

מתוקים מדבש



Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah

RABBI GIL STUDENT

Bemachashavah Techilah

“If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass...” (Devarim 13:1-2). The clear indication from this verse is that, generally, we are to believe a prophet who proves his identity as a prophet, i.e. who gives “a sign or a wonder.” This is further expressed in the Torah: “And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' – when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him” (Devarim 18:21-22). We can identify a true prophet – one to whom we are biblically obligated to listen – if he proves himself true by stating a prophecy that is verified. What kind of prophecy is sufficient to prove a prophet as true?

R' Yochanan said in the name of R' Yossi: G-d does not retract any positive statement that He emits, even if it was on condition. (Berachos 7a).

Evidently, the Gemara is stating that a prophecy about something good that will happen will always come true, even if the prophecy was on condition that, for example, the beneficiary of the good will not sin. Even if he does sin, the prophecy will still come true. The Rambam accepts this statement but limits it. In the introduction to his commentary on the

Mishnah, the Rambam explains that this rule is for the benefit of mankind. If this rule were not the case, “there would be no way left in which we can prove a prophecy to be true.” Since a prophecy about a bad event can be retracted if the subjects of the prophecy repent, if a good prophecy could also be retracted then even a true prophet could have his prophecies become false by the changed circumstance. This would leave the public in a bind. How would we know who is a true prophet in a changed circumstance and who is a false prophet? To avoid this dilemma, G-d does not retract prophecies about good events. His bountiful mercy allows Him to bestow good even on those who turn to sin.

However, according to the Rambam this rule has limitations. It does not apply to private prophecies, such as that given to Ya'akov Avinu,¹ because there is no public need for such good prophecies to come true. Similarly, it does not apply to the prophecies of Moshe Rabbeinu because everyone already knows that he is a true prophet.²

R. Chasdai Crescas³ points out a significant difficulty with the Rambam's understanding of the Gemara. The following biblical passage seems to contradict the Gemara's rule:

At one moment I may decree that a nation or a kingdom shall be

uprooted and pulled down and destroyed; but if that nation against which I made the decree turns back from its wickedness, I change My mind concerning the punishment I planned to bring on it. At another moment I may decree that a nation or a kingdom shall be built and planted; but if it does what is displeasing to Me and does not obey Me, then I change My mind concerning the good I planned to bestow upon it. (Yirmiyahu 18:7-10)

Yirmiyahu clearly states that a public good prophecy, “that a nation or a kingdom shall be built and planted,” can be retracted if the intended recipient of the reward sins. Rather, R. Chasdai explains, the passage in Yirmiyahu is the general rule. Any prophecy is subject to repeal based on a change in behavior, since the general equation of reward and punishment is an underlying albeit unstated condition to the prophecy. The condition is that a good prophecy will only come true if the intended recipient does not sin and a bad prophecy if the intended recipient does not repent is a given. However, when a prophet specifically prophesies as part of a test of his status, the condition is inapplicable and the prophecy can not be revoked. Since the prophecy is not part of reward and punishment but part of testing a prophet, there is no underlying condition. However, R. Chasdai has trouble with the above Gemara passage that good prophecies must come true. R. Chasdai explains that this passage must be referring to a

¹ Cf. Berachos 4a

² Ibid.; Tzlach, ad loc. sv. *re'uyim*; Shemos 15:16.

³ *Or Hashem* 2:4:2

prophecy that does not discuss reward and punishment and therefore does not have this underlying condition. Understandably, this is a difficult reading.

R. Chasdai also offers another solution. He suggests that the passage in Jeremiah is not discussing prophecies at all. It is discussing decisions by G-d that are not relayed via prophecy. If G-d decides to punish a nation who then repents, G-d will not punish them. And if He decides to reward a

nation who then sins, He will no longer reward them. Therefore, the passage in Yirmiyahu refers to heavenly decisions and the Gemara refers to good prophecies, whether public or private.

R. Yitzchak Abarbanel⁴ offers the surprising suggestion that the Gemara represents a minority opinion with which we need not agree. He, therefore, explains that prophecies

⁴ Commentary to the Torah, vol. 3 pp. 177-178

about good or bad events in the future are subject to change if the intended recipient repents or sins, as Yirmiyahu indicates. Since such prophecies are non-absolute, a prophet must be tested on other kinds of prophecies, namely: miraculous signs, i.e. actions that go contrary to nature; or the telling of the past or future with neither good nor bad implications.⁵

⁵ E.g. Shmuel I 9:19-20, 10:2-8

RABBI MICHA BERGER

Bakeish Shalom

A critical tool for self-improvement is having some model with which to understand the inner workings of the self. This approach was taken by the various schools of psychology: Freud's id-ego-super ego, Berne's Child-Adult-Parent, etc.. *Lehavdil* the Zohar also offers a model of the human psyche, one more oriented toward a particularly Jewish concept of self-improvement.

There are three terms the Torah and Talmud use to refer to the soul: *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*, often referred to in Kabbalistic literature by the acronym "naran". The Zohar in numerous places finds the Torah's choice of term for "soul" to be significant, that each refers to a different aspect.

R. Chaim Volozhiner explains this by invoking a common metaphor: "Our Rabbonim z"l already compared the three-fold living *ruach* of man – the making of a glass utensil to reviving the dead. They said, 'It is a *kal vachomer* (a *fortiori*) argument from a glass utensil, which is made by the breath of flesh and blood... *Flesh and blood, which is made by the breath of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, how much more so!...*'

"For the message must be similar to the metaphor. When we study the

breath of the mouth of the worker into a glass container when he makes it, we find in it three concepts. The first idea is when the breath of air is still in his mouth, before it goes into the opening of the hollow tube, we can only call it then a 'neshimah'. The second idea, when the breath enters the tube, and continues like a line, then it is called 'ruach' (wind). The third, lowest, idea, is when the breath goes from the tube and into the glass, and inflates in it until it becomes a container to fit the will of the glass-blower, then his wind stops and is called 'nefesh', a term of rest and relaxation." (Nefesh Hachaim 1:15)

The Zohar briefly describes the dynamic between these components. "The various components of the *Tzaddik* are all inter-connected, *nefesh* with *ruach* and *ruach* with *neshamah*; and the *neshamah* is connected with the Holy One (blessed by He) so that [even] the *nefesh* is bound up in the Bond of Life." (Zohar, Acharei Mos)

We say in morning prayer, "My G-d, the *neshamah* which you have placed within me is *tehorah* (pure)..." The *neshamah* remains unsullied even in the present. Our first words upon waking up are "...for you have returned my *neshamah* within me..." The *neshamah* joins Hashem's presence in heaven when we sleep. It contains the spiritual side of man. No

matter how much man gets caught up in his day-to-day life, the Zohar teaches that the *neshamah* is his link to the heavenly realm. It still is aware of man's origin in heaven before birth, and strives to return to that purity. No matter how rote or habitual one's observance becomes on the conscious realm, the *neshamah* is aware of the significance. This is the basis of the common explanation about why *tefillah* has some value even without *kavanah*. Within the *neshamah*, well below the conscious mind, a connection is made with the Almighty.

In the middle – "connected", as the Zohar tells us, to both *nefesh* and *neshamah* – resides the *ruach*. Literally *ruach* means "wind", the unseen air blowing about the seen objects of the world. By extension, it is man-the-creator's power to control the world around him. The *ruach* too has desires, the urges of the world of man. The drives for fame, for wealth, and for power are all contained in the *ruach*. These tendencies are direct consequences of consciousness and free will. With the notion of "self" comes the ability to place that self ahead of the rest of the world.

In this week's *parashah* we find reference to the *nefesh*. "Just be strong, lest you eat the blood; because the blood, it is the *nefesh* (soul) – and you

should not eat the *nefesh* with the flesh.” (Devarim 12:23)

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch elaborates. “*To the Torah, the blood is the material which at every beat of the pulse circulates through the whole body, is the medium by means of which the soul exercises its ever-present mastery of the body. So that it is eminently the foremost bearer of the soul, and the Torah forbids animal blood, as the bearer of the animal soul, animal life, any entry into the realm – the holy morally free-willed realm – of the human soul, human life...*

“...and just as you are not to consume the blood, in which the soul has its foremost representative, so also you are not to eat the meat at the time when the soul is still in connection with it, in which the joint you are taking for consumption is still under the mastery of the soul.” (ad loc.)

As Rav Hirsch explains, the prohibition against eating circulatory blood is because it is the seat of animal life and the animal soul. This is why the verse ties it to eating flesh from a living animal – animalism should be beneath man; one should not try to absorb it.

Nefesh is the force that controls and maintains the body, its life force. The term “*nefesh*” describes the physical drives. The verse tells us the motivation behind prohibiting blood by its choice of term for soul. “The blood, it is of the *nefesh*.” Hirsch’s explanation “the Torah forbids... the bearer of the animal soul... any entry

into the realm... of the human soul,” tells us that the prohibition against eating blood is to prevent tainting, prejudicing the *ruach* with something that brings to mind the *nefesh*.

Our *parashah* lists the kosher species, connecting them to the dichotomy between *tum’ah* and *taharah*. “But these you should not eat... because they raise their cud, but their hooves are not split, it is *tamei* to you.... And all [fish] which do not have fins and scales you should not eat, it is *tamei* to you. All birds that are *tahor* you may eat.” (Devarim 14:7, 10-11)

As we saw in the past, the Ramchal defines the personal attribute called *taharah*: “*Taharah*[’s] ... essence is that man shouldn’t leave room for the inclination in his actions. Rather all his actions should be on the side of wisdom and awe [for the Almighty], and not on the side of sin and desire.”¹ Note that if we identify desire with the *nefesh*, and the power to consciously decide with the *ruach*, the *kashrus* of species is about the same tainting of the *ruach* as Rav Hirsch’s warning about consuming blood.

Taharah then is the shift from a *ruach* that is prejudiced by the *nefesh* to one that is free to use the *nefesh* as a tool. Without being chained down, it is able to fully exercise free will. Once it is *tahor*, the *ruach* is free to serve a higher goal.

¹ Mesilas Yesharim, ch. 16

The last *kashrus* laws in this week’s *parashah* are the prohibitions against eating meat killed improperly, and eating meat together with milk. A shift from *what* one may eat to *how* one is to eat it. “Do not eat any carcass, to the foreigner who lives inside your fences it should be given for him to eat, or sell it to a gentile, for you are *kadosh* – a nation dedicated to Hashem your G-d; do not cook a kid in its mother’s milk.” (ibid. 21)

When our verse discusses “*kedushah*” it says, “you are a *kadosh* nation to Hashem your G-d”. *Kedushah* is a relationship between two things, one thing committing to another. The insertion of the middle phrase into the verse draws a connection between these two prohibited foods, and the extra *kedushah* of the Jewish nation. This *kedushah* originates in the extra commandments incumbent on the Jew.

People, like animals, eat. It is a function of the *nefesh*. As such, eating has the potential for causing *tum’ah*. In order to prevent this, we not only purify but also sanctify the act of eating. We shift the possibility of becoming slaves to our bodies into an opportunity for becoming committed to G-d. Even the preparation of food is subject to *mitzvos*, and so becomes *kadosh*. *Kashrus* gives us the power to take a *tamei* act, which should reduce human potential, and use it to elevate ourselves, to become higher beings.

REB JONATHAN BAKER

Sefasai Tiftach

Sanctity and Kingship, *Kedushah uMalchus*. Thus end *Pesukei deZimrah*, leading to the first *beracha* of the *Shema*. How do they relate? Where is G-d the King before the *Shema*? Why say a *Kedushah*?

What is a king in Judaism? First, a king relates to his people. As the famous maxim says, “*ein melech b’lo am*”, there is no such thing as a king without a nation. The human king rules his people, legislates with a word, and holds power of life and death over them. In return, he protects

them from enemies, and leads them in following G-d’s word.

How is G-d a King? The analogy should be fairly obvious. In fact, the two are innately linked. G-d lends his power to human beings (as we say in the *beracha* for seeing a king); their power reflects His, and their honor reflects on Him. The Bible notes:

“Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father” (Divrei Hayamim I 29:23). Not that the throne was G-d’s, but that the throne, symbolizing kingship, drew from G-d’s power.

Honor and glory flow upward as well. The credit of the nation reflects well or badly on its king, and through the king to G-d, as David says, “The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’” (Tehillim 110:1). The psalm says of David that he is lord under the Lord. David says similarly, after the conquest “*Mi k’amcha Yisrael... – Who is like Your people Israel... And let Your name be magnified for ever, that it may be said: The Lord of hosts is G-d over Israel; and the house of Your servant David shall be established before You*” (Shmuel II 7:22-26). David praises Israel, whose glory redounds upon him, and thus also to G-d.¹

Kedushos appear in the daily morning services: in the *Shema*, in the *Amidah*, and in the conclusion of the service. Each helps to explain the others; today we focus on the *Kedushah deYotzer*, in the *beracha Yotzer Or*.

The *kedushos* are based on the daily angelic choir described in the first chapter of Yechezkel and elsewhere. These choirs daily crown G-d and acclaim Him King, while accepting upon themselves His Kingship.

Why coronation? We say “*umamlichim*,” the angels make Him King, but it is explicit in the Sephard *mussaf kedushah*, saying “*keter yitnu l’cha* – a crown the angels will give to You.” There are many ways of appointing kings. We anoint Israelite kings, and the community proclaims them by praise. The crown is a badge of kingship, of course, but its placement is not a part of our usual cere-

mony. That is liturgically reserved for G-d.

The coronation of the *kedushah* is complemented by the angels’ acceptance of the Divine yoke, “*umekablim ol malchus shamayim zeh mizeh*,” and also by our coronation of G-d, as the *mussaf kedushah* goes on to say, “*malachei hamonei ma’alah, im amcha yisrael kevutzei mata*,” or as we say on Yom Kippur, “*darei ma’alah im darei mata*”; we crown Him along with the angels above, we accept Him along with the angels. There is no King without a nation, and He rules the heavenly hosts along with the physical realm. This compares to *melech ha’olam* in the basic *beracha* text, King of the universe, including the *he’elam* concealed, spiritual universe.

The coronation theme emerges from a variety of *midrashim*, both in the Gemara and later midrashic collections. The basic form is in Chagigah 13b, amplified here by variants from parallel versions in the other midrashim, particularly *Pesikta Rabbasi* 20, and the late *Midrash Kohen*:

It is taught in a Mishnah (really a braisa) that (the angel) Sandalphon ... stands behind the merkavah and binds crowns (made out of the prayers of Israel) for His Master. Indeed? But does Scripture not say “Blessed is the glory of G-d from His place” (Yechezkel 3:12) indicating that nobody [including the angels, who speak this verse] knows His place? Rather, he recites a name on the crown and it goes and seats itself on His head. (When the crowns arrive, there is a moment of silence, punctuated by the roaring of the chayos. Then the legions say, quaking, Kadosh kadosh kadosh... Then He passes by them, and they respond Baruch kevod H’ mimkomo. They all together say (Tehillim 146:10) Yimloch H’ l’olam...)

Our prayers crown G-d. Our words form the core of the angelic coronation

ritual. We join their daily crowning and acclamation of G-d the King, and prepare to accept His Sovereignty when we say, *Shema ... Baruch shem kvod malchuso l’olam va’ed*. The Gra comments on *es shem hamelech*: “this is the Royal Crown” – hinting at the whole trope, of names corresponding to crowns, made from our prayers, ascending to G-d.

Where does the *Kedushah* fit into the *Yotzer Or*? We begin the *beracha* with praise of G-d for creating the physical universe. Then, both on Shabbos (*Keil Adon*) and on weekdays (*Keil Baruch*) we get a *piyut*, that starts with physical creation, concluding with angelic praise. We read, and join in with, the angelic coronation ceremony, return to praise of physical things, concluding with thanks for creating the light sources. Light is of this world, of the physical sun and moon, but light is also a spiritual energy, as the Infinite Light.

These midrashim link us and our prayers with the angelic choirs, and urge us to incorporate them in our daily acceptance of G-d’s Kingship. However, the angels *have* to praise Him. We *choose* to praise and crown and accept Him, through free will, and may thus rise higher than the angels.

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¹ *The Temple*, by R’ Joshua Berman, Aronson: 1995, pp. 101-103.