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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

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Covenant & Conversation

Buried among the epic passages in Va-etchanan -- among them the Shema and the Ten Commandments -- is a brief passage with large implications for the moral life in Judaism. Here it is together with the preceding verse: "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your G-d, and His testimonies and His statutes, which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers." (Deut. 6:17-18)

The difficulty is obvious. The preceding verse makes reference to commandments, testimonies and statutes. This, on the face of it, is the whole of Judaism as far as conduct is concerned. What then is meant by the phrase "the right and the good" that is not already included within the previous verse?

Rashi says, it refers to "compromise (that is, not strictly insisting on your rights) and action within or beyond the letter of the law (lifnim mi-shurat ha-din)." The law, as it were, lays down a minimum threshold: this we must do. But the moral life aspires to more than simply doing what we must. The people who most impress us with their goodness and rightness are not merely people who keep the law. The saints and heroes of the moral life go beyond. They do more than they are commanded. They go the extra mile. That according to Rashi is what the Torah means by "the right and the good." (See Lon Fuller, The Morality of Law, Yale University Press, 1969, and R. Aharon Lichtenstein's much reprinted article, 'Is there an ethic independent of the halakhah?')

Ramban, while citing Rashi and agreeing with him, goes on to say something slightly different: "At first Moses said that you are to keep His statutes and his testimonies which He commanded you, and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought as well to do what is good and right in his eyes, for He loves the good and the right."

Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends, all his various transactions and the ordinances of all societies and countries. But since He mentioned many of them, such as, "You shall not go around as a talebearer," "You shall not take vengeance nor bear a grudge," "You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor," "You shall not curse the deaf," "You shall rise before the hoary head," and the like, He went on to state in a general way that in all matters one should do what is good and right, including even compromise and going beyond the strict requirement of the law... Thus one should behave in every sphere of activity, until he is worthy of being called "good and upright."

Ramban is going beyond Rashi's point, that the right and the good refer to a higher standard than the law strictly requires. It seems as if Ramban is telling us that there are aspects of the moral life that are not caught by the concept of law at all. That is what he means by saying "It is impossible to mention in the Torah all aspects of man's conduct with his neighbours and friends."

Law is about universals, principles that apply in all places and times. Don't murder. Don't rob. Don't steal. Don't lie. Yet there are important features of the moral life that are not universal at all. They have to do with specific circumstances and the way we respond to them. What is it to be a good husband or wife, a good parent, a good teacher, a good friend? What is it to be a great leader, or follower, or member of a team? When is it right to praise, and when is it appropriate to say, "You could have done better"? There are aspects of the moral life that cannot be reduced to rules of conduct, because what matters is not only what we do, but the way in which we do it: with humility or gentleness or sensitivity or tact.

Morality is about persons, and no two persons are alike. When Moses asked G-d to appoint a successor, he began his request with the words, "Lord, G-d of the spirits of all flesh." (Numbers 27:16) On this the rabbis commented: what Moses was saying was that because each person is different, he asked G-d to appoint a leader who would relate to each individual as an individual, knowing that what is helpful to one person may be harmful to another. (Sifre Zuta, Midrash Tanhuma and Rashi to Numbers ad loc.) This ability to judge the right response to the right person at the right time is a feature not only of leadership, but of human goodness in general.

Rashi begins his commentary to Bereishit with the question: If the Torah is a book of law, why does it not start with the first law given to the people of Israel

as a whole, which does not appear until Exodus 12? Why does it include the narratives about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the patriarchs and matriarchs and their children? Rashi gives an answer that has nothing to do with morality -- he says it has to do with the Jewish people's right to their land. But the Netziv (R. Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin) writes that the stories of Genesis are there to teach us how the patriarchs were upright in their dealings, even with people who were strangers and idolaters. That, he says, is why Genesis is called by the sages "the book of the upright." (Ha-amek Davar to Genesis, Introduction.)

Morality is not just a set of rules, even a code as elaborate as the 613 commands and their rabbinic extensions. It is also about the way we respond to people as individuals. The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is at least in part about what went wrong in their relationship when the man referred to his wife as Ishah, 'woman,' a generic description, a type. Only when he gave her a proper name, Chavah, Eve, did he relate to her as an individual in her individuality, and only then did G-d "make them garments of skin and clothed them."

This too is the difference between the G-d of Aristotle and the G-d of Abraham. Aristotle thought that G-d knew only universals not particulars. This is the G-d of science, of the Enlightenment, of Spinoza. The G-d of Abraham is the G-d who relates to us in our singularity, in what makes us different from others as well as what makes us the same.

This ultimately is the difference between the two great principles of Judaic ethics: justice and love. Justice is universal. It treats all people alike, rich and poor, powerful and powerless, making no distinctions on the basis of colour or class. But love is particular. A parent loves his or her children for what makes them each unique. The moral life is a combination of both. That is why it cannot be reduced solely to universal laws. That is what the Torah means when it speaks of "the right and the good" over and above the commandments, statutes and testimonies.

A good teacher knows what to say to a weak student who, through great effort, has done better than expected, and to a gifted student who has come top of the class but is still performing below his or her potential. A good employer knows when to praise and when to challenge. We all need to know when to insist on justice and when to exercise forgiveness. The people who have had a decisive influence on our lives are almost always those we feel understood us in our singularity. We were not, for them, a mere face in the crowd. That is why, though morality involves universal rules and cannot exist without them, it also involves interactions that cannot be reduced to rules.

Rabbi Israel of Rizhin once asked a student how many sections there were in the Shulchan Arukh. The student replied, "Four." "What," asked the Rizhiner, "do you know about the fifth section?" "But there is no fifth section," said the student. "There is," said the Rizhiner. "It says: always treat a person like a mensch."

The fifth section of the code of law is the conduct that cannot be reduced to law. That is what it takes to do the right and the good. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt"l*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"And we dwelt in the valley, opposite the Temple of Peor" (Deuteronomy 3:29) The contents of the final book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, are almost sandwiched between two curious references to a detestable idol: Ba'al Peor. At the conclusion of the first part of Moses' farewell speech to the Israelites, the text informs us that when Moses relinquished the baton of Jewish leadership to Joshua, "the Israelites had settled in the valley, opposite the Temple of Peor" (Deuteronomy 3:29). Then at the closing of the book, in a poignant passage summarizing Moses's life, the text reads: "And He [God] buried [Moses] in the valley in the Land of Moab opposite the Temple of Peor; no human being knows his burial place until this day" (Deut. 34:6).

Is it not strange that the only real landmark by which to identify Moses's grave is "opposite the Temple of Peor"? What makes these references especially startling is the disgusting manner in which this idol was served: by defecating in front of it! What kind of idolatry is this? And what type of repulsive individuals would it be likely to attract?

Furthermore, the Sages of the Talmud (B.T. Sanhedrin 106a) suggest that when Balaam advised the Moabites on how to vanquish the Israelites, he suggested that they bring Moabite women to entice the Israelites and then assimilate them into their culture. In effect, Balaam was explaining that, although no external soothsayer or prophet could get the Almighty to curse Israel, the Israelites could in fact curse themselves out of existence through sexual licentiousness with gentile women. And so, "the Israelites dwelt in Shittim, and began to engage in harlotry with the daughters of Moab" – but God was not angry at them. It was only when "they became attached to Baal Peor that the wrath of God flared up against them" (Numbers 25:1-3). Sexual immorality led to idolatrous worship of Peor – and it was this idolatry that would ultimately ruin Israel.

What is it about Peor that is not only abominable but also so dangerous?

Balaam's advice causes the Israelites to degenerate to lower and lower depths and the sexual debauchery becomes interchanged and intermingled

with the worship and joining “together” with Peor. At this point, God tells Moses to take all the leaders of the nation and to slay them under the rays of the sun; but no sooner does Moses give this command than an Israelite (Zimri ben Salou, a prince of the tribe of Simeon) cohabits (joins together with) the Midianite princess Cosbi bat Zur – a flagrant and disgustingly public act of rebellion against Moses, his teaching and his authority. It appears as though Jewish history was about to conclude even before it had a chance to begin – when Phinehas steps in and saves the day.

Phinehas seems to have been the antidote to Balaam, who, as we know from our text, was the son of Beor, strikingly similar to Peor (and in Semitic languages “b” and “p” can be interchangeable). It clearly emerges from the Talmudic discussion (B.T. Sanhedrin 64a) that Peor is the nadir – the lowest depth – of idolatrous practice. Is defecating before an idol the worst expression of idolatrous behavior?

The first two chapters of the Book of Genesis begin with two stories of the creation of the human being. Rav Soloveitchik describes these as two ways of looking at human personality: the first he calls homo natura, natural man, the human being as an inextricable part of the physical and animal world. This is mechanistic man, scientifically predetermined and pre-programmed, devoid of freedom and so (ironically) freed from responsibility.

The second aspect of the human personality is introduced in the second chapter of Genesis with God’s breathing the breath of life, a portion of His very essential self (as it were), His soul, into the clay body He has just formed. This results in homo persona, a vitalistic and free human being, responsible for his actions and charged with the obligation to perfect, or complete, God’s imperfect and incomplete world.

And God created homo persona! Homo persona is given the command to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit, to control his physical drives and impulses, to recreate himself as well as the world around him.

Peor says that man must give back to God his animal and physical excretions, that man cannot be expected to rise above his nature and become God’s partner. Moses taught, on the other hand, that man can and must enable, uplift and sanctify his material being until he can truly see himself as “only a little lower than God, crowned with honor and glory.”

Moses and Phinehas are the antithesis of Balaam and Peor, and so Moses is buried opposite Peor.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

This week's parsha begins the seven-week period of consolation and condolence that bridges the time space between Tisha b'Av and Rosh Hashana. In order to properly prepare for the oncoming year and its challenges one must first be comforted by the vision of better times ahead and the belief in one's ability to somehow overcome those omnipresent challenges. Healing occurs when one believes that there is yet a future ahead.

All medical doctors agree that hope and optimism on the part of the patient are great aids in the process of recovering from illness or injury. If we would not have time and vision to recover from the sadness before the advent of the High Holy Days then those most meaningful days of our year would clearly be diminished measurably in our minds and hearts.

Throughout the book of Dvarim, Moshe's pain at not being allowed to enter the Land of Israel is manifestably present. But Moshe is strengthened, and even somewhat consoled, by his vision of his student and loyal disciple, Yehoushua, succeeding him in the leadership of Israel, and in his firm conviction that the people of Israel will successfully conquer and settle the Land of Israel.

Comfort and consolation come in varying forms. What comforts one individual may not be effective for another. But again, all agree that such consolation is a necessary ingredient in the restoration and rehabilitation of those who were depressed and saddened. There is no substitute for consolation and healing. Otherwise, it is impossible to continue in life.

The parsha also deals with the Ten Commandments of Sinai. I have often thought that the repetition of this subject, which seemed to be adequately covered once in the Book of Shemot, teaches us an important lesson, which again may serve to be a source of consolation to us.

The "first" Ten Commandments was given at the beginning of the Jewish sojourn in the desert of Sinai. There was no Golden calf, no complaints about the manna, no spies, no Korach, no plagues of snakes -- nothing had yet occurred to diminish the light and aura of Sinai. In such a perfect society, there is no reason not to recognize the values and laws of the commandments as being valid and even necessary in practice.

But now Moshe stands forty years later, after all the disappointments and rebellions, the backsliding and the pettiness, the death of an entire generation, and reassures us in the "second" Ten Commandments, that all those values and rules have not changed at all. The lesson of the immutability of Torah and Halacha is engraved upon the Jewish heart and mind.

Many things have happened to the Jewish people since Moshe's speech before his death. Many have mistakenly thought that all the changes in technology, economies, world orders, etc. have made the Ten Commandments, Torah and Halacha somehow less relevant.

Moshe stands and speaks to us to remind us

that the basic anchor of Jewish life, and in fact of all world civilization, lies in those words of Sinai. Everything has changed but human beings have not changed. And neither has God's instructions for us.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Parashat Va'etchanan presents a grim forecast of the Jews' fortune. God says that, following their entry into the land of Israel, the Jews would sin, resulting in their exile. The Torah then states, "And there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat, nor smell" (Deuteronomy 4:28).

This sentence may describe further sins the Jewish People would commit once driven out of Israel. Yet one could also look at it another way, not as a description of sin but as part of the initial punishment Am Yisrael would bear.

Abarbanel describes the punishment as follows: once exiled, the Jews would worship idols. Although they would be aware of the false nature of these idols, they would be forced to serve them in order to protect themselves and save their lives. Despite their recognition in their hearts of their true God, they would have no choice but to pray to idols and lie about their true belief, a torturous punishment indeed (Abarbanel, Deuteronomy 4:25).

Biur agrees that the sentence is descriptive of punishment yet sees the punishment differently. Biur suggests that, in exile, we would find ourselves in a foreign culture imbued with a value system contrary to Torah. To restate Biur, there is no greater punishment than the soul drowning in the abomination of sin from which one cannot escape. There is no worse soulful pain than recognizing the evil of one's actions but not being able to stop – having become so accustomed to committing this sin (Biur, Deuteronomy 4:28).

Nehama Leibowitz, who cites the Abarbanel and Biur, notes that these two commentators reflect the challenges of their respective generations. Abarbanel lived in Spain in the latter part of the fifteenth century during the period of the Spanish Inquisition when the Catholic Church demanded that Jews worship their man-god or face death. Hence, Abarbanel sees the biblical punishment as a reflection of his generation's experience. At the risk of being killed, Jews had no choice but to outwardly leave their faith.

The Biur was penned by Moses Mendelssohn and others in eighteenth-century Western Europe. The challenge of that generation was the enlightenment that ensnared the Jewish People and caused rampant assimilation. The threat was not physical but spiritual. For Biur, our Torah speaks of Jews who leave the faith not because their lives are threatened but because they have been beguiled by the prevailing zeitgeist.

In truth, Abarbanel and Biur speak of the physical and spiritual tasks that we face throughout history. What these challenges share is the promise that immediately follows in the text: somehow, against all odds, we will extricate ourselves from that exile and return to God – in fulfillment of God's covenant with the Jewish People. As the Torah states, "And from there you will seek the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

Parashat Va'etchanan is always read on Shabbat Nachamu (the Shabbat of Comfort), the Shabbat after the Fast of the Ninth of Av. Appropriately, we read the portion that promises that, no matter the darkness of exile, the light of redemption will prevail.

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Blessing of Ga'al Yisrael

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

During the morning prayer service, one may not pause or interrupt between the blessing of redemption (*Ga'al Yisrael*), and the recitation of the *Amidah*. Even standing silently between them is prohibited. However, there is also a *halacha* that one must respond with an *Amen* after hearing a blessing. Thus, it would seem that someone who hears the *chazan* (cantor) complete the blessing of *Ga'al Yisrael* must answer *Amen*. But then he is creating an interruption between the blessing and the *Amidah*! What's a person to do?

Some answer that saying *Amen* to *Ga'al Yisrael* is like saying *Amen* after one's own blessing. In general, a person does not say *Amen* to his own blessing. However, if he is concluding a subject the *Amen* is considered part of the blessing and thus is not considered an interruption. (The classic example of this is in *Birkat HaMazon*, when we conclude our own blessing of "*Boneh Be-rachamav Yerushalayim*" by saying *Amen*.) Perhaps the *Amen* after *Ga'al Yisrael* is in the same category.

Others insist that the reciting of *Amen* at this point is an interruption and should be avoided. How can a person avoid taking sides in this disagreement?

The *poskim* offer three suggestions:

1. The person praying should try to reach *Ga'al Yisrael* a little before the *chazan*. He can then wait, recite *Amen* to the *chazan*'s blessing, then recite the blessing himself, and immediately begin the *Amidah*. However, this solution is not without its problems. First, one is not supposed to pause in the middle of the blessings following *Keriat Shema*. Second, ideally one

is meant to begin the *Amidah* at the same time as the *chazan*.

2. The person praying should recite the blessing together with the *chazan*. In such a case, he is not required to say *Amen*, as a person does not say *Amen* to his own blessing. However, as we have seen, there is an opinion that in the case of *Ga'al Yisrael* a person does say *Amen* to his own blessing.

3. The person praying should start the *Amidah* before the *chazan*. Once someone is in the middle of the *Amidah*, he does not respond *Amen* under any circumstances. However, once again, this means one is not beginning the *Amidah* with the *chazan*.

A fourth solution is very commonly followed nowadays. Namely, the *chazan* recites *Ga'al Yisrael* under his breath. Since no one hears the blessing, no one needs to answer *Amen*. Interestingly, this practice is not mentioned anywhere in the literature. Can it be that there truly is no source for it?

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Admonitions

Parashat V'etchanan continues the admonitions of Moshe to the B'nei Yisrael prior to their entering the land. The Torah continuously uses the phrase, "And it will be when He brings you into the land." Each of these introductions is followed by a different warning that Moshe considered to be crucial for their survival in such a Holy Land. He insisted that the people understand the negative possibility that they would be influenced by those around them to abandon Hashem and worship their gods.

We find in our parasha, "And it will be when Hashem, your Elokim, brings you into the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov, to give you great and good, cities that you did not build, houses filled with every good thing which you did not fill, hewn-out cisterns which you did not hew, orchids and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall be satisfied. Beware for yourself lest you forget Hashem, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. Hashem, your Elokim, you shall fear, Him shall you serve, and in His name shall you swear. You shall not follow after gods of others, of the gods of the peoples who are around you. For a zealous G-d is Hashem, your Elokim, among you, lest the wrath of Hashem, your Elokim, will flare against you and He will destroy you from upon the face of the earth. You shall not test Hashem, your Elokim, as you tested Him at Massah. You shall surely observe the commandments of Hashem, your Elokim, and His testimonies and His statutes that He commanded you. You shall do what is fair and good in the eyes of Hashem, so that it will be good for you, and you shall come and take possession of the good land that Hashem swore to your forefathers, to thrust away all your enemies from before you, as Hashem spoke."

HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch explains that this paragraph follows immediately after the commandment to put mezuzot on the doorposts of your house. A mezuzah is "the symbolic dedication and submission of our domestic and public life to Hashem and His Will." This leads us to the understanding that one "cannot ascribe the acquisition of the Land to (one's) own merit at all." Hirsch describes this as a promise which was destined to the Jewish People long before they became a nation. This promise was given to our forefathers, including all the wealth and abundance of the land that the people would find upon conquering the land. Hirsch cautions that one might have the tendency to sit back and enjoy these benefits without remembering that it was Hashem Who granted these benefits to the people.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin agrees with Hirsch on this matter. He explains that one tends to forget Hashem when there is an abundance of good. He points to the phrase, "it is with my strength and the strength of my hand" which becomes an assumption on our part. While it is true that one must put in his effort to accomplish anything, it is not his effort alone which makes the task a success. Hashem's hand is in everything that we do and our success is based on the blessing which He chooses to give. Moshe makes this clear by stating that the B'nei Yisrael will receive houses which they did not build, crops which they did not plant, cisterns which they did not dig. Just as these gifts upon conquering the land were not d ueto their building or planting, so any future endeavors will reach fruition only through the blessings of Hashem. This is the lesson which the B'nei Yisrael must internalize for them to serve Hashem completely.

The Torah tells us, "Hashem, your Elokim, you shall fear, Him shall you serve, and in His name shall you swear." In the Ten Commandments that are repeated earlier in the parasha, we are commanded to love Hashem. The Ramban explains that after we are to love Hashem, we must respect Hashem and His Laws so that we will not sin and be punished. The ibn Ezra explains this to mean that our love of Hashem brings us to perform the positive commandments, and our fear of Hashem causes us to avoid transgressing any of the negative commandments. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that after one has witnessed the mighty acts of Hashem in freeing the B'nei Yisrael from Egypt and slavery, and finally bringing the B'nei Yisrael into a goodla nd with all of the benefits mentioned above, one must recognize the power of Hashem and fear Him.

The fear of Hashem is also a prerequisite for the commandment to swear in the name of Hashem. Hirsch explains that only one whose fear of Hashem is evidenced in his actions can swear in Hashem's name, for that oath must indicate that his fear of Hashem will

cause him to respect that oath. Hirsch explains a difference of opinion between the Rambam and the Ramban concerning the taking of an oath using Hashem's name. According to the Rambam, "it is a direct command to confirm the truth by an oath on serious occasions. For such subjecting our whole existence under Hashem as a guarantee of our truthfulness is, after all, an expression of our acknowledgement of His sublime, ever-present, all knowing, all just, all-mightygo vernment." The Ramban's concern with this commandment involves whether this is a requirement (thou shalt) or a permission (thou may). The Ramban is concerned that one might swear in Hashem's name but also in the name of other gods of the surrounding people. He ties this pasuk into the next pasuk which warns of following the gods of the nations which surround the B'nei Yisrael.

Another admonition concerns worshipping other gods after coming into the land. The Torah warns the people that Hashem is a jealous Hashem, and He will become angry and He will destroy your from upon the earth. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that following other gods causes doubt in one's own heart about the singular Kingship of Hashem. The warning about Massah reminds us, that there was where the B'nei Yisrael questioned whether Hashem was in their midst. Hirsch explains that this admonishment speaks to the life of the individual, as the commandment is in the singular. It is not only in the public life that one must subject himself to Hashem's Will, but also in one's own home that one must be faithful to Hashem and His Laws.

The concluding words here are a repetition of Hashem's promise to His people. If one follows Hashem's Laws to do good in His eyes, then the B'nei Yisrael will be able to go into the good land and possess it, a land that was sworn to their forefathers. We have been blessed once again with possessing that same land, and we must remember Moshe's admonitions to us that it is only when we subject ourselves and our land's values to the Laws of Hashem that we will continue to possess it.

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"And the seventh day shall be a Sabbath to Hashem, your G-d; don't do any work, not you, your child, servant or animal, so your slave shall rest as you." (Devarim 5:14) Usually, when the Torah uses the word, "l'maan," meaning, "in order that," it is telling us the underlying reason for the commandment. For example, regarding the tzitzis, it says, "L'maan tizkeru," in order that you recall all the commandments and do them. In this case, though, it seems odd that we would understand the entire reason for the mitzva of Shabbos be that one's servant be able to rest.

Indeed, this is not the intent here. Rather, the reason for including all the others in the prohibition of working is so that the one who is commanded in "shevisa," abstention from work, is not working through any agent of any means, so that their abstention is complete. The reason it would be incomplete without that is because the main purpose of not "working" on Shabbos is that we be able to focus on studying and coming to know more about Hashem. That is why the posuk says, "a Sabbath to Hashem, your G-d."

However, it is not merely that having a servant or animal working would detract from our focus, but ensuring that our slaves rest is integral to this mission. As some meforshim explain, the idea of having our workers rest of Shabbos is to remind us that we were slaves in Egypt, and Hashem took us out and freed us in order to serve Him.

What this tells us, then, is that when we allow our servants to rest, perhaps giving them the time to think and reflect, we are acting as Hashem did when He took us from Egypt. We have a concept in Judaism called, "Ma Hu, af atah, just as He is, so shall you be." Hashem is merciful so we should be merciful. He feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, and we should do the same.

In other words, when we make our possessions rest, we put ourselves in a position of emulating Hashem, and by using the feelings we have when we do so, we can come to understand more about Hashem. This, in turn, generates further knowledge of Him and fosters our appreciation of His greatness, and therefore our ability to come close to Him.

By giving our slaves time to rest, we would hope they do something better with it than merely laze the day away. We would hope they appreciate the break, and think about how they can better serve us the next day. We'd want them to acknowledge that though we could be forcing them to labor 24/7, we don't do that. So it is with Hashem.

When we keep Shabbos, it's not merely about not "doing" anything. It's about what we "do" with the time we are given. It's about using it to get to know Hashem, as we ended the Haftara on Tisha B'Av morning, saying, "In this shall one take pride, consider and know Me… for this is what I desire, says Hashem." If we understand this and use the Shabbos correctly, we will find true comfort in it and in Hashem. Nachamu, Nachamu Ami.

A prince received a package from his father, the King. It was hand-delivered and the messenger had been warned how important it was. With great anticipation the prince opened it and found a delightful ornate keepsake box inlaid with precious stones. He proudly displayed it on his mantelpiece.

When the King came to visit, he asked his son about the gift. The son replied that he liked it but was

wondering why his father seemed so interested in something which, though nice, was not spectacular. He pointed to the mantel.

"Didn't you open it?" asked the King, "Inside was the deed to an estate right near the palace so you could come live near me! I wanted you close by - but you never came." © 2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

STEVEN TOPLAN

Relating to Shabbat

As the parsha for the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av, part of Vaetchanan reiterates the foundation of our halachic and hashkafic systems, the Aseres HaDibros. As a foundational text, however, it is curious that Moshe edits this text. The two most notable changes are when talking about the parent-child relationship and Shabbat. And, Shabbat (5:12-15) itself has two notable changes. The first change is the usage of Zachor in Shmot to Shamor in our parashah. The gemara (Rosh Hashana 27a) addresses this issue from a pragmatic perspective which results in an halachic directive. In Shmot 20, it says, "Remember the Shabbat day." "Remember" and "keep" were expressed in a single utterance—something which the human mouth cannot articulate and the human ear cannot hear.

This difference gives us two sides of the same coin: zachor represents the positives/ imperative aspects of Shabbat whereas shamor the prohibitive aspects of Shabbat. One without the other makes Shabbat observance not only impractical but nearly impossible.

The second change is the justification for Shabbat. In Shmot the justification was universal (zicaron l'maaseh berashit) but in our parashah, Shabbat is ascribed to a uniquely Jewish event, yetziyat mitzrayim. Is Shabbat no longer a weekly event for the entire world? And unlike shamor versus zachor, does this change impact our halachic system?

A simple way to comprehend the differences and how Chazal understood Shabbat is by looking at our tefilot. Hence, if one looks at our Shabbat tefilot (all four amidot, both kiddushim), the primary understanding of Shabbat is as a reflection of creation. And when yetziat mitzrayim is mentioned (only in Friday night kiddush), it is secondary. Parenthetically, when we see Moshe being mentioned (Shabbat shacharis, 'Yismach Moshe…'), one reason for Moshe's happiness here is due to the Egyptians allowing B'nei Yisrael to rest on Shabbat, not because we left Mitzrayim (see Artscroll siddur commentary). So despite our parashah, Shabbat is and will always be universal. How then is Shabbat impacted by the textual change of 'zecher l'yetziat mitzrayim'?

According to Rabbi Yehuda Pearl (Congregation Anshei Shalom, West Hempstead, NY) the change in the text was necessary due to pragmatic concerns which we can all very much relate to - how to make Shabbat relevant. B'nei Yisrael in the midbar had difficulty relating to Shabbat solely from the point of Creation. Chait ha'egel and the sin of the Meraglim were prime examples of how this difficulty manifested itself.

Moshe's presentation of Shabbat, therefore, was meant to be meaningful and practical to the current generation that would enter Eretz Yisrael. It might be that although the reference to yetziat mitzrayim wasn't adding any specific halachot (Ibn Ezra, Stone Chumash ad loc), it was adding how one should *think* about Shabbat. Just like zachor and shamor are two sides of the same coin, berashit and yetziat mitzrayim are also two sides of a different coin[1] and inseparable. One side of this proverbial coin is a list of yeses and nos, but the other side is a mindset – and you need both. If one were to focus solely on the halachot of Shabbat, Shabbat would be dry and impersonal. Yetziat mitzrayim tells us to view Shabbat through a personal lens – remember *you* were once a slave *yourself!* (Moreh Nevuchim, 2:31, Stone Chumash ad loc)

Thousands of years later, it is through a personal lens that we can often discover the specialness of Shabbat. Wishing everyone much bracha as we work on ourselves, and teach our children 'How can 'I' relate to Shabbat?'! *© 2022 S. Toplan*

SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

This Shabbat, and in the weeks that follow, we read the "Shiv'ah D'nechemta" / "Seven [Haftarot] of Consolation." These selections from the Book of Yeshayah console us after Tisha B'Av by speaking of the ultimate redemption.

But why? asks R' Mordechai Menashe Zilber shlita (Toldos Yehuda -- Stutchiner Rebbe in Brooklyn, N.Y.). Why is consolation appropriate when Mashiach still has not come? Perhaps we should mourn even more when Tisha B'Av ends and we have not yet been redeemed!

He explains: On Tisha B'Av, we are not mourning for what was, for a world that existed and is no longer. Rather, on Tisha B'Av, we are pining for a world that is yet to come. Indeed, R' Zilber writes, if one were to sink into despair on Tisha B'Av over the losses of the past, it would border on heresy, for it would imply that he does not believe in the ultimate redemption. [This idea is supported by the fact that many of the Kinnot end on an "upbeat" note, expressing our hope and confidence for the future.]

Our Sages say that Mashiach was born on Tisha B'Av. This means, R' Zilber continues, that a

[1] Although not within the context of Shabbat, the duality of Shabbat observance discussed is similar to the duality of the parent-child relationship: one cannot 'honor' one's parents without 'fearing' them.

"spark" of redemption is awakened in every person on Tisha B'Av. As a result, every person can leave Tisha B'Av a new, changed person--one who is closer to what we need to be to merit the ultimate redemption.

The Gemara (Bava Batra 60b) teaches: "One who mourns for Yerushalayim will merit to see its joy." R' Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (rabbi and Chassidic Rebbe of Radomsko, Poland; died 1866) writes that this is not speaking of joy at some time in the distant future. Rather, one who properly mourns for Yerushalayim will immediately experience the joy of the approaching redemption. Thus, concludes R' Zilber, consolation is in order now. (Kuntreis Divrei Torah: Bein Ha'meitzarim p.55)

"Honor your father and your mother, as Hashem, your Elokim, commanded you, so that your days will be lengthened and so that it will be good for you, upon the land that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you." (5:16) R' Moshe Yitzchak Ashkenazi z"l (1821-1898; Trieste, Italy) writes: This Mitzvah is the foundation of a civilized society. Therefore, the promised reward is that "your days will be lengthened... upon the land that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you." This is not referring to long life for the individual, but rather long-term existence for the Jewish Nation on its Land. Of course, R' Ashkenazi writes, a person who honors his parents may be rewarded with long life so that, Middah-K'negged-Middah, he can enjoy the same pleasure from his descendants that he gave to his parents. However, we see that it does not always work out that way, so the verse must have another meaning as well. Indeed, the primary purpose for which this Mitzvah was included among the Ten Commandments is to teach us that a nation cannot endure without Mussar / a solid ethical grounding, and the foundation of all Mussar is honoring parents. (Simchat Ha'regel: Drush 6)

"You shall love Hashem, your Elokim, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources." (6:5) R' Dov Kook shlita (Teveryah, Israel) writes: When a person loves something, he does not feel that he is losing out by giving up other things to obtain what he loves. If his love for something is great enough, he will give up everything he has in order to get it. In this verse, the Torah is teaching us how much we should love Hashem--so much that we gladly would give up our hearts (i.e., everything else that we love), our souls (i.e., our lives), and all our resources (i.e., our money).

R' Kook continues: Why does a person love money? Because he attaches importance to this world, and money allows him to realize his this-worldly goals. People do not feel bad when they have to spend money on what they love. Yet, when they have to spend money on serving Hashem, they feel as if something has been taken from them. Our obligation, this verse teaches, is to change that balance--to love Hashem more than we love money and the things it buys.

The same thing applies to "Mesirut Nefesh" / giving one's soul, either literally or figuratively (i.e., by going out of his comfort zone for a Mitzvah). Man naturally loves life in this world more than he loves Hashem. Thus, if he has to give up his life, or even a physical comfort, to serve Hashem, he views it as a loss. Yet, people generally do not object to giving up something they love for their children's sake. We see, therefore, that whether or not one views a tradeoff as a difficult "sacrifice" depends on what one loves more. This verse is instructing us to love Hashem more than we love what this world has to offer. (It'aluta p.19-21)

In the quoted verse, the word "heart" (in the phrase, "With all your heart") is written "Levavcha," instead of the simpler "Libcha." The Mishnah (Berachot 9:5) states that the doubled letter "Bet" is hinting: "Love Hashem with both your inclinations--your Yetzer Ha'tov / good inclination and your Yetzer Ha'ra / evil inclination." R' Natan Adler (1741-1800; Frankfurt, Germany) wrote in his copy of the Mishnah: "See Shemonah Perakim, chapter 6."

R' Zvi Binyamin Auerbach z"l (1808-1872; rabbi of Halberstadt, Germany) explains: Philosophers debated whether it is better to be tempted to sin, and then to overcome that temptation, or to be above all temptation. In his work Shemonah Perakim, R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (Rambam; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) suggests a middle position: If the sin is one that man would not know logically (e.g., eating non-kosher food), it is better to be tempted to sin, and to overcome that temptation. However, if the sin is one that society abhors (e.g., murder, theft), it is better not to be tempted at all.

Accordingly, R' Auerbach writes, we can understand our verse, the Mishnah, and R' Adler's marginal note as follows: "You shall love Hashem, your Elokim, with all your heart..." When your good inclination tells you that something obviously is a sin, do not refrain from sinning because it seems wrong to you. Rather, refrain from sinning because you love Hashem, Who commanded you to refrain. When your evil inclination tempts you to violate a law that seems illogical, also refrain from sinning because you love Hashem. (Cheil Ha'tzava)