v. *she'raah bo*.

⁷ 27:19

sensing (theoretically unwarranted) bad vibes, will also respond in kind. One thing leads to another and we, at this point, are no longer dealing with “hatred” sanctioned by Halacha, but with what Tosafos calls, “real, or complete, hatred” (*sina g’mura*). It is this unsanctioned hatred that the Torah is trying to avoid, conquer, so to speak, by commanding the hater to help with the burden.

We can see how we can have gratuitous hatred building up between two Jews. We can see why it is totally **gratuitous**, stemming, as it does from zeal on the one hand and misunderstanding on the other. We can also understand why Torah, *mitzvos* and every good habit wouldn’t prevent such hatred. You see, it all began as a *mitzva*!

The Torah allows for the holding back of the filial closeness reserved for fellow Jews in the case of one whom I know to be lax in his morality. After all his very Jewishness is marred by such behavior. Nevertheless, three things are obvious from this *sugya*: 1. That this “hatred” must be kept to one’s self and not even the hated one should be allowed to feel it lest it become reciprocal and, thus fester and grow. 2. That one must go out of his way to prevent this “hatred” from growing into genuine ill-will between two Jews. 3. That real hatred is totally **gratuitous** even in this case, and is a function of the *yetzer hara* - which must be conquered.

Since *k’lal yisrael* was so *machmir* on *mitzvos* during the time of the second Temple, I assume they were *machmir* as well in the “*mitzva*” of hating a Jew who was immoral. It is quite probable that they were even *machmir* to the point of hating anyone they thought wasn’t doing torah and *mitzvos* properly.⁸ But in their enthusiasm to fulfill this *mitzva* I assume the secret got out and the haters felt it. It was down hill from there. It was **their own yetzer** they were supposed to conquer by being nice to the fellow, they weren’t supposed to take the fight to the other fellow’s *yetzer*. But one *chumra* leads to another and one *sina* does too.⁹

“The former ones, whose sins were revealed; (i.e. *yisrael* of the first Temple) had the end (i.e. redemption) revealed as well. The latter ones, whose sin was not revealed; their end wasn’t revealed either.”¹⁰

⁸ The Gemara (B. Yoma 9b) tells us that gratuitous hatred existed in first Temple times as well but only among the “princes of Israel.” As if to say that vindictiveness, finger pointing and petty squabbles which are taken seriously could be expected among politicians, it is when the masses begin to react in political ways that we bring a *churban* upon ourselves.

⁹ This might be a good time to mention that *chazal* say, “Any generation in which the Temple isn’t rebuilt is a generation in which it was destroyed.” (Yoma, loc.cit)

¹⁰ The joint statement of R. Yochanan and R. Eliezer in B.Yoma 9b. Rashi zl explains that in the case of the former both their sins and the limit of their exile are explicit in the scriptures. The latter, who

The cardinal sins of idolatry, immorality and murder are manifestly sins. One cannot fool one’s self about them, they are “revealed” sins. One needs merely to see what those sins caused and can immediately repent and suffer the consequences and, thank G-D, return to normal. The “end,” the deliverance, is equally manifest.

The sin of the second Temple is not manifest, unfortunately it hides (still) as a *mitzva*. There is no *t’shuva* for *mitzvos*. As long as the sin will allude us so, G-D help us, will the “end”.

The futility of such gratuitous hatred is further compounded because of its source. Tosafos quoted the insightful wisdom of *Sh’lomo Hamelech*, “As water faces [back at] the face, so does the heart of man to man.” Water, reflects one’s **own** face. When one sees another, he may well intuit the other’s feelings but first, and beyond that he sees himself. When I see someone I instinctively do not like, it is because I see something in him that is dislikeable **about myself**. If he then senses this dislike and returns it in kind, it is a totally unwarranted outgrowth of a projection of my own self-hatred. What a waste of emotion on both our parts. If my hatred were really of the kind permitted by the Torah, there would be nothing personal there merely the withholding of love because, and only because, there was no way to use the system to reconstitute this fellow. If, however, even the original zealotry stems from my own insecurity, or even my own *aveiros*, (*Hashem y’racheh*) there enters a **hidden** element of personal hatred. This, when sensed by the ostensible object of the feelings, can lead to reciprocity and *sina g’murah*. The remedy is for me to immediately recognize this zeal as an opening for the *yetzer hara* and conquer it by doing good for the other fellow, by dealing nicely with him. This, mind you for the fellow I’m “permitted” to hate for “his” *aveira*. Even if it means forgoing a larger *mitzva* for someone I “love”. “Conquering the *yetzer* [of “real” *sina*] takes precedence.”¹¹

See, then how deeply this *aveira* hides from us yet today, and alas, with it the “end.” © 1997 Rabbi JB Love

needed to uncover the reason for their exile (i.e., *sinas chinam*) through analyses must also remain in the dark as to the extent of their punishment. My explanation in the text is my own, a similar idea is quoted by Rabbi Y. Y. Wienberg zl (*S’ridei Aish* Vol. 4) as having been expressed by “The Elder”zl of Slabodka.

¹¹ B. Bava Metzia, loc cit. This *mitzva* of “hating” an avaryan is one which, after two thousand-plus years of exile, we must learn to be extremely lenient about. Fear of the possible repercussions, including the continuation of this galus, should make us be stringent about *sinas chinam*. In such a case, the halachic prescription regarding the former is *shev v’al ta’ase*.