

מתוקים מדבש



Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah

RABBI MICHA BERGER

Bemachshavah Techilah

“Behold, I placed before you the land; come and inherit the land which Hashem promised to your forefathers – to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov – to give to them and their children after them.” (Devarim 1:8)

The Sifri¹ comments on this last clause, perhaps because it seems redundant: *If Israel was given to our forefathers, would we, their children, not get the land from them? And do their children not come after them? The Sifri quotes two interpretations: “To give to them” – to those who first came to the land, “and to their children” – their descendants, “after them” – that which David and Yer'avam [ben Yo'ash] later conquered. Another interpretation: “To give to them” – to those who first came to the land, “and to their children” – those who returned from Bavel, “after them” – the generation that reacquires the land in the messianic era.*

Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen MiDvinsk, writes in his Meshech Chochmah² that he finds it “simple” that this debate is a consequence of two others.

“Rabbi Eliezer said, ‘I heard that when they were building the sanctuary [before the second Temple], they made curtains for [the as yet unbuilt] walls of the sanctuary, and curtains

for the [future] walls of the courtyard. But they built the walls of the sanctuary from the outside [of the curtains], and the walls of the courtyard from within [them].’ Rabbi Yehoshua said, ‘I heard that they[, those who returned after the exile to Bavel,] offered korbanos even when there was no Temple [yet], they ate the holy of holies even when there were no curtains, and they ate the less holy and the second tithes even when there were no curtains because kedushah rishonah kidsha leshe'ata vekidsha le'asid lavo – the original sanctity, was sanctified for its time, and sanctified for all future to come.’ Implied is that Rabbi Eliezer holds lo kidsha le'asid lavo – it was not sanctified for all time to come.” (Megillah 10a)

According to Rabbi Eliezer, the original sanctification of the land and of the Temple was only for the duration of the first *Beis HaMikdash*. This position comes from a tradition he received that before starting worship in the second *Beis HaMikdash*, they had to erect curtains denoting the walls of the new Temple, building something anew. Rabbi Yehoshua, on the other hand, had a tradition that they started worship right away, because the sanctity of the first *Beis HaMikdash* remained; the Temple Mount was still ready for worship from that original sanctification.

The second debate the Meshech Chochmah uses to understand the Sifri

is whether the conquest of an individual is considered conquest. “In three ways Syria [conquered under King David’s command] is equated with the land of Israel, and in three ways with outside the land. Its sand can become tamei like the diaspora’s, one who sells his slave into Syria is like one who sells to outside the land, and one who brings a writ of divorce from Syria is like one who brings it from outside the land. And in three ways it is like Israel: it[s produce] require tithing and shemittah, one who desires to enter it should enter it in taharah, and one who buys a field in Syria is like one who bought in the courtyards of Jerusalem. It requires tithing and shemittah, because he holds the conquest of an individual is considered conquest. (Gittin 8a-8b)

Rav Meir Simcha HaKohen MiDvinsk explains the first opinion of our Sifri as holding that the original sanctity of the land remains until the end of time. Therefore, the gift that we received in the days of Yehoshua is the gift by which we have the land today. The subsequent returns to Israel after the first exile and the current one could not qualify as the gifts referred to in our verse. However, this first opinion does consider an individual’s conquest to be significant. Therefore the enlarging of the borders by David and Yeravam ben Yoach are additional gifts to be implied by the redundancy in the verse.

According to the second opinion, the original sanctification did not

¹ Piska 8

² Ad loc

outlast the original commonwealth.³ Therefore we needed to re-sanctify the land and the Temple Mount. Hashem gave us the land a second time, and will, G-d willing, soon give it to us a third. However, according to this opinion, David's and Yeravam's decisions to enlarge the borders are not of significance.

While the Meshech Chochmah explains the midrash well, he does not tell us why the two debates ought to be linked. Could not someone believe that an individual's decision to conquer land qualifies as halachic conquest as

³ The *rishonim* debate the meaning of this position. The Rambam (Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 5:16) and Ra'avad (Hilchos Terumos 13:13) write that while the first sanctification in the days of Yehoshua was not permanent, the second sanctification is still in effect. This position is disputed by the Sefer HaTerumah (Hilchos Eretz Yisrael) and Rabbeinu Simcha (Or Zaru'a, Avodah Zarah 299). The Meshech Chochmah must be assuming that the second sanctification was also temporary, otherwise the verse could not be giving significance to the messianic return to Israel as a third giving of the land. *Iy"H* we will someday discuss the Rambam's position, but it is out of the scope of this week's article.

well as believing that the original conquest by Yehoshua did not permanently sanctify the land? Or that an individual's decision does not qualify, and Yehoshua did sanctify the land permanently? These positions would yield 5 gifts of land (Yehoshua, David, Yeravam, the return from Bavel and the messianic return) or only 1 (Yehoshua) respectively, but are they only linked by the necessities of our verse, or are they also logically sound?

I would like to suggest that perhaps they are based on differing approaches toward sanctity. Does something become *kadosh* when it is set aside for sacred purpose, or when it is actually pressed into service? *Kiddushin* occurs when the husband gives the wife a ring and declares "You are hereby consecrated..." – sanctity by declaration, before the pair do anything together as a couple. However, the sanctity of the Jewish people operates on both levels. There is the *kedushah* of every Jew, no matter how assimilated. Then there is

also the added *kedushah* from worship – "*Kedoshim tihyu* – You shall be holy!"

If the *kedushah* of the land is defined in terms of its being set aside, then even a single person can consecrate land by choosing to conquer it. Even if another people forcibly take the land from us, as long as we do not nullify that appointment the *kedushah* remains. This is the first opinion in the Sifri, which counts the conquests of Kings David and Yeravam ben Yoash as new consecrations and therefore new gifts.

On the other hand, if the land's *kedushah* derives from its use as a place where the Jewish People can live as Jews, then it requires the people as a whole to bestow its *kedushah*. And, the *kedushah* can be lost when the land is under the control of others and it does not house a Jewish society. This is the second opinion, that each resettlement was another giving of Israel to us.

RABBI MICHA BERGER

Bakeish Shalom

The story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza is very well known. It is introduced by Rabbi Yochanan, who asks, "What is the meaning of the verse in Mishlei which reads, 'Fortunate is the one who is always fearful, but the one who is hard of heart will fall to evil?' (28:14) It was because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza that Yerushalayim was destroyed."¹

An unnamed host was throwing a party, and invited his good friend Kamtza. Through an accident, the invitation went to Bar Kamtza. The host hated Bar Kamtza and refused to allow him to remain, even after Bar Kamtza offered to pay his way;

even after he offered to pay for the half the *simchah*; even to pay for the whole affair! The host must have been relatively prestigious, as many of the leading rabbanim of the generation were in attendance. But none of them spoke up. Bar Kamtza felt that a society in which none of its leaders would stand up to this injustice did not deserve to survive. And although his subsequent actions were evil, apparently Hashem agreed with his assessment.

Bar Kamtza went to Nero Caesar and told him that the Jews had rebelled. And as proof, he alleged that if Caesar would give an offering to the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Jews would reject it. Caesar gave a healthy calf, but Bar Kamtza made

some kind of blemish in it that invalidated it as an offering. The Rabbis wanted to offer it anyway, since the risk to life outweighs the *halakhah*. Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulos objected, saying that people would think that it means that blemished animals may be offered. Then they wanted to kill Bar Kamtza, so that he could not report back to the Romans. Again, Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulos objected, as he thought it would teach people that the punishment for damaging an offering was death. Nero heard that his offering was refused, was convinced that the Jews were in rebellion, and after checking some portents, decided to attack.

¹ Gittin 55b

Later in the Gemara,² Rabbi Elazar presents the lesson, “Come and see how great is the power of embarrassment! For Hashem helped Bar Kamtza and destroyed His Temple and burnt His sanctuary.”

This lesson is far more intuitive than Rabban Gamliel’s. He interrupts the story to comment, “Because of the ‘*anivus*’ of Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulus our Temple was destroyed, our sanctuary burnt, and we were exiled from the land.”³ This “*anivus*” is a false *anivus*. In this week’s *parashah* we begin *Sefer Devarim*, the overwhelming majority of which is the final sermons of Moshe Rabbeinu – the most modest of people. True *anivus* is a full awareness of one’s abilities and a lack of attendant self-pride because one knows that G-d gave everything necessary to be even greater than one iss. *Anivus* is an emotion that motivates, not cripples.

But how is Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulus’s error nearly comparable in magnitude to the sins of the host, of Bar Kamtza, or of the guests who remained silent? Why does Rabban Gamliel lay the blame at his feet? And, in fact, Rabban Gamliel introduces the story by saying that it was the fault of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, not Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulus!

A different gemara⁴ provides an even more enigmatic reason for the

² Ibid 57a

³ Ibid 56a

⁴ Nedarim 81a

destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Yirmiyahu asks, “For what reason did the Land perish and become parched like a desert . . .?”⁵ The question was posed to sages and prophets, and they could not answer. Hashem Himself then replied, “For they have forsaken my Torah that I placed before them; they did not listen to My Voice nor follow it.” Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav, people were learning Torah, but they neglected to recite *Birchas HaTorah* before they began learning every day. For this we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*. But are we to understand that not making a *berachah* is tantamount to not following Hashem’s Voice?

Why are there two or perhaps three *berachos*⁶ before learning Torah? Most other *mitzvos* only have one *berachah*. The Ramban⁷ explains that the first was a *birchas hamitzvah*, a *berachah* before a mitzvah like any other. However, the second *berachah* is a blessing of praise and thanks, like that after food.

⁵ Yirmiyahu 9:10

⁶ 1. “*La’asok bedivrei Sorah*,” 2. “*Aasher bachar banu*,” and 3. “*Veha’arev na*” if considered as separate from “*la’asok*.”

⁷ Perhaps the basis for a third *berachah* is that one separately thanks Hashem for placing the words of Torah “in our mouths and in the mouths of our offspring” as individuals and for “selecting us from all other people” as a community.

Birchas HaTorah is thanking Hashem for the changes that came with being the people of the Torah. Learning Torah without the realization that such study is intended to elevate the self loses its value. If one is not aware of the full grandeur of one’s potential, one is not open to the changes Torah is supposed to induce. That is the false “*anivus*” of Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulus.

As we said, *anivus* motivates a struggle to accomplish, which constantly brings more worth into one’s life. But when someone is plagued by false “*anivus*”, lacking belief in his ability, how does he combat the feeling of worthlessness? *Sin’as chinam*, undeserved hatred, is a means of feeling like one is greater by perceiving everyone else as something less.

Rabbi Zechariah ben Avkulus’s false “*anivus*” brought down the Temple, but not because he alone had this misperception. The whole story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza is of similar false “*anavim*.” Like the last generation of the previous *Beis HaMikdash*, this generation did not fully understand the purpose of Torah and therefore could not be thankful for what it meant for human potential. Since they couldn’t see how to redeem themselves, they assuaged their feelings by spending their lives focusing on the flaws of others.

REB JONATHAN BAKER

Sefasai Tiftach

through practices that remind us of occasions when loved ones passed on.

We should not bring ourselves to such a state voluntarily. In fact, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik tells us, we are forbidden from voluntary mourning.

The prayers for Tisha B’Av take a somewhat different form than the usual Ta’anis service. Instead of the additional Selichos, we do not let ourselves pray for forgiveness, and give in to despair. We stand (sit) at the end of three

weeks of increasing mourning, falling down to a nadir of loss for the Temple. Mourning for a building, a way of life, that was lost 1966 years ago is hard, as the events are so remote. We have to evoke the mourning in ourselves

Just as we only know we can pray because permission was granted to our ancestors to pray, we only can ask G-d *Eichah*, how could this have happened, on this day because Jeremiah the prophet received permission to ask it. In a sense, Kinot, Eichah, and the rest, equate to the blessing *Baruch ... dayan ha'emes*, which Maseches Sofrim requires be said as a real *berachah* on this day. To grant ourselves permission to say Kinot, then, we say the book of Eichah at night, and the Haftarah, which is itself a sixth kinah (Eichah being five Kinot) by Jeremiah. Once we say the Kinot ordained by the prophet, we can continue to say the Kinot that move us through the ancient and modern destructions.

When we mourn a person, says Rav Soloveitchik,¹ we say eulogies, lamenting the person's end and recounting his honor. Today, though, the goal is tears. As the Megillah says, "*bacho tivkeh balaila* – cry, you shall cry, at night." Why at night? That is when one feels despair and pain most acutely. One wakes in the night and obsesses about his fears. One wakes in the night and cries for the Temple in *Tikkun Chatzos*. So too on this day, particularly at night, but also in the morning, we cry without limit. Mourning of a person is bounded, since the person died and will eventually pass out of immediate memory. Here we reverse the process, but cannot stop crying, because that which terminates the mourning will not happen *ad bias hagoel*. The world and nature have been destroyed – should we not cry?

We say *Eichah Atzta B'apecha*, the second morning kinah in many shuls – "How could You have been so fast in Your anger?" Do we not always say that You are slow to anger, *erech apayim*? Through all the other exiles, Egypt, Rome, etc., paralleling the exile to Bavel that Jeremiah recounts, You

could not have had a little more patience?

The kinah may be technically tricky, a strict alliterative structure with 5- and 6-word verses based on adjacent letters of the alphabet and certain key words, but the basic idea is simple yet possessing great metaphoric depth. How could you do this to us? You must have forgotten this wonderful thing we did with You; therefore please remember it and reverse Your stern decree.

Returning to our kinah: how could You have gotten so angry so fast while forgetting the prolonged process of refining us through tests, *bararta bichunecha*, which began at *bris bein habesarim*? We were refined through Yitzchak (and not Yishma'el), and not even all of Yitzchak, for Esav was dross. The Avos and we stood up to your tests, and we tested You and You came through – in the time of Avraham, in the desert, etc. – and You **thus** promised us the reward of the Covenant Between Pieces. I note the "thus" – even though the tests came **after** the Covenant, the tests *merited* the reward. G-d is outside of time. All time is the same – past present and future. How can our observance today, our mourning today, not merit us the restoration? Therefore we say to You, remember what we had together.

Lo Zacharta Deligas Dilug, the three-day journey to Kadesh Barnea that should have taken eleven. You did great things for us, please remember.

You destroyed at the hand of *Zarim, Zevul* the house of Your Glory, but did not remember *Chitun Chukey Choreiv*, the marriage between Israel and Yourself at *Matan Torah*, referred to by the Mishna at the end of Taanis, whose Kesubah was the Tablets, whose Chuppah was the Mishkan, whose wedding ceremony was Divine Service – when will the *Nissuin* happen, at the Final Chosen House?² Alternatively,

Jerusalem sits *k'almanah*, like a widow – how can she be widowed when the Husband is Eternal? Therefore we make a legal claim, *chivinu*, for Him to do His duty as a husband, and redeem His captive city.

Eichah Sachta, how could You have plowed under, crushed us who bear witness to Your Truth and Guidance, which in turn testify to the truth of Torah, with which You crowned your Servants? Remember the Torah to our merit!

How could You not remember the *regesh rechev rabotayim*, the company of thousands of angels who joined with G-d in revealing the Torah, who eagerly ran to Your People at the Sinaitic Marriage? Therefore we justly complain, *reganenu* – remember what we had.

But all mourning comes to an end, and by Mincha time we have *Nacheim* (originally *Racheim*) to sustain the loss of the Temple as we move into the workaday world. Even that retains some poetic structure – the four adjectives beginning with *aveilah* are expanded and interpreted. Our own words do not suffice to describe it – we have to borrow *Legionos*, Legions, from Latin. *Libi libi, me'ai me'ai* poetically reinforce the reawakening and maintenance of some sense of continuing, but muted, mourning.

Editor: Gil Student

Associate Editor: Micha Berger

Mesukim Midevash is a project of The AishDas Society, offering words of machshavah, mussar and tefillah each week. For more information, email mesukim@aishdas.org or call (201) 757-0246.

© 2004, The AishDas Society and the authors. Permission is granted to quote any material if content is quoted by name and is not modified.

¹ Hararei Kedem p. 298

² Shemos Rabbah 43:1