

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Howard Gardner, professor of education and psychology at Harvard University, is one of the great minds of our time. He is best known for his theory of "multiple intelligences," the idea that there is not one thing that can be measured and defined as intelligence but many different things -- one dimension of the dignity of difference. He has also written many books on leadership and creativity, including one in particular, *Leading Minds*, that is important in understanding this week's parsha. (Howard Gardner in collaboration with Emma Laskin, *Leading minds: an anatomy of leadership*, New York, Basic Books, 2011.)

Gardner's argument is that what makes a leader is the ability to tell a particular kind of story -- one that explains ourselves to ourselves and gives power and resonance to a collective vision. So Churchill told the story of Britain's indomitable courage in the fight for freedom. Gandhi spoke about the dignity of India and non-violent protest. Margaret Thatcher talked about the importance of the individual against an ever-encroaching State. Martin Luther King told of how a great nation is colour-blind. Stories give the group a shared identity and sense of purpose.

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has also emphasized the importance of narrative to the moral life. "Man," he writes, "is in his actions and practice as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal." It is through narratives that we begin to learn who we are and how we are called on to behave. "Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutters in their actions as in their words." (Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.) To know who we are is in large part to understand of which story or stories we are a part.

The great questions -- "Who are we?" "Why are we here?" "What is our task?" -- are best answered by telling a story. As Barbara Hardy put it: "We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative." This is fundamental to understanding why Torah is the kind of book it is: not a theological treatise or a metaphysical system but a series of interlinked stories extended over time, from Abraham and Sarah's journey

from Mesopotamia to Moses' and the Israelites' wanderings in the desert. Judaism is less about truth as system than about truth as story. And we are part of that story. That is what it is to be a Jew.

A large part of what Moses is doing in the book of Devarim is retelling that story to the next generation, reminding them of what G-d had done for their parents and of some of the mistakes their parents had made. Moses, as well as being the great liberator, is the supreme story teller. Yet what he does in parshat Ki Tavo extends way beyond this.

He tells the people that when they enter, conquer and settle the land, they must bring the first ripened fruits to the central sanctuary, the Temple, as a way of giving thanks to G-d. A Mishnah in Bikkurim (ch. 3) describes the joyous scene as people converged on Jerusalem from across the country, bringing their firstfruits to the accompaniment of music and celebration. Merely bringing the fruits, though, was not enough. Each person had to make a declaration. That declaration became one of the best known passages in the Torah because, though it was originally said on Shavuot, the festival of firstfruits, in post-biblical times it became a central element of the Haggadah on seder night: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt and lived there, few in number, there becoming a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians ill-treated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labour. Then we cried out to the Lord, the G-d of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders." (Deut. 26:5-8)

Here for the first time the retelling of the nation's history becomes an obligation for every citizen of the nation. In this act, known as *vidui bikkurim*, "the confession made over firstfruits," Jews were commanded, as it were, to become a nation of storytellers.

This is a remarkable development. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi tells us that, "Only in Israel and nowhere else is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people." (Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory, Schocken, 1989, pg. 9) Time and again throughout Devarim comes the command to remember: "Remember that you were a slave in Egypt." "Remember what Amalek did to you."

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"Remember what G-d did to Miriam." "Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you."

The vidui bikkurim is more than this. It is, compressed into the shortest possible space, the entire history of the nation in summary form. In a few short sentences we have here "the patriarchal origins in Mesopotamia, the emergence of the Hebrew nation in the midst of history rather than in mythic prehistory, slavery in Egypt and liberation therefrom, the climactic acquisition of the land of Israel, and throughout -- the acknowledgement of G-d as lord of history." (Yerushalmi, *ibid.*, 12)

We should note here an important nuance. Jews were the first people to find G-d in history. They were the first to think in historical terms -- of time as an arena of change as opposed to cyclical time in which the seasons rotate, people are born and die, but nothing really changes. Jews were the first people to write history -- many centuries before Herodotus and Thucydides, often wrongly described as the first historians. Yet biblical Hebrew has no word that means "history" (the closest equivalent is *divrei hayamim*, "chronicles"). Instead it uses the root *zakhor*, meaning "memory."

There is a fundamental difference between history and memory. History is "his story," (This is a simple reminder not an etymology. *Historia* is a Greek word meaning inquiry. The same word comes to mean, in Latin, a narrative of past events.) an account of events that happened sometime else to someone else. Memory is "my story." It is the past internalised and made part of my identity. That is what the Mishnah in *Pesachim* means when it says, "Each person must see himself as if he (or she) went out of Egypt." (10:5)

Throughout *Devarim* Moses warns the people - no less than fourteen times -- not to forget. If they forget the past they will lose their identity and sense of direction and disaster will follow. Moreover, not only are the people commanded to remember, they are also commanded to hand that memory on to their children.

This entire phenomenon represents a remarkable cluster of ideas: about identity as a matter of collective memory; about the ritual retelling of the

nation's story; above all about the fact that every one of us is a guardian of that story and memory. It is not the leader alone, or some elite, who are trained to recall the past, but every one of us. This too is an aspect of the devolution and democratization of leadership that we find throughout Judaism as a way of life. The great leaders tell the story of the group, but the greatest of leaders, Moses, taught the group to become a nation of storytellers.

You can still see the power of this idea today. As I point out in my book *The Home We Build Together*, if you visit the Presidential memorials in Washington, you see that each carries an inscription taken from their words: Jefferson's 'We hold these truths to be self-evident...', Roosevelt's 'The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself', Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and his second Inaugural, 'With malice toward none; with charity for all...' Each memorial tells a story.

London has no equivalent. It contains many memorials and statues, each with a brief inscription stating who it represents, but there are no speeches or quotations. There is no story. Even the memorial to Churchill, whose speeches rivalled Lincoln's in power, carries only one word: Churchill.

America has a national story because it is a society based on the idea of covenant. Narrative is at the heart of covenantal politics because it locates national identity in a set of historic events. The memory of those events evokes the values for which those who came before us fought and of which we are the guardians.

A covenantal narrative is always inclusive, the property of all its citizens, newcomers as well as the home-born. It says to everyone, regardless of class or creed: this is who we are. It creates a sense of common identity that transcends other identities. That is why, for example, Martin Luther King was able to use it to such effect in some of his greatest speeches. He was telling his fellow African Americans to see themselves as an equal part of the nation. At the same time, he was telling white Americans to honour their commitment to the Declaration of Independence and its statement that 'all men are created equal'.

England does not have the same kind of national narrative because it is based not on covenant but on hierarchy and tradition. England, writes Roger Scruton, "was not a nation or a creed or a language or a state but a home. Things at home don't need an explanation. They are there because they are there." (England, an *Elegy*, Continuum, 2006, pg. 16) England, historically, was a class-based society in which there were ruling elites who governed on behalf of the nation as a whole. America, founded by Puritans who saw themselves as a new Israel bound by covenant, was not a society of rulers and ruled, but rather one of collective responsibility. Hence the phrase, central to American politics but never used in English politics:

"We, the people."

By making the Israelites a nation of storytellers, Moses helped turn them into a people bound by collective responsibility -- to one another, to the past and future, and to G-d. By framing a narrative that successive generations would make their own and teach to their children, Moses turned Jews into a nation of leaders. ©2014 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the Lord your G-d is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the Lord your G-d is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey . . . set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today . . ." (Deuteronomy 27:2-4)

Why are the Israelites commanded to leave Trans Jordan and travel through the heart of enemy territory all the way up to Mt. Ebal overlooking Shekhem? After forty years of wandering in the desert, what's the rush to get to Shekhem?

The command is especially strange since the Israelites will then almost immediately return back to where they started from! And why the urgency to write out the Torah on twelve stones in Shekhem?

The first explanation is based upon the Biblical record that Abraham, heeded G-d's commandment to leave his land, (Ur of the Chaldees, in modern-day Iraq) taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and all their belongings.

When they reached Canaan, Abraham continued to traverse the promised boundaries of Israel as far as Shekhem. There, he built an altar to G-d who had appeared to him (Gen.12:5-7).

The Gaon of Lutzk, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, (1881-1966), author of *Oznayim LaTorah*, points out that by coming to Shekhem, the Israelites establish the fact they're not newcomers to Israel; their historical roots in this land goes back to Abraham. They were exiled in Egypt, but now they're returning to re-establish Abraham's legacy. It was not the land's fruit trees, or physical beauty that brought them back to Israel; it was the fact that Israel was their Promised Land, originally settled and acquired by Abraham.

In addition, Shekhem is one of three locations (along with Hebron and Jerusalem), which was paid for in cash. Jacob, after his long stay with Laban in Aram, returned and bought an open field, Shekhem, for 100 kesitah. (Gen. 33:19)

This combination of historical right (Abraham's acquisition by settlement) and law (Jacob's purchase), makes Shekhem unique among Israel's cities. Hence for the émigrés from the desert to travel first to Shekhem was like bringing visitors straight from Ben

Gurion airport to the Kotel.

But it's not just a history lesson. When the Jews are commanded to write the Torah on twelve stones, past memory becomes future destiny. For although the Jewish right to the land may be historic, Jews will not be able to live on their land unless they keep the ethical, moral and ritual commandments of Torah. This is what guarantees that Israel will not be the mere gravesite of our past, but will remain the homeland of our future.

And the Torah is more than the Constitution of Israel. The verses concerning the Jews setting up these twelve stones end (Deut. 27:8) with the words 'be'er hetev,' which literally mean 'explained clearly.' Quoting from the Mishnah Sotah (7: 1), Rashi explains that 'be'er hetev' means that the Torah was written "in 70 languages," symbolizing the 70 nations. In other words, the sages understood that a further condition for our maintaining sovereignty over the land is that we must teach at least the moral laws of the Torah to the entire world.

When G-d first elected Abraham, He explained that the Patriarch will be the father of a great nation through which all the families of the earth will be blessed. Indeed, G-d chose Abraham because he was "teaching his household to guard the ways of the Lord, to do compassionate righteousness and moral justice". (Gen. 18:18-19).

In the covenant with Abraham, "between the pieces" G-d established Israel, the nation; in the Covenant at Sinai, G-d established Israel, the religion; and in the Covenant at Shekhem, G-d established Israel, His witnesses to the world! It is precisely this Third Covenant which expresses our universal mission.

Shekhem is also where Joseph, the son of Jacob, is buried. Joseph, who never forgot G-d's charge to Abraham to bless the world; Joseph, who dreamt of Egyptian agriculture and eventually brought his entire family to Egypt; Joseph, who taught Pharaoh about the G-d of Israel and the world; this is the same Joseph who set the stage to teach the greatest power in the ancient world that G-d created every human being in His image and that G-d demands the inviolability and fundamental freedom of every individual. Joseph began the process which led to the Arab Spring today.

Finally, it was in Shekhem that the children of Israel waged their war against a tribal "nation" which perpetrated an act of rape upon their sister Dinah, seemingly with impunity. This was the first example of the necessity of Israel to champion moral justice and human rights before the eyes of the world in the Fertile Crescent, the first place where Israel fought terrorism.

Perhaps this is why our Promised Land is at the crossroads of the continent. From the very moment we crossed the Jordan, G-d charges us with perfecting the world under the Kingship of a G-d of love and universal

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

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In this week's parsha, all of Jewish history is reflected in the two relatively short scenarios that the Torah describes for us. There is the opening section of the parsha – the promise that the Jewish people will come into the Land of Israel, settle there, develop the country, build the Temple and express their gratitude to G-d for the blessings that He has bestowed upon them. They will harvest bountiful crops and commemorate these achievements by bringing the first fruits of their labor as a thanksgiving offering to the Temple and the priests of the time. They will then recite a short statement of Jewish history, a synopsis of the events that have occurred to them from the time of the patriarchs until their own time.

The Torah promises blessings and serenity to the people of Israel but the Torah does not minimize the toil and travail that led to the moment of these offerings in the Temple. However, it does convey a sense of satisfaction, achievement, gratitude and appreciation for the accomplishments of the Jewish people, individually and nationally, regarding the Land of Israel and its bounty.

It is a spirit of wondrous gratitude that marks the accomplishments of the individual farmer and of the people generally in settling and developing the Land of Israel. There is little room for hubris and self-aggrandizement in the text of this offering in the Temple. Rather, it highlights the relationship between G-d, the Land and people of Israel. That is one scenario that is outlined for us in this week's parsha.

The second situation is a much more somber and even frightening one. It describes the events, travail and persecution that will visit the Jewish people over the long millennia of its exile from its land. In vivid detail, the Torah describes the horrors, defeats and destruction that the Exile will visit upon the Jewish people.

In our generation, this portion of the Torah reading can actually be seen on film and in museums. We are witness to the fact that not one word of the Torah's description of dark future events is an exaggeration or hyperbole. This period of trouble and exile has lasted far longer than the offering of the first fruits in the Temple. Unfortunately, the residue of this second scenario is still with us and within us as we live in a very anti-Jewish world society.

Yet we are to be heartened by the concluding words of this section of the Torah that promises us that it will be the first scenario that will eventually prevail. Even though so much of the negative is still present in our current state of affairs, we should nevertheless be grateful for our restoration to sovereignty and dominion in our own homeland and for the bounty of the land that

we currently enjoy.

All of this is a symbol of the beginning of the resurrection of the first scenario and the diminishing effects of the second outlined in this week's parsha. May we all be wise enough to realize this and adjust our attitudes and actions accordingly. ©2014 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

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Four sentences found in this week's portion have become a central element of the Passover Seder.

These sentences prescribe the ritual that is to accompany the presentation of the first fruits at the sanctuary in Jerusalem. A beautiful prayer is recited upon that occasion which deals with the Jews settling in Egypt; their being enslaved by Pharaoh; their crying out to G-d for help; and finally their being freed. (Deuteronomy 26:5-8)

Yet, why should verses from Deuteronomy be recited at the Seder table when there are chapters dedicated to the actual unfolding of the story in the Book of Exodus? Several answers come to mind.

The portion of the first fruits instructs the native Israeli to thank G-d for his bounty by bringing the first of his produce to the Holy Temple. Although not enslaved in Egypt he recalls the Egyptian experience in the first person as if he were there. Hence, this text is read on Passover night, as it is our challenge then, not only to "retell" the story of the Exodus but to "reenact" the event as if we, living thousands of years later, were in Egypt. "Only through this total identification as a Jewish people," writes Rabbi Shlomo Riskin in his Passover Haggadah, "can we ensure the historical continuity of Judaism and Jewry." Just as the native Israeli acts as if s/he were there, we must do so as well.

Rabbi David Silber offers an alternative approach. Paradoxically, he argues, only the people who were not in Egypt can fully understand that bondage. In fact, many of the slaves who left wanted to return-as they never fully comprehended what it meant to leave Egypt. Only a free people could attain the proper perspective to recognize that the experience in Egypt may not have been a punishment but a covenantal opportunity.

Indeed, sometimes, one is better able to assess the significance of an event years after it has occurred. Seeing an experience from a distance gives one a more whole perspective of what happened. For example, the generation after the Holocaust, not having been there, has a different perspective on the significance and impact of the Shoah. Each generation has the potential to understand the Shoah in ways that

even survivors may not.

A final thought comes to mind. The text chosen to be analyzed on the Seder night deals with the land of Israel to teach that leaving slavery has much more significance and meaning if it is followed by entry into the Jewish land of Israel. The land of Israel then takes its place as a central idea in the Passover Seder.

Centrality of Israel is a foundation of Judasim. There are, of course, communities in the Diaspora that have become exemplary expressions of Torah values. But the place, the only place, where the national destiny of the Jewish people can be carried out is in the land of Israel. Only there do we have the sovereignty, the independence, the autonomy, to potentially become a light to the nations. Thus, entry to Israel is inextricably bound to the exodus. Without it, redemption is incomplete. © 2007 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 DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"You have declared today regarding Hashem, that He shall be your G-d, and that you shall follow in His ways, and that you will keep His statutes and His commandments and His laws, and that you will listen to His voice. And Hashem has declared about you today that you will be a treasured nation to Him, as He has told you, and will keep all of His commandments. And will raise your status above all the nations that He made, for praise, and for renown, and for glory, and that you will be a holy nation to Hashem your G-d, as He has spoken." These verses (D'varim 26:17-19) are much more difficult to translate than they are to understand, but the specifics are extremely important since they are a summation of our covenant with G-d. [This covenant is about to be re-entered, and its specifics described, which is why these "declarations" (one of the words whose translation the commentators grapple with) are being made "today."]

One of the clauses of this summation is the topic of much discussion, as it seems to appear on both sides of the agreement. We agreed to "keep G-d's statutes, commandments and laws" while G-d agreed "to keep all of His commandments." Or has He? What does it mean that G-d will keep His own commandments? And if it means that we will keep His commandments, why is it included in the list of things that G-d will do for us? Additionally, why is the word "all" included with His obligation, but not with ours? Is it a way of including all the categories ("statutes, commandments and laws") without having to mention them explicitly?

Rabbeinu Bachye sidesteps these questions by explaining the words "to keep all of His commandments" not as one of G-d's covenantal

obligations, but as a condition for His previously mentioned commitment to consider us His "treasured nation." In other words, only if we keep all of His mitzvos are we worthy enough to be His "treasured nation." However, if this was the intent of the words "to keep all of His commandments," it should have said "if the commandments are kept" or "when" they are kept; the way it is worded indicates that it's a separate clause, not part of the previous one.

[Interestingly, Rabbeinu Bachye's approach indicates that the covenant can never be broken. Otherwise, by not keeping His commandments we didn't fulfill our covenantal obligation; needing to specify that being His "treasured nation" (and only that clause) is contingent upon our keeping His commandments is only necessary if the covenant is still in force despite our having failed to do our part. The other clauses of G-d's promise are apparently still in effect even if we don't "keep all of His commandments."]

Ramban (see also Alshich) understands the clause "to keep all of His commandments" to mean that G-d has given His Torah only to us, not to the other nations. Keeping the mitzvos is an honor and a privilege, and G-d is declaring that this honor and privilege is reserved for us. Meshech Chachmah has a similar approach, adding that the word "all" is included because there are some commandments that apply to everyone (i.e. the Noachide laws), some that can be done by anyone (even if non-Jews aren't obligated to), and some (e.g. keeping Shabbos and learning Torah) that non-Jews are prohibited from keeping; we are the only nation that can keep "all" the commandments. Or Hachayim suggests that the comparison is between the Nation of Israel and the righteous individuals who lived prior to our becoming G-d's treasured nation (at Sinai), such as Adam, Noach and the Patriarchs, as we were given "all of His mitzvos," whereas they were only commanded a few.

The main drawback of this approach (and its variations) is the switching back and forth between who the subject doing the action is. G-d does the "declaring" and G-d "raises" us above the others, yet in-between it is we who do the "keeping" of the commandments. Granted, it is difficult to have G-d be the one "keeping" His own commandments (which is part of our original difficulty), but that doesn't make the issue of switching back and forth disappear. It is possible to make what we positioned as two clauses into one longer two-part clause (as opposed to Rabbeinu Bachye, who made the second part a condition for the first part), with G-d declaring that we are His treasured nation so only we can keep all of His commandments (see S'fornu), but the expression "as He has told you" and the word "and" dividing these two parts, as well as the hard comma of the musical note between them, indicates that they are two separate clauses. It should be noted, though, that Ba'al HaTurim counts six clauses for each side, with

the second clause being "raising you above others." Obviously, he considers us being G-d's treasured nation and keeping all of His mitzvos as one clause.

Panim Yafos references the Talmud (B'rachos 6a) saying that G-d puts on t'filin (as it were). Since they demonstrate His attachment to us (based on what's written in His t'filin, much as our t'filin demonstrate our attachment to Him), G-d is promising to keep these types of "commandments," i.e. ones that demonstrate His commitment to us.

Chasam Sofer references the Talmud (Ta'anis 23a) saying that G-d fulfills the requests of the righteous (see also Avos 2:4), and suggests that the verse is saying that when we are a "treasured nation" He will "keep" our "commandments," i.e. fulfill our requests (with the word "his" being lower case, referring to the nation).

Malbim explains the words "to keep all of His commandments" to mean enabling us to keep His mitzvos by removing any obstacles that might prevent us from doing them and by providing everything we need to fulfill them. This fits well in the context of the covenant, where the blessings are not a reward for keeping the Torah, but a promise to provide us with the optimal environment to continue to keep it (see Rambam, Hilchos T'shuva 9:1). [Chasam Sofer's grandson, Rabbi Akiva Sofer (Shir M'on), makes a similar suggestion; since we would not be able to overpower the evil inclination without G-d's help, He is promising to help us, thereby enabling us to "keep His commandments."] However, this changes the definition of the word "keep" to "enables us to keep," a definition inconsistent with how the word is used in the previous verse. Nevertheless, since the mitzvos are best "kept" if we have everything we need to fulfill them and nothing prevents us from doing them, it could be argued that this is how G-d "keeps" them.

Netziv says that G-d's promise "to keep all of His commandments" is based on the fact that "G-d created the world with a structure of the 613 mitzvos, which are what keeps the world going." By making the world's existence dependant upon our keeping the Torah, the importance of keeping the mitzvos becomes magnified, helping ensure that we do so. This can be considered how G-d "keeps" His own commandments (similar to Malbim), but Netziv seems to be saying that the way G-d Himself "keeps" the mitzvos is by having the world's existence tied to them.

Another possibility is based on the corollary to Malbim's approach. Rather than G-d "keeping all of His commandments" by providing us with the tools (and environment) necessary to keep them, by making sure things go badly when we don't keep them -- either because the world collapses around us when we aren't providing the spiritual nourishment it needs to work properly or because G-d punishes us for not doing what is incumbent upon us to do -- ultimately the mitzvos will

be kept (by us).

Although the word "keep" usually refers to the actual observance of the mitzvos, it literally means to "guard" them (which is accomplished by fulfilling them). This is why the need to "build fences" around the Torah, prohibiting things that had been permitted in order to protect it, is learned from the commandment to "keep" the mitzvos (see Y'vamos 21a, based on Vayikra 18:30). G-d "guards" His mitzvos, ensuring that they will be kept, by providing severe consequences for a lack of observance. And it is not just some of His mitzvos that must be kept in order to avoid the consequences; if any are neglected, we will be held accountable (so we must keep "all" of them, and therefore, by extension, G-d is "keeping/guarding" all of them).

These verses (D'varim 26:17-19) are a summation of the covenant between us and G-d, and, as evidenced from the bulk of this Parasha (28:15-69) and Parashas B'chukosai (Vayikra 26:14-46), much of the covenant involves the consequences for not keeping our end of the deal. It is therefore fitting (and perhaps necessary) for this aspect of the covenant to be included in the summation. Not only must we "keep His commandments," but by spelling out the consequences if we don't, G-d is also "keeping all of His commandments," i.e. making sure they will all be kept. ©2014 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

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"Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with happiness and goodness of heart when you had an abundance of everything." (Devarim 28:47). The horrific punishments of the tochacha are caused by our failure to serve Hashem with happiness.

The Rambam concludes Hilchos Lulav (8:15) as follows: "The simcha that a person rejoices in the performance of mitzvos, and in the love of Hashem Who commanded them, is a great service. One who prevents himself from this happiness is worthy of punishment, as it says 'Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with happiness and goodness of heart.'"

This formulation indicates that joy is a natural outgrowth of performing mitzvos out of love of Hashem unless one prevents it. How is it prevented? The Rambam answers: One who is arrogant and accords himself honor is a sinner and a fool. But one who lowers himself is the great and honored one who serves with love. There is no greatness and honor except to rejoice before Hashem.

A prerequisite for serving Hashem with love is humility. One who is full of love for himself, whose arrogance leads him to honor himself, is unable to love Hashem with all his heart. While love of Hashem is not

mentioned in the passuk, presumably the Rambam derived it from the need to serve Hashem with goodness of heart, which, in turn, requires wholehearted love of Hashem. A good, and humble, heart leads not only to proper interpersonal relationships (See Avos 2:13) but also allows for the heart to be filled with love of Hashem.

Seeking honor precludes true happiness as well. One who pursues honor, honor escapes him, since he never has enough. Happiness with one's lot is not only true wealth (Avos 4:1), but also reflects love of Hashem Who grants every person his portion. Only by serving Hashem with joy and a good heart can the punishments of the tochacha be avoided.

The Rambam quotes this passuk in Hilchos Yom Tov as well. The Torah mandates rejoicing on yom tov and requires gladdening the disadvantaged as well (Devarim 16:11,14). One who feasts and drinks but does not provide for the poor and embittered does not achieve this mitzva joy but only the joy of his belly (Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18). Intoxication, levity and lightheadedness is not joy; it is frivolity and foolishness. We are commanded to have joy that contains service of the Creator, and proper service of Hashem is with joy, as it says "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with happiness and goodness of heart" (ibid 6:20). Again, the juxtaposition of joy and goodheartedness appears to be the Rambam's source. Without helping the poor, one cannot experience true joy.

"Gladdening the heart of the poor, orphans, widows and strangers is the greatest and most splendid joy. One who does so resembles Hashem, Who revives the spirit of the lowly and the heart of the crushed" (Hilchos Megilla 2:17). Serving, and resembling, Hashem, the Source of joy (Divrei Hayamim I 16:27), yields the greatest possible happiness.

"I have done all that You have commanded me" (Devarim 26:14) -- this refers to the tithes eaten in Yerushalayim and the tithes given to the Levi and the poor (see Rashi). Rashi concludes: "I have rejoiced and have brought joy to others with it", referring to the aforementioned tithes respectively.

Rashi's formulation indicates that one must be joyous in order to make others happy. While others refer here to the Levi and the poor, earlier (14:26,27) the Torah also commands: "You shall rejoice, you and your household." This refers specifically to one's wife, without whom a man cannot enjoy true happiness (Yevamos 62b).

"He shall gladden his wife", as Onkelos translates. He who translates 'he shall be glad with his wife' is mistaken" (Rashi, Devarim 24:5). The "mistaken" translation is none other than Yonasan ben Uziel. How do we justify his ungrammatical translation?

Perhaps Targum Yonasan is based on the linkage established by Rashi (26:14) himself, "I have rejoiced and have brought joy to others with it". In order

to fulfill the literal sense of gladdening one's wife, one must first be glad with his wife. He should be overjoyed by his marriage, which yields Torah protection, peace, joy, blessing and goodness (Yevamos 62b). In fact, the Rambam (Hilchos Ishus 15:19) teaches that a married man may not be sad. His sadness will undoubtedly affect his wife and preclude his fulfillment of his obligation to gladden her. Targum Yonasan demands that a man be glad with his wife as a prerequisite to the literal requirement to gladden her.

True joy is achieved by serving Hashem with humility and love, and by giving and thereby resembling Hashem. The joy of marriage, the metaphor of loving Hashem (Rambam Hilchos Teshuva 10:3), is achieved by giving to and gladdening one's spouse as well. Indeed, a man and wife who merit it, Hashem dwells in their midst (Sota 17a). ©2014 Rabbi M. Willig and The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg

Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne

"**W**hen you go out to war with your enemy, your G-d will place him in your hands" [Devarim 21:10]. We are promised that we will be victorious, but the question is just how this will be accomplished. At different times we have seen different types of behavior. For example, Yehoshua was told to set an ambush for the city of Ai, and he did so using thirty thousand soldiers, thus winning the battle.

On the other hand, Gideon came to fight against Midyan with thirty-two thousand soldiers. G-d told him, "The number of people is too large for Me to hand over Midyan in their hands, for in that case Yisrael will exaggerate their power over mine, and say, my own hands helped me" [Shoftim 7:2]. He therefore told Gideon to release some of the forces. But even after twenty thousand men returned home, He told Gideon, "There are still too many" [7:4]. He was told to bring them to the water's edge, and that those who drink directly with their tongues should be kept, while those who kneeled down would be sent home. In the end only three hundred men were left, less than one percent of the original number. Gideon won the battle using only these men.

What, then does the Holy One, Blessed be He, want? Does He want us to win our battles in a natural way, or would He prefer miraculous behavior, as is written, "G-d will fight for you, and you shall be silent" [Shemot 14:14]? According to Rav Kook, the answer to this depends on the period involved and the moral status of the nation. When the nation was first formed, including the people who left Egypt and then travelled in the desert, there was a need for miracles in order to inculcate within them the foundations of faith. But in Eretz Yisrael, the demand in general is for us to take

positive action, as long as we remember that "G-d is the One who gives you the strength to gather riches" [Devarim 8:18]. But we are the ones who perform the action. And that is the way things should be.

"Some come in chariots, others come on horses, but we make mention of the name of G-d" [Tehillim 20:8]. Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook explained that this does not mean that our enemies will fight using tanks and airplanes while we sit and recite Tehillim. We also have tanks and airplanes, but we mention G-d's name in connection with our tanks and remember that G-d is the source of all our might.

After the victory of the Six Day War, the Defense Minister declared that we helped the Holy One, Blessed be He, in His victory. Many people were very upset by this statement, which implies the concept that "my power and my strength made this wealth for me" [Devarim 8:17]. But Rav Tzvi Yehuda was happy. He said that this is really the way things happen, that we support Him. "In the future a voice will come out from heaven, saying, whoever acted together with G-d is invited to come and receive his reward." [Tanchuma 22:6].

In the time of Yehoshua there was a low probability that the people would take the exclusive credit for their victories, and they were therefore able to operate by a natural process. But in the generation of Gideon, when the people worshipped idols, there was a definite possibility that they would take credit for any victories, and it was therefore necessary to perform miracles at the time.

"... for Yisrael is a youth, and I love him" [Hoshayahu 11:1]. A young child likes to be fed with a spoon. When he gets older he wants to eat on his own, and when he reaches maturity he wants to gather his own food. When we were children we were fed through miracles, but in Eretz Yisrael we have become adults and we want to do the work by ourselves. If our generation was like that of Yehoshua we could have won the war by using only the Iron Dome defense system and nobody would have brought up the

possibility that this "Protective Dome" could be credited to us alone. Everybody would have known that the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave the military personnel and the scientists the wisdom with which they built the system. If, however, we would be living in the generation of Gideon, the victory would have been a result of all the enemy rockets falling in open spaces, and it would have been perfectly clear to all that the hand of G-d was directly involved in the war. However, since we are in the generation of "ikvetah d'meshicha" - the footsteps of the Mashiach" -- we are like young children who must be spoon-fed, not yet mature enough to provide our own food. Therefore we have the Iron Dome system, but we also have the miracle of many enemy rockets hitting open areas. In summary, we can all see that Eretz Yisrael is a land which is openly protected by G-d (see Devarim 11:12). ©2014 Rabbi A. Bazak and Machon Zomet. Translated by Moshe Goldberg

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Of the many sub-topics in Parshat Ki Tavo, one especially noteworthy expression is when the Torah says, "G-d has not given you a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear until this day" (Deuteronomy 29:3). Tradition (and Rashi) has it that Moshe gave Shevet Levi (the tribe of Levi) a Torah scroll, and the rest of the nation justifiably complained that they didn't get one. But their complaint wasn't that they didn't get a scroll, but that future generations might have a problem with it. Upon hearing this complaint Moshe rejoiced. As Rabbi Liebowitz explains, he was actually happy about a complaint because it showed that the Jews valued the Torah and their bond with G-d so much that they even thought about the future of that bond.

If we look closer at the Passuk (verse) we'll see it even clearer: G-d gave us eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to feel. Why does the Torah here say that our hearts will know, instead of feel? The answer is that if we feel something strongly enough, in our hearts we know it to be true. The Jews knew in their hearts that they had to protect the future of the Torah by safeguarding against potential diversions. The Torah is telling us that we must look into our hearts, and do whatever it takes to preserve, maintain and grow as Jews, until our hearts know what's right. And if we don't know exactly what we need to do, we must always use our eyes to look at customs of the past, our ears to listen to the existing rules, and our minds to develop our own Jewish niche, until our heart knows we've found it. ©2014 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.



Parsha Puns!

**ARBEcha that A ROAR might cause u2
turn TAIL & run, but LOOK, don't let it
PLAGUE u! SHIP off toward the STARS &
have an enTITHEing Shabbos!**

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