

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

It is one of the most important words in Judaism, and also one of the least understood. Its two most famous occurrences are in last week's parsha and this week's: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our G-d, the Lord is one," and "It shall come to pass if you surely listen to My commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul" -- the openings of the first and second paragraphs of the Shema. It also appears in the first line of the parsha: "It shall come to pass, if you listen to these laws."

The word, of course, is shema. I have argued elsewhere that it is fundamentally untranslatable into English since it means so many things: to hear, to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise, to respond, to obey. It is one of the motif-words of the book of Devarim, where it appears no less than 92 times -- more than in any other book of the Torah. Time and again in the last month of his life Moses told the people, Shema: listen, heed, pay attention. Hear what I am saying. Hear what G-d is saying. Listen to what he wants from us. If you would only listen... Judaism is a religion of listening. This is one of its most original contributions to civilisation.

The twin foundations on which Western culture was built were ancient Greece and ancient Israel. They could not have been more different. Greece was a profoundly visual culture. Its greatest achievements had to do with the eye, with seeing. It produced some of the greatest art, sculpture and architecture the world has ever seen. Its most characteristic group events -- theatrical performances and the Olympic games -- were spectacles: performances that were watched. Plato thought of knowledge as a kind of depth vision, seeing beneath the surface to the true form of things.

This idea -- that knowing is seeing -- remains the dominant metaphor in the West even today. We speak of insight, foresight and hindsight. We offer an observation. We adopt a perspective. We illustrate. We illuminate. We shed light on an issue. When we understand something, we say, "I see." (See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980.)

Judaism offered a radical alternative. It is faith in a G-d we cannot see, a G-d who cannot be

represented visually. The very act of making a graven image -- a visual symbol -- is a form of idolatry. As Moses reminded the people in last week's parsha, when the Israelites had a direct encounter with G-d at Mount Sinai, "You heard the sound of words, but saw no image; there was only a voice." (Deut. 4:12). G-d communicates in sounds, not sights. He speaks. He commands. He calls. That is why the supreme religious act is Shema. When G-d speaks, we listen. When He commands, we try to obey.

Rabbi David Cohen (1887-1972), known as the Nazirite, a disciple of Rav Kook and the father of R. Shear-Yashuv Cohen, chief rabbi of Haifa, pointed out that in the Babylonian Talmud all the metaphors of understanding are based not on seeing but on hearing. Ta shema, "come and hear." Ka mashma lan, "It teaches us this." Shema mina, "Infer from this." Lo shemiyah lei, "He did not agree." A traditional teaching is called shamaytta, "that which was heard." And so on. All of these are variations on the word shema. (This appears in the opening pages of his work, *Kol Nevuah*. To be sure, the Zohar uses a visual term, ta chazi, "Come and see." There is a broad kinship between Jewish mysticism and Platonic or neo-Platonic thought. For both, knowing is a form of depth-seeing.)

This may seem like a small difference, but it is in fact a huge one. For the Greeks, the ideal form of knowledge involved detachment. There is the one who sees, the subject, and there is that which is seen, the object, and they belong to two different realms. A person who looks at a painting or a sculpture or a play in a theatre or the Olympic games is not himself part of the art or the drama or the athletic competition. He or she is a spectator, not a participant.

Speaking and listening are not forms of detachment. They are forms of engagement. They create a relationship. The Hebrew word for knowledge, da'at, implies involvement, closeness, intimacy. "And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and gave birth" (Gen. 4:1). That is knowing in the Hebrew sense,



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not the Greek. We can enter into a relationship with G-d, even though He is infinite and we are finite, because we are linked by words. In revelation, G-d speaks to us. In prayer, we speak to G-d. If you want to understand any relationship, between husband and wife, or parent and child, or employer and employee, pay close attention to how they speak and listen to one another. Ignore everything else.

The Greeks taught us the forms of knowledge that come from observing and inferring, namely science and philosophy. The first scientists and the first philosophers came from Greece from the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE.

But not everything can be understood by seeing and appearances alone. There is a powerful story about this told in the first book of Samuel. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the part. He was tall. "From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people," (1 Sam. 9:2, 10:23). He was the image of a king. But morally, temperamentally, he was not a leader at all; he was a follower.

G-d then told Samuel to anoint another king in his place, and told him it would be one of the children of Yishai. Samuel went to Yishai and was struck by the appearance of one of his sons, Eliav. He thought he must be the one G-d meant. But G-d said to him, "Do not be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. G-d does not see as people do. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Jews and Judaism taught that we cannot see G-d, but we can hear Him and He hears us. It is through the word -- speaking and listening -- that we can have an intimate relationship with G-d as our parent, our partner, our sovereign, the One who loves us and whom we love. We cannot demonstrate G-d scientifically. We cannot prove G-d logically. These are Greek, not Jewish, modes of thought. I believe that from a Jewish perspective, trying to prove the existence of G-d logically or scientifically is a mistaken enterprise. G-d is not an object but a subject. The Jewish mode is to relate to G-d in intimacy and love, as well as awe and reverence.

(To be sure, many of the great medieval Jewish philosophers did just that. They did so under the

influence of neo-Platonic and neo-Aristotelian thought, itself mediated by the great philosophers of Islam. The exception was Judah Halevi in *The Kuzari*.)

One fascinating modern example came from a Jew who, for much of his life, was estranged from Judaism, namely Sigmund Freud. He called psychoanalysis the "speaking cure", but it is better described as the "listening cure." (See Adam Philips, *Equals*, London, Faber and Faber, 2002, xii. See also Salman Akhtar, *Listening to Others: Developmental and Clinical Aspects of Empathy and Attunement*. Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2007.) It is based on the fact that active listening is in itself therapeutic. It was only after the spread of psychoanalysis, especially in America, that the phrase "I hear you" came into the English language as a way of communicating empathy.

(Note that there is a difference between empathy and sympathy. Saying "I hear you" is a way of indicating -- sincerely or otherwise -- that I take note of your feelings, not that I necessarily agree with them or you.)

There is something profoundly spiritual about listening. It is the most effective form of conflict resolution I know. Many things can create conflict, but what sustains it is the feeling on the part of at least one of the parties that they have not been heard. They have not been listened to. We have not "heard their pain". There has been a failure of empathy. That is why the use of force -- or for that matter, boycotts -- to resolve conflict is so profoundly self-defeating. It may suppress it for a while, but it will return, often more intense than before. Job, who has suffered unjustly, is unmoved by the arguments of his comforters. It is not that he insists on being right: what he wants is to be heard. Not by accident does justice presuppose the rule of *audiam alteram partem*, "Hear the other side."

Listening lies at the very heart of relationship. It means that we are open to the other, that we respect him or her, that their perceptions and feelings matter to us. We give them permission to be honest, even if this means making ourselves vulnerable in so doing. A good parent listens to their child. A good employer listens to his or her workers. A good company listens to its customers or clients. A good leader listens to those he or she leads. Listening does not mean agreeing but it does mean caring. Listening is the climate in which love and respect grow.

In Judaism we believe that our relationship with G-d is an ongoing tutorial in our relationships with other people. How can we expect G-d to listen to us if we fail to listen to our spouse, our children, or those affected by our work? And how can we expect to encounter G-d if we have not learned to listen. On Mount Horeb, G-d taught Elijah that He was not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire but in the *kol demamah dakah*, the "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19) that I define as a voice you can only hear if you are listening.

Crowds are moved by great speakers, but lives are changed by great listeners. Whether between us and G-d or us and other people, listening is the prelude to love. © 2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"Remember the entire path along which the Lord your G-d led you these forty years in the desert, He sent hardships to test you." (Deut.

8:2) "The land which you are about to inherit is not like Egypt." (11:10) Our Biblical portion of Ekev devotes much praise to the glories of the Land of Israel – its majestic topography, its luscious produce, and its freely-flowing milk and honey. And in order to conceptually explain the truly unique quality of our land promised us by G-d, the Biblical text – in chapters eight and eleven of the Book of Deuteronomy – contrasts the Land of Israel with the desert experience of manna on the one hand and the geographical and geological gifts of Egypt on the other, with Israel coming out far ahead. In this commentary – heavily inspired by Rav Elhanan Samet's "Studies of the Weekly Portions" – I shall attempt to understand what it is that makes the land of Israel so special.

The Israelite wanderers are hardly enamored with the manna they receive in the desert. Again and again they complain about the lack of meat and fish (Numbers 11:1-7), about the scarcity of water and fruits, crying out in despair, "Why did you bring G-d's congregation into this desert? So that we and our livestock should die? Why did you take us out of Egypt and bring us to this terrible place? [the desert] is an area where there are no plants, no figs, no grapes, no pomegranates, no water to drink" (11:4,5). And even in our portion of Ekev, G-d describes the desert years as years of "hardships to test you," of "chastisement and training" (Deut. 8:3,5). The moral message of the inexhaustible manna was merely to teach the people that the ultimate source of food is G-d, "so that you may observe His commandments and fear Him" (8:3,6).

Indeed, the desert's difficulties are contrasted with future life in the Land of Israel, the Torah narrative praising the Promised Land's blessings. In three packed verses (8:7-9) the land (erezt) – in contrast to the desert – is referred to seven times, a chiasmic structure reveling in the seven special species of fruit for which Israel is esteemed (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olive oil and date-honey), a "good land with flowing streams and underground springs, gushing out in valley and mountain, whose stones are iron and from whose mountains you will quarry copper."

The wondrous descriptions depict a wide range of foods and natural resources produced by the earth – from bread and olive oil to copper mines – all of which require serious human ingenuity, input and energy to create a partnership with G-d to properly develop the

gifts inherent in the land. After all, to properly irrigate the fields rainwater must be collected and gathered through the underground springs, the making of bread requires eleven agricultural steps, oil must be carefully extracted from the olive trees by means of olive presses, and the copper must be painstakingly quarried from the depths of the mountains. It is precisely this partnership between G-d and humanity that is critically necessary to develop – and ultimately perfect – the world which we have been given.

It shouldn't surprise us that Egypt, representing the very antithesis of the desert ("the gift of the Nile," in the words of Herodotus) is where agriculture had initially developed – a development which made the land of the Pharaohs the most commanding power of the ancient world. And so chapter eleven of the Book of Deuteronomy, in our portion of Ekev, provides a dazzling parallel (verses 8-12) to the passage we discussed earlier (8:7-9), similarly emphasizing the "defining and leading" word *erezt*, land.

Interestingly enough, in our passage where "erezt" is mentioned seven times, the land of Israel is the focus of all but one, the fourth time, when it refers to Egypt. On one level the contrast is between land and desert, but the Torah's intention is to provide a contrast between Egypt and Israel, the latter introduced as the "land flowing with milk and honey" (11:9). The Biblical text continues: "Because the land you are about to inherit is not like Egypt, the place you left, where you could plant your seed and irrigate it with your feet, just like a vegetable garden" (11:10). Since the fertility of Egyptian land and the cultivation of its crops does not depend on rainfall but is effectively irrigated by the Nile's natural overflow and from the omnipresent moisture of the great river, Egyptians did not need to turn to the heavens for rain.

However, while Egyptian land may be easily cultivated, it remains a dry, desert valley, unlike Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey: milk derived from livestock grazing on fields of natural growing grass and honey from bees that thrive in areas blessed by a natural abundance of flora. It may be difficult to live only on milk and honey – but it is possible. And more importantly: "The land you are crossing to occupy is a land of mountains and valleys, which can be irrigated only by rain. It is therefore a land constantly under the Lord your G-d's scrutiny; the eyes of the Lord your G-d are on it at all times, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (Deut 11:11, 12).

Ancient Egypt had very little to offer in the G-d-human partnership. The rich, fertile soil of the 'gift of the Nile' makes the agricultural process a relatively simple one, its dependency on rain removed. Israel, abundant in its natural supply of resources, nevertheless must rely heavily both on plentiful rainfall as well as human input for a successful agricultural crop. And since Israel must rely on G-d – the obvious source for rain – the

Israelites must be worthy of G-d's grace by dint of their ethical and moral conduct, their fealty to G-d's laws. Hence our Biblical portion concludes with a call to sensitive fulfillment of G-d's laws as the key to our successful harvesting of the land's produce. Perhaps this is really why Israel is called the land 'flowing with milk and honey: only milk and honey can be garnered without destroying any form of life whatsoever – human, animal or plant. ©2016 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The The Torah reading of this week continues the long, final oration of Moshe to the Jewish people, as he prepares for his own mortal demise. It is important to note that throughout the words of Moshe here in the final book of the Chumash, there is, mixed together, the requirement of the memory of the past – the distant and immediate past – with the vision of the future, again the far future and the immediate future.

There are those amongst us who live pretty much in the memory of our long, eventful and holy past. Being suffused with nostalgia, they paint for themselves a picture that is many times more fantasy than reality. And since the reality of the past never is portrayed, any attempt to learn from that past is futile. We see so often in the words of Moshe how frank and honest is his recollection and recitation of the events of the past. He spares no one and no event.

His love for the Jewish people, that shines forth from every verse and word of this book, in no way forces him to color the past and sanitize the events that occur. It is the honesty of his oration and presentation that gives it such power and eternity.

The person who has to climb a hill will oftentimes in the middle of the climb look back to see how much has already been accomplished. In order to continue the climb, psychologically that is an enormous aid. So too, on the eve of the entry of the Jewish people into the Land of Israel, Moshe reminds them of the past and of the climb that they already achieved and experienced – the travails of our ancestors, the slavery in Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, the disasters of the desert – in order to prepare them for the rest of the climb before them.

But he also portrays the vision of their future in the Land of Israel and in the diaspora. There again Moshe is honest and candid with his words of prophecy. He promises no rose garden, nor an easy path towards the ultimate redemption and return of the Jewish people to their homeland, to their faith and ultimately to their Creator.

Just as Jews were and are prone to fantasize about our past, so too, perhaps even to a greater extent, are we susceptible to creating a picture of an unrealistic and unsustainable future. We see in the

Talmud the opinion that promises us a rather bland messianic era. Maimonides adopts this viewpoint as well. However because of the length of the exile and of the enormous tragedies that have been our lot in that exile, many Jews have upped the ante for the messianic era.

By so doing, we are disappointed with what has already been achieved and make it more difficult than ever to have a realistic view of what our policies and expectations for the future should be. For a balanced picture of the holy vision regarding the Jewish people, past and present, one need only study and remember the final words of Moshe as they appear before us in the Torah readings of these weeks. ©2016 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

This week's portion begins with the statement "Ve-hayah ekev tishmeun et ha-mishpatim ha-eileh - and if you listen to these laws" reward will come (Deuteronomy 7:12-15). Since the common Biblical term for "if" is "im," many commentators have wondered why the Torah uses the word "ekev" instead.

In one of his most famous comments, Rashi notes that the word ekev connotes a human heel. What the text is teaching is the importance of keeping those commandments that seem less important, like the dirt that one kicks up with one's heel. The message is simple: what appears to be less important is of great importance. In fact, reward depends on keeping the ekev-type commandments.

Alternatively, ekev can mean to pursue, like one running on his or her heels to attain a certain goal. True reward comes to an individual who not only keeps the commandment, but does so with eagerness and anticipation. The yearning reflects an excitement that translates into a higher level of commandment performance.

Much like the heel is the extremity of the body, ekev also refers to the redemptive period that will come at the end of days (aharit ha-yamim). That time of redemption will come when there is a commitment to listen to the words of the Torah which direct us to lead ethical lives in accordance with G-d's will.

One last thought. Perhaps ekev reminds us of our forefather, Yaakov (Jacob) who was born holding the heel of his brother Esau. Yaakov is later given an additional name – Yisrael. The name Yaakov refers to our third patriarch as an individual – husband, father, brother, and son. Yet whenever the Torah calls him by the name Yisrael, it has far reaching implications for the development of the Nation of Israel.

From this perspective, ekev tishmeun is the counterpoint and amazing parallel of Shema Yisrael (Deuteronomy 6:4) which we read just last week. Shema Yisrael speaks of our responsibility as part of the Nation of Israel to keep the commandments and profess belief in G-d. Ekev tishmeun serves as a safeguard to remind us that we not only have communal responsibilities, but each of us as individuals, must explore our personal relationship with G-d.

Sometimes it is easier to follow the law as part of a nation, as this is a public statement, open for all to watch. The challenge is to commit when one is alone. The redemptive period will arrive when not only the nation connects with G-d, but when each one of us, like Yaakov, quietly, modestly, and without fanfare, years to keep and observe even the smallest of mitzvot. © 2016 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

“**W**homsoever extends his prayer, his prayer will not come back empty. How do we know this? From Moshe our teacher, as it says, 'and I prayed to G-d' (D'varim 9:26), and it says after that, 'and G-d listened to me that time as well' (D'varim 10:10)." This Talmudic statement (B'rachos 32b), based on Moshe praying to G-d for 40 days to forgive the Children of Israel for the golden calf, is a bit puzzling, as there is no indication in these verses that a longer prayer is more effective than a shorter one. Maybe Moshe was answered because he was the righteous Moshe, who was so close to G-d, who did the praying, or because over the 40-day period those for whom he was praying had become more worthy of forgiveness. As the P'nay Y'hoshua points out, there were many other times when Moshe prayed for a very short time and was answered; how does his being answered after such an extended prayer show that it is more effective than a shorter one?

This question can be side-stepped if we reframe the message of the Talmudic statement to mean that it is worthwhile to keep praying for something over and over again rather than a longer prayer being more effective. In this case, Moshe was asking G-d to forgive the nation and let them continue on their mission, including reestablishing the covenant they had broken by worshipping the golden calf, and it wasn't until the end of the 40 days of Moshe's continual prayer that G-d told him to carve out tablets that He would inscribe with the text that was on the first set (10:1). The point being made could be that we are not being bothersome nudges if we ask G-d for the same thing over and over again, as Moshe did so for 40 straight

days, and even though his prayer wasn't answered the first 39 days, he kept asking again anyway, and it eventually helped. Nevertheless, this is not how most understand this Talmudic statement (including how it's referenced on 34b, although that could just be poetic license to get a point across about taking a long time to pray), so I will attempt to explain this statement as if it means that a longer prayer is more effective than a shorter one.

Our first order of business is to deal with the verses quoted by the Talmud. Rashash changes the text of the first quoted verse to "and I fell [in prayer]," referring to D'varim 9:18, which constitutes changing just one letter (from "va'espalel" to "va'esnapel"), which in turn makes the Talmud's reference of "and G-d listened to me that time as well" referring to 9:19 instead of 10:10. Although Rashash doesn't explain why he makes this change, it can be assumed that it is because 9:19 directly follows 9:18, and is a continuation of the same thought, while 10:10 is in a totally separate paragraph from 9:26, and part of a different thought/conversation.

[P'nay Y'hoshua asks how the Talmud can put 9:26 and 10:10 together since they are in completely separate conversations, and discounts changing the text to 9:18 because we can't learn anything about the advantage of longer prayer from a circumstance where the prayer hadn't been answered (as obviously unanswered prayers should be continued until answered). Without getting into his approach to these issues, I will just share four issues with his approach: (1) He translates "his prayer will not come back empty" as "it will be answered in its entirety," which, if that was the intent, could have more easily been worded "his prayer will be completely answered," whereas this wording means (or at least implies) it is not for naught, but will accomplish something, if not everything; (2) He says 9:26 is quoted to prove that the prayers made in the middle 40 days weren't answered completely (only halfway) because they would not be considered an extended prayer, even though the Talmud is clearly quoting it to prove how valuable extended prayer is; (3) He contrasts the prayers made in the middle 40 days not being answered completely because it doesn't say "and G-d listened to me that time as well" there with the two times it does say those words, without explaining which prayer the first one (9:18) was referring to (it can't be the same prayer referenced in 9:26 if such a contrast is being made) despite Moshe prefacing that it was a prayer said for 40 days and 40 nights (precluding the prayer said at the very end of the first set of 40 days, while the prayer said during the third set is referred to later); and (4) He understands the second "and G-d listened to me that time as well" to be referring to the prayers made during the third set of 40 days, even though the answer was that the nation will not be destroyed (10:10), which had already been

answered before Moshe ascended for the third set of 40 days (and was already told that he would get the second Luchos).]

Which prayers Moshe made during each of the three sets of 40 days is debated by the commentators. Ibn Ezra (Sh'mos 32:11) is of the opinion that there was no prayer during the first set of 40 days; even after Moshe was informed of the sin of the golden calf, he couldn't ask for forgiveness while they were still sinning, so had to first go down and start the process of repentance. The biggest difficulty with this approach is that the Torah describes Moshe's (successful) prayer before telling us that he descended (Sh'mos 32:11-14). Among the other issues is how it can be said that the prayer Moshe made during the middle set of 40 days was "also" answered (D'varim 9:19) if there was no prior prayer. Although this question is dealt with (see Ibn Ezra, Rashbam and Chizkuni) by suggesting that it refers to prayers Moshe made before the golden calf incident, such as by the sea (see Sh'mos 14:15), when they were thirsty at Marah (15:25) and when they were thirsty in R'fidim (17:4), since none of these were referenced by Moshe here (the third is included in D'varim 9:22, albeit not in regards to Moshe praying), it would be difficult for the "also" to mean besides those earlier prayers; why refer to them when discussing G-d answering Moshe's request that G-d forgive them for the golden calf? Rather than saying "and G-d listened to me that time as well," why not stop at "and G-d listened to me"?

Ramban (Sh'mos 32:11-12) insists that Moshe prayed that G-d should not destroy the nation before he descended Mt. Sinai at the end of the first set of 40 days (how could he not, once he heard that G-d wanted to destroy them), and prayed again during the second and third sets of 40 days, but for different things. Among the questions on Ramban's approach is how closely the wording of the prayer described here (D'varim 9:26-29), said to have been made for 40 days (9:25, which seems to be discussing the second set of 40 days), matches the prayer Moshe made on the last day of the first set of 40 days (Sh'mos 32:11-13). [His answer (D'varim 9:25-26) is less than satisfying.] G-d "also" listening to Moshe's prayer here can more easily be explained, though, as besides being answered at the end of the first set of 40 days (that G-d would not destroy His people), he was answered again after the prayers made during the second set of 40 days (see Ramban on D'varim 9:19-20) and yet again after the prayers made during the third set of 40 days (see Ramban on D'varim 10:10), but the "answers" to these prayers don't really match what Moshe was praying for. [Ramban tries to address this as well, with slightly more satisfying answers this time. That the prayer described in 9:26-29 is said to have been made over a period of 40 days and 40 nights (9:25), despite it dealing with G-d not destroying the nation, is indisputable, making it

very difficult to reconcile it with the way these prayers are described in Parashas Ki Sisa.] Before trying to make sense of all these verses, let's take a closer look at how these prayers don't seem to match the way they were answered.

G-d is described as having been angry enough to destroy the nation until He listened to Moshe "again" (9:19), even though Moshe had already been told that G-d wouldn't destroy them (Sh'mos 32:10/14), whereas during the second set of 40 days Moshe asked that the sin be forgiven (Sh'mos 32:32) so that the nation can reestablish its covenant with G-d, which included G-d leading the nation to the Promised Land, not just an administering angel (Sh'mos 33:12-16), a prayer that was answered when G-d said he would lead them (33:14) and reestablish his covenant with them (and therefore told Moshe to carve out replacement tablets, see 34:1). Why is G-d having wanted to destroy the nation mentioned before His listening to Moshe "again" if the "answer" wasn't (and didn't need to be, anymore) that G-d wouldn't destroy them? Similarly, why is G-d thinking about destroying the nation mentioned regarding Moshe's 40 day/night prayer in D'varim 10:10 if the prayers that G-d heard yet "again" there were during the third set of 40 days, well after the end of the first set?

Until now, Moshe had never told the nation what G-d would have done had he not intervened before descending from Mt. Sinai at the end of the first set of 40 days. Why should he? To toot his own horn, that he had single-handedly saved them from destruction? Besides, Moshe figured that he could more successfully convince them to repent if they didn't know that G-d had already promised not to destroy them, as they might think that this indicated that His anger had started to wane when it really hadn't (but that Moshe had successfully convinced Him not to express that anger by wiping them out). As far as the nation knew, things had occurred the way Ibn Ezra says they occurred, with Moshe rushing back down to try to get them to repent before it's too late. In reality, though, even though G-d was still just as angry as He had been (since no repentance had taken place yet), Moshe did pray before descending, and was able to take destroying the nation off the table. Now, though, almost four decades later, when addressing the next generation, Moshe finally tells them what really happened, that G-d had already agreed not to destroy them before he came down the first time. But when he does, he also makes sure they know that G-d's anger was still fully there, at least until they repented and he continued his extended prayer. If you can, grab a Chumash (D'varim), and follow along.

Moshe tells them that he had to pray as fervently after he descended, over a period of 40 days and 40 nights (9:18), as he did on the final day of the first set of 40 days ("karishona," as done initially),

fasting each of those 40 days (see N'tziv). Why did he have to pray as fervently then, if G-d had already said He wouldn't destroy them? "For I was terrified by the anger and fury with which G-d was upset with you, to the point of wanting (initially) to destroy you" (9:19). Not that this destruction was still a possibility, but that this was the level of anger he had to deal with. Nevertheless, referring to G-d's initial threat to destroy them, Moshe continues, "and G-d listened to me that time as well." Please note that, according to this, Moshe is referring to G-d listening to Moshe's prayer made at the end of the first set of 40 days (which was referenced in order to illustrate the level of G-d's anger that was still, at this point, in full force). We will get back to why Moshe says he was answered "again" if this was the first in the sequence of prayers after the golden calf.

Moshe continues to describe the level of G-d's anger by sharing another "new" piece of information, that G-d wanted to destroy Aharon too (9:20), before relating that he destroyed the golden calf (9:21), which started the process of diminishing G-d's anger. Then other instances where the nation angered G-d are mentioned (9:22-24) before Moshe returns to the golden calf (9:25), repeating that he had to pray for 40 days and 40 nights "because G-d had said he would destroy you," and it was that level of anger that had to be reversed. The paragraph ends (9:26-29) with Moshe sharing with the nation -- for the first time -- the prayer Moshe made, before he had descended from the mountain, that convinced G-d not to destroy them. There is no need to tell us G-d's response here, because Moshe had already told us that G-d had answered that prayer (9:19).

The next time Moshe mentions praying for 40 days and 40 nights (10:10), he is referring to those same set of 40 days/nights, the middle one, except that this time when he tells us that "G-d listened to me that time as well," he is referring to his prayer being answered after this extended 40 day/night prayer. What was G-d's answer? "G-d no longer wanted to destroy you." That He wouldn't destroy you was already known from G-d answering Moshe's first prayer (at the end of the first set of 40 days), but that didn't mean He didn't still want to. Now, though, after Moshe's extended prayer (and the repentance that went along with it), G-d no longer wanted to destroy you, which paved the way for His being able to lead you once again, and reestablish His covenant with you.

Getting back to how G-d listened to Moshe "again" after his first prayer, the narrative being presented by Moshe was, for the most part, already known. They all knew that they weren't destroyed, just as they knew that they had spent 40 years in the desert, and that G-d led them to the doorstep of the Promised Land (through His "clouds of glory"). What was being shared now was how they got to where they were, and the meaning and importance of every step

they took to get there (both the good steps and the missteps). They therefore knew that G-d had eventually forgiven them for the golden calf (to some degree), but didn't know that there were three sets of prayers, not just two. Moshe was telling them that not only had G-d listened to his extended 40-day prayers (which they had been aware of), but He "also" listened to the one they had been unaware of, the one made before he descended from Mt. Sinai the first time. Even though the "also" in the second mention (10:10) refers to a prayer made prior to the one under discussion (because they were described sequentially), the "also" in the first mention (9:19) refers to a prayer made after the one under discussion, because the second one was known first.

Even though it makes sense to use "also" to refer to a subsequent prayer if that was the one known about first, it was still unnecessary to add the words "at that time as well," unless there was a reason to think G-d wouldn't have listened to the first one. But why would G-d have listened to Moshe the second time and not the first if His level of anger was the same? The Talmud therefore says that from here we learn that an extended prayer is more effective than a shorter prayer; not only did G-d listen to Moshe's extended 40-day prayer (which can be expected, since extended prayers are so powerful), but He even ("also") listened to Moshe's shorter prayer, which was made at the very end of the very last day of the first set of 40 days.

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RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

The Summary of All Fear

One of the most discussed verses in this week's portion deals with the fear of Heaven. Moshe presents the Children of Israel with a simple request fear G-d. Though it may sound simple we all know that it is not. The problem is that Moshe presents the petition as if it were a simple feat. He says, And now Israel, what does G-d want of you? Only that you fear G-d your Lord (Deuteronomy 10:12). He makes it sound as though the fear of G-d is only a minor matter.

The Talmud in Tractate Berachos asks what we all might ask: Is the fear of G-d such a small thing? The Gemara relates how Rabbi Chanina said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha'i: The Holy One, blessed be He, has in His treasury nothing except a stockpile of the fear of heaven, as it says, "The fear of G-d is His treasure" (Isaiah 33: 6). Obviously if fear of G-d is so cherished by the Almighty, it must be very difficult to attain.

The Gemara answers: True! For it was Moshe who said this verse and for Moses fear of G-d was a small thing. Rabbi Chanina compared it to a person who is asked for a big article, and he has it. Since he has it, then it seems like a small article to him.

I always was bothered by the Gemara. Just

because it was easy for Moshe, who says it is easy for us? So why does Moshe imply to the people that fear of G-d is simple. That is easy for him to say. But don't you have to know your audience and talk to them on their level? Rav Yitzchok Zilber, founder of Toldos Yeshurun, an organization that re-educates estranged Russian Jews about the heritage that was snatched from them, is known as the Father of contemporary Russian Jewry. A native of Kazan, Russia, Rav Zilber was born just before the Russian Revolution in 1917, but was discreetly taught Torah by his revered father and not only completed Shas several times during his years in Russia, but also taught Torah to many others. During World War II, he was imprisoned in Stalin's gulag where, yet hemanaged to remain Shomer Shabbos despite the inhumane conditions. He later had to flee from the KGB, which wanted to arrest him for his Torah activities in Russia. In 1972, he emigrated to Israel. As he walked off the airplane on his arrival in Israel and embraced the custom agent.

Chavivi! My dear one! shouted Rabbi Zilber as he gave the man a bear-hug embrace. It is so wonderful to be here and talk to a Jew like a Jew! The man offered a polite smile and a pleasant Shalom.

Please tell me, pleaded Rabbi Zilber with an intensity that seemed to announce a question whose answer would solve all the problems facing Jews for the millennia. For years I am struggling with this problem. Please tell me, how did you understand the K'tzos haChoshen on the sugya of Areiv? (The K'tzos haChoshen is a classical commentary on the Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat, Code of Jewish Law.)

Ma zeh K'tzos haChoshen. (What is a K'tzos haChoshen)? came the reply.

Rav Zilber was puzzled. He tried another query. Maybe you can explain how you understood the Mishne in (tractate) Uktzin in the last chapter.

Mishne? Uktzin? K'tzos? What are you talking about?

Rav Zilber, recalling the difficulties he had trying to teach and study Torah in Russia was mortified. In honest shock, he asked the man. How is this possible? You mean to tell me that you live here in Israel and have the ability to learn Torah. And you don't know what the K'tzos is? You never heard of Mishne Uktzin?

Rav Zilber began to cry.

They say that the customs agent was so moved by Rabbi Zilber's simple sincerity, that he began to study Torah.

Perhaps the Gemara is telling us the simple truth. It was important for an entire nation to see the man to whom fear of heaven was considered the simplest and most rudimentary aspect of life. To Moshe, fear of Heaven was natural. As a leader, he had the imperative to impress the nation, with his sincerity. To us simple Jews, it is important to see

someone whose Jewish observance is as simple and graceful as if it is second nature. To us it may be a struggle, but it is imperative that the benchmark of our goals is someone to whom fear comes natural.

In this country, we say anyone can become president. In Moshe's vision, the one he imparts to his people, anyone can fear Hashem. ©2016 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

"A Land that Hashem, your Elokim, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your Elokim, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end." (11:12)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust in 1941) writes in connection with this verse:

We read (Shmot 34:24), "No man will covet your land when you go up to appear before Hashem, your Elokim, three times a year." The Gemara (Pesachim 8b) comments: Not only will no person covet your land, your cows will not be harmed while they graze and your chickens won't be hurt while they peck at garbage. Rashi z"l explains that not only is one's land protected when he makes the pilgrimage to Yerushalayim for the festivals, all of his property is protected. (The fact that property other than land will be protected is learned from the superfluous article "et" (aleph-tav) which disappears in the translation of the verse.)

Still, this requires explanation, for the Torah only promises that "no man" will harm the pilgrim's property. It does not say that no animal predators will harm the pilgrim's property! The answer, writes R' Lewin, is that man has the free will to harm others, while animals do not. Once Hashem has promised to protect the pilgrim's property from people, who have free will, it follows that He certainly will protect that property from animals, which do not have free will. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun) ©2016 S. Katz & torah.org

