

תשנ"ח

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אש: The Burning Truth

The progression of knowledge and service of ה' in ספר שמות, through the use of fire imagery

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ספר שמות IS THE DRAMATIC TALE of the Jewish people's formation as a nation. This nationhood, however, did not come easily. It took many hard-learned lessons before בני ישראל could accept ה' as their G-d and serve Him in the proper way. The process through which בני ישראל attained this level is illustrated throughout ספר שמות through the imagery of fire.

The first time that ה' appears in ספר שמות it is "בלבת אש מתוך הסנה" (ג:ב). It was in the form of a pillar of fire that ה' chose to first reveal Himself to בני ישראל, when He appointed him as the leader, savior, and teacher of בני ישראל. The פסוק continues to relate that what caught משה's attention was the fire that burned within the bush, yet failed to consume it; "וירא והנה הסנה בער באש; והסנה איננו אכל". From the outset, it is apparent that whatever it was that ה' wished to teach His future nation and their leader, would be accomplished through the imagery of fire.

משה, however, was reluctant to accept G-d's message. In fact, משה had to be cajoled, convinced, and finally forced to accept his שליחות and assume his role as the leader of the Jewish people. משה's strongest argument to Hashem, as to why he considered himself unworthy for this mission, was that he was "כבד פה וכבד לשון" (ד:י). The *Midrash Rabbah* on this פסוק tells us that when משה was a baby, living in the house of פרעה, he was once subjected to a test. פרעה wished to ascertain whether משה had tendencies to covet the מלכות, as he had placed פרעה's crown upon his head. The baby משה was placed before two trays — one laden with gold, and the other with burning coals — and his fate was to be determined by which item he grabbed. Had he picked up the gold, that would determine that he was destined to usurp the throne. According to the Midrash, משה automatically reached for the gold, however, a ה' intervened and pushed him towards the coals. He then picked one up and placed it in his mouth, causing permanent damage to the inside of his mouth. Thus, משה's first encounter with fire, brought

about through Divine intervention, left him scathed for life, and the second would forever change his life.

If, in fact, Hashem utilized fire so conspicuously as a form of Divine intervention, then one might assume that there would be some reference to אש in the ten מצוות, all of which were directly from Hashem. In fact, אש is found in the description of the seventh מצוה, ברד (arguably the most miraculous of the ten מצוות): "ויהי ברד ואש מתלקחת בתוך הברד" (כד:ט). The single מצוה involving fire, and it is also the only מצוה for which Hashem's primary goal is explicitly stated, as it says: "כי בפעם הזאת...בעבור תדע כי אין כמני" (יד:מ). In this paradoxical מצוה, Hashem utilized fire in order to punish מצרים, and to teach them of His reality and greatness.

Before בני ישראל could be redeemed from מצרים, they were commanded to bring the קרבן פסח. The קרבן פסח was the primary lesson that בני ישראל had to learn regarding the service of Hashem. The commandment itself came replete with details of the process through which the קרבן should be brought, and אש is referred to three different times. The first time is in the positive commandment to prepare the meat and eat it roasted, or "עלי אש" (יב:ח). The second reference to fire is in regard to the negative command elaborating that the meat should be none other than roasted by fire, as it says: "אל תאכלו" (יב:ט). Further, it is explicitly commanded that any remainder of the קרבן after that night "באש תשרפו" (יג:כב), should be burned in fire. In this way משה, the מצרים, and בני ישראל all received lessons from Hashem, on some level, through אש.

Once בני ישראל had been redeemed from מצרים, the Torah says that Hashem led them in the form of a cloud by day, and at night "בעמוד אש" (יג:כב). A pillar of fire led בני ישראל, both protecting them and constantly reminding them of Hashem's presence. While בני ישראל were crossing the ים סוף, the מצרים began to pursue them. However, something stopped them from being successful in their pursuit. The פסוק says: "וישקה ה' אל מחנה מצרים" (יד:כד). רש"י explains that the אש actually burned the chariots of the מצרים so that they were unable to advance and attack בני ישראל. Thus, Hashem once again chose to appear in the form of fire in this divine intervention to protect בני ישראל and teach vital lessons.

The single most prominent example of Hashem's intervention in this world was the giving of the Torah at סיני הר. The Torah describes this event in the following terms: "והר סיני עשן כלו מפני אשר ירד עליו ה' באש ויעל עשנו כעשן" (יט:יח). After משה descended from the mountain, the פסוק says that in the eyes of בני ישראל the glory of Hashem was apparent; "כאש" (כד:יז). The one and only time in history that Hashem re-

vealed Himself to all of בני ישראל and taught them Himself, speaking directly to them, was through fire. The Jewish people's most important lesson, and the milestone which made them a nation and was meant to ultimately bring them to the knowledge and service of Hashem, was done באש.

What is extremely significant during and following מתן תורה, is that Hashem was no longer merely demonstrating his presence to משה and בני ישראל. Rather, בני ישראל began to see it for themselves, and it actually became a part of משה's very essence. This can be illustrated effectively by the aforementioned פסוק which says: בני ישראל saw for themselves that which Hashem had been impressing upon them from the very beginning of שמות. משה's understanding of Hashem's fundamental lesson manifests itself not only in his consciousness and אמונה, but in his physical appearance as well, and it was בני ישראל who recognized this reality. The פסוק states that when משה descended from סיני, בני ישראל saw a divine light radiating from משה's face: "וירא אהרון וכל בני ישראל את משה והנה קרן עור פניו" (לד:ס). The Torah further elaborates on משה's shining skin in a subsequent פסוק which says: בני ישראל את פני משה כי קרן עור פני משה והשיב משה את המסוה על פניו עד באו לדבר אתו (לד:לה). Such was the high level attained by משה and בני ישראל, illustrated through fire imagery.

Although בני ישראל did learn to recognize Hashem's hand in the world, they still had many חסרונות and gravely misused their newfound knowledge. While משה was on הר סיני learning Torah directly from Hashem, the Jewish People were busy creating the הזהב, through no means other than the use of fire. בני ישראל evidently took the gold of אהרון in answer to their requests and threw it into a fire, allowing the עגל to emerge in its grotesque form, as the פסוק says: "ואשליכהו באש ויצא העגל" (לב:כד). When משה saw the atrocity of the עגל, he immediately corrected the situation by throwing the עגל into a fire to burn, as it says: "ויקח את" (לב:כ). Thus, בני ישראל were almost lost, and were finally saved, through the אש, the very medium through which Hashem always wished to teach them the right way. This, too, served as an integral lesson for the future.

Only after the חטא העגל did בני ישראל understand the true essence of אש, and what it was that Hashem was trying to impress upon them. It is now, as the ספר approaches its conclusion, that the culmination of all of the lessons taught to בני ישראל through אש is finally reached. Not only did Hashem no longer have to force the אש upon them, and not only did משה emulate the essence of the אש itself, and not only could בני ישראל now recognize the true and proper use of this אש, but they could now offer to Hashem a piece

of themselves באש: the קרבנות of the משכן.

מספר שמוות culminates in the building of the משכן and its various כלים for the עבודה. Three of the כלים of the משכן embody the concept of אש. One, the pride of the משכן and the symbol of the Jewish people for all time, was the מנורה. The purpose of the מנורה was to bring light to the people; "להאור, להעלות" (כז:כ). Additionally, in the very construction of the elaborate מנורה, it states that Hashem demonstrated the exact appearance that it should have by eliciting the image of a fiery מנורה של אש, once again utilizing אש to demonstrate proper service to G-d (ד"ה וראה ועשה) (כה:מ, רש"י, ד"ה וראה ועשה). In the center of the משכן were the מזבח הזהב and מזבח הנחשת, and the קרבנות comprised the main עבודה of the משכן. As taught to משה on סיני, the קרבנות were to be brought with fire, as it says: "ואת בשר הפר ואת עורו ואת פרשו תשרף" (כט:יד) באש. Furthermore, that which remained of the meat of the קרבנות or "ושרפת את הנותר באש לא יאכל כי קדוש: לחם הפנים" (כט:לד) הוא. Thus, בני ישראל began to serve Hashem in the very way that they were taught to trust Hashem, and using that which made them an עם; it was all through אש.

The very last פסוק of מספר שמוות describes Hashem's resting of His presence in the newly built משכן, and says: "כי ענן ה' על המשכן יומם ואש תהיה לילה בו" (מ:לח) לעיני כל בית ישראל בכל מסעיהם. This פסוק perfectly captures the essence of מספר שמוות. One can finally see with clarity that Hashem has succeeded in teaching בני ישראל, through אש, how to be אמונה, become an עם, and serve Hashem so that Hashem can rest His presence, the עמוד אש, within בני ישראל, and all know and can recognize Hashem's presence in their midst.

The Parameters of קנאות

Elanit Rothschild

WHEN ONE READS through בראשית פרק לד, many questions can be raised concerning the actions of שמעון ולוי in the city of שכם. The following are the questions which will be focused on in this article:

1. Is there any justification for the act of שמעון ולוי, killing not only the guilty but the innocent as well?
2. If yes, why was יעקב angry with his sons at the end of the פרק, and at the end of his life, in פרק מט?
3. If not, then why did יעקב stay quiet when his sons spoke to שכם וחמור?
"במרמה"?
4. Why does it seem as if the Torah actually justifies the act a few פסוקים later, in לה:ה, where it says "זויהי חתת א-להים על הערים..."?

To answer the first question, we can look at a מחלוקת between רמב"ם and רמב"ן. Both מפרשים agree that when דינה kidnapped שכם he violated one of the מצוות בני נח (kidnapping is included under the general prohibition of גזל - theft) Non-Jews — בני נח — are חייב מיתה for violations of any of their seven מצוות. Therefore, he was חייב מיתה. The issue that they are divided upon is whether or not the whole city deserved to die as well. רמב"ם, in הלכות רמור, believes that the entire city as well as its leaders, שכם and חמור, were worthy of death. He bases his opinion on his interpretation of the מצוות בני נח. He writes that בני נח are obligated to set up courts and judge their people on the violations of the other מצוות — גילוי עריות, שפיחת דמים, עבודה זרה, אבר מן החי, גזל, זרה, ברכת השם, and אבר מן החי. However, if they do not set up these courts, then the entire society is in violation of the seventh מצוה of דינין and is deserving of death.

רמב"ן, however, strongly disagrees. In his פירושו on בראשית לד:יג, he writes that דינין is a מצוה לא תעשה, as opposed to the other six, which are עשה מצוות. Therefore, since people of the city only violated a עשה מצוה, they were not

worthy of death, and שמעון and לוי had no right to kill them. רמב"ן brings two proofs to establish his point. The first is that שא"ת על פי שאתה יודע, אף על פי שאתה יודע "בדיני עכום, אף על פי שאתה יודע — a non-Jewish judge is allowed to drop a case and not bring judgment if he so desires. This is opposed to a Jewish judge who is only allowed to do so when he is positive that someone is lying or if there is not enough evidence to prosecute. Therefore, even if אנשי שכם knew what שכם did, they were not obligated to judge. The second proof comes directly from the פסוקים in the Torah. בני ישראל are commanded in many places not to follow the ways of the other nations — "כי אתה בא אל" (דברים יח:ט). (הארץ אשר ה' נתן לך לא תלמד לעשות כתועבת הגויים ההם" Although from this we see that the שבט בני נח were violating the מצוות בני נח, there is no one who condemns them to death for their transgression.

ויענו בני יעקב...במרמה" פסוק states that when רמב"ן, it was not talking about the act of killing the whole city. יעקב and his sons wanted to trick שכם so that they could get דינה back. The "trickery" was asking them to get a ברית מילה, so on the third day, that which is the most painful, the brothers would go into the city and take דינה back. יעקב agreed to **this** part of the plan. But, שמעון and לוי decided to take this plan to a "higher" level — in the words of רמב"ן, "רצו להנקם מהם" — they wanted to take revenge. יעקב took out his wrath on שמעון and לוי for this very reason — they killed innocent people. יעקב believed that due to this one act, שמעון and לוי put their whole family in a very dangerous and precarious position; living amongst foreign people, any of the surrounding cities could have potentially started a war. רמב"ן adds that if אנשי שכם were in fact worthy of death, יעקב would have been the one to kill them — דינה was his daughter! No one gave שמעון and לוי the authority to hand out punishment. אנשי שכם had the potential to do תשובה, and return to Hashem, as can be seen when they were contemplating the ברית מילה, the people of both families would sit together and "להיות עם אחד" — be one nation.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (לד:יג, כה) agrees with רמב"ן on his main points. He states that if שמעון and לוי would have only killed וחמור שכם, no fuss would have been made over it. But, under no circumstances was the killing of innocent people justified. Only for this did יעקב reproach them. In the eyes of שמעון and לוי, their act was justified because they only wanted to protect the honor and purity of a ישראל, and to show the world that such an act was unacceptable and intolerable. But, nonetheless, instead of "taking revenge on innocent people for that which powerful ones had done", they could have illustrated their point less forcefully.

שמעון וּלְוִי, on the other hand, finds reasons to defend וּלְוִי in the killing of the people of שכם. On פסוק כה, he asks two questions:

- a. Why did they kill those who were not guilty?
- b. Why did they not first kill those who actually did the עבירה?

The first answer that he gives actually answers both questions. When שמעון and לוי come to take דינה back, they saw the men of the city attempting to defend שכם. As such, they found themselves in danger and, following the דין of רודף דין and לוי first killed "כל יזכר" in self-defense and then killed the ones who were actually חייב for the original sin. Hence, וייהרגו כל זכר...ואת, "חמור ואת שכם בנו הרגו..."

A second reason he gives for the killing of "כל בני העיר" is that since the whole city was in on the plan to kidnap דינה, they were all guilty. How do we know that they were all in on it? In פסוק it says, ובני יעקב באו על החללים ויבזו. "העיר אשר טמאו אחותם" — the city which "טמאו" their sister. "אור החיים" then connects this reason to what the רמב"ם wrote in הלכות מלכים — הלכות מלכים כל בעלי "ומפני זה נתחייבו כל בעלי" — שכם הריגה". Although he agrees that the city deserved to be killed, he disagrees with רמב"ם's reasoning, for he does not see a source that indicates that a city is obligated to judge its inhabitants. Therefore, one must say that the whole city helped שכם in the kidnapping of דינה.

But, if the sin was גול (kidnapping), then the פסוק should have said, "גול אשר גולו אחותם". So, "אור החיים" explains, one is only worthy of death for גול when that which was "stolen" is not returned. But they were planning on returning דינה. If it were not for "טמאו", שמעון and לוי would not have killed. שכם defiled their sister and for that they wanted revenge. Nevertheless, "אור החיים" emphasizes the fact that they had no right to take the responsibility for judging שכם to death.

At the end of the פרק, we see יעקב's anger. The same anger, perhaps even a bit sharper, can also be seen at the end of his life, when יעקב gives his sons their ברכות. There, he reprimands שמעון and לוי for their murderous act. Even when many years have passed and the family is no longer living in ארץ כנען in danger of being attacked, יעקב still feels strongly about their acts. In fact he reprimands them when he gives most of his children ברכות, but says that there was no justification for the deeds of שמעון and לוי.

Thus far, we have attempted to answer our first three questions according to three different מפרשים. The basic conclusion we can come up with is that none of the reasons that שמעון and לוי had to kill the whole city were justifiable enough to condone what they did (except for the first reason given by "אור החיים"). Although יעקב was aware of the "מרמה", he only intended it to be used to get דינה back. He in no way gave his consent to murder, and he therefore displayed tremendous anger at the end of the פרק.

This brings us to the fourth question. If one reads לה:ה, it seems as if the Torah actually justifies the act by instilling fear in the surrounding nations and protecting יעקב and his family. Nechama Leibowitz brings in a beautiful explanation to this seeming contradiction. At the end of her article on פרשת וישלח, she explains that an אות or נס given in the Torah does not always prove the truth or consent from Hashem. We can prove this from the basic fact that a נביא שקר can perform נס after נס, and yet, it does not prove that Hashem desires this נביא שקר. So, we can not learn from here that the Torah is justifying the act of murder. Hashem intervenes, but it does not conclusively prove anything.

There is a certain level of קנאות, zealotry, that can be found in what שמעון and לוי did. They had a mission with a purpose and believed with all their hearts that what they were doing was the right thing. We can find a direct parallel and contrast to this in the story of פנחס. When מעשה saw פנחס, כזבי וזמרי, he immediately lifted his sword and killed them both. Hashem tells Moshe that what פנחס did was an act of zealotry for Hashem, "השיב (פסוק יא) רש"י. את חמתי מעל בני ישראל בקנאו את קנאתי" (במדבר כה:יא) comments that the term "קנאה" always denotes one who strives to take revenge for the sake of something. So, it seems as if both acts, of שמעון and לוי and of פנחס, were acts of קנאה. But what makes פנחס praiseworthy while שמעון and לוי are subject to curse? In order to see the differences between them, we must first highlight the parallels.

- a. Both acts are קנאה על הונות.
- b. Both killed an important non-Jew — שמעון and לוי killed the leaders of a city, and פנחס killed the daughter of the "head of the people of a fathers' house in Midyan" — "ראש אמות בית אב במדין" (במדבר כה:טו).
- c. Both put בני ישראל in potential danger from the surrounding nations.
- d. Both risked their own lives for this one act.

The most striking difference between the two stories is that פנחס had pure intentions, his was לשם שמים, while שמעון and לוי were more selfish in their קנאה. We already discussed that שמעון and לוי wanted to avenge the honor of their family and take revenge on the horrible act that was done to their sister, דינה. Their goals were based more on the personal, on **their** honor and **their** embarrassment. פנחס was only conscious of the fact that a חילול ה' was taking place, and therefore created a קידוש ה' by killing זמרי וזמרי. We see this from the Gemara that רש"י brings in on פסוק ז — when Moshe saw this act, he forgave the halacha of what should be done. פנחס, remembering what Moshe

taught, "הבוועל ארמית קנאין פוגעין בו" — one who commits harlotry with an Aramean woman, zealous people have the right to kill him. Moshe immediately told פנחס to go ahead and kill them. His anger was Hashem's anger; his קנאות, Hashem's קנאות.

Another obvious difference between both stories is that in פנחס's case, מירי וזמיר clearly deserved the punishment of death. Hashem explicitly states in פסוקים quoted above that He approved of what פנחס did. Although there is no clear indication from the פסוקים in בראשית, as we have seen earlier, it is apparent that the whole city of שכם did not deserve to die.

In addition to achieving a clearer understanding of what went on in שכם on that day, one can find in this story importance in the realm of מחשבה as well. "אני ה' קראתיך בצדק ואחזק בידך ואעריך ואתנך — ישעיה מב in פסוק ו. "I, G-d, have called you to righteousness. I took your hand, created you, and made you a covenant people, a light for the nations." רד"ק and Malbim both say on this פסוק that the job of בני ישראל is to teach the גויים true faith in G-d and encourage them to observe the שבע טובים. "ללמוד את הגויים את דרך ה'", מצוות בני נח. This does not mean that we must teach them all 613 מצוות, get them to convert and practice our religion. Rather, our goal is to teach them morality, the correct way to live a life of honesty, ethics and virtue. Rav Avraham Yitzchak haCohen Kook writes in his book, **אורות**, that "It is in Israel, 'the core of humanity', that mankind's positive qualities find a common denominator (pp. 129-130)." In אגרת הראייה he continues, "Judaism is the quintessence of humanity, of the all-extensive real" (1, p. 175). What are we to learn from this? Surely, this is not just to give us an "ego-trip", to tell us that we are the best in the world, and that we must teach those who are on a "lower level." At the core of the concept of "אור לגויים" lies a great responsibility. This responsibility calls for a type of perfection that only Hashem can expect from us, an ideal that we must strive to achieve on a daily basis. Because we are the chosen people, appointed as a "light for the nations," whatever we do, on the communal or individual level, is looked at under a fine microscope. But, most importantly, the people of the world will never allow the individual Jew to remain isolated in his own private and separate sphere. Once the act of one or a few is brought into the public domain, he is then used as a harsh indictment against the entire Jewish community. For our purposes, though, this does not serve as a negative comment against the nations of the world. This serves as a negative comment against us. Although we are not perfect and will never be perfect, for G-d created us בשר ודם, this is part of the responsibility that comes with the territory of "אור לגויים". As mentioned earlier, although we must be the teachers of morality, ethics and virtue, we can not

reach that goal if we do not properly keep the entire Torah. שמעון and לוי destroyed an entire city in a seemingly justifiable act of revenge. As we have seen, this was wrong- not only because it went against everything their father stood for, but because the integrity of בני ישראל, the family of the אבות, was disgraced. As יעקב says at the end of the פרק in לך בראשית אתי, "עכרתם אתי, בראשית אתי, בראשית אתי, בראשית אתי..." "...להבאישיני בישב הארץ..." "you have brought trouble on me to make me odious among the inhabitants of the land..." יעקב saw that this one act of murder would lower them in the eyes of the surrounding nations, bring his family down from the level of "אור לגויים" and give the nations an excuse to not even want to follow the שבט מצוות בני נח and heed the word of Hashem.

The only way we can properly be an "אור לגויים" is if we learn the lesson taught by יעקב. We must live the life of a light unto the nations, using a system of values and justice set forth by the Torah, and never allowing our emotions to dictate and openly justify our actions. We must show the nations of the world that this type of life is truly possible, so that they too can attain a true faith in G-d.

The ברכות of יעקב and the ברכות of משה

Bethany Bleier

IT IS THE SAGA of two dying men standing before a nation of people. One man, 147 years old, lies victim to a dreadful illness. The other, 120 years old, is victim of a dreadful punishment. Both know the end is drawing near, and both are prepared to apportion the blessings and the legacy. Neither one is content to simply bless the people with general good wishes; rather each in his own unique way gives an eternal message to each of his children/tribes. In this essay, we shall seek to understand the nuances of these messages, and their meaning.

In פרשת ויחי, the ברכות of יעקב are relayed to his sons. While these ברכות outline the special mission each שבט is to fulfill, the ברכות of משה, as told in פרשת וזאת הברכה, are meant to combine both blessing and prophecy and tell each tribe its national responsibility.

The brachot of יעקב begin in בראשית מט:א. יעקב calls to his sons and says, "האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם באחרית הימים. הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב," רש"י comments that יעקב wished to reveal the details of the קץ; nevertheless, despite his pleas, Hashem would not allow him to. Rav Hirsch mentions a similar theme with respect to the redundancy in the usage of "האספו" and "הקבצו". He explains that the שרש of אסף connotes "to gather together" for a common goal or purpose; the שרש of קבץ refers to physically staying together in an "external account of space, not mind." יעקב, though clearly cognizant of the fact that his sons were diverse by their very nature, believes that, if they work together and unite into one spirit of mind and body, the משיח will come.

ראובן בכרי אתה כחי וראשית אוני יתר שאת ויתר עז: פחו כמים אל תותר כי
עלית משכבי אביך או חללת יצועי עלה: (בראשית מט:ג-ד)
Reuven, you are my firstborn, my strength and my initial vigor,
foremost in rank and foremost in power. Water-like impetuosity

ity, you cannot be foremost, because you mounted your father's bed; then you desecrated Him Who ascended my couch.*

These פסוקים relay the ברכה given to ראובן, the first-born. יעקב tells ראובן that, since he is the בכור, he is assumed to be the strong dependable one. However, like water which flows in every direction and cannot be contained on its own, ראובן too is unstable in his character. According to the רד"ק, יעקב says that his instability and recklessness led ראובן to sleep with his father's wife, Bilhah. (Others explain that he merely moved his father's bed into Bilhah's tent.) And this, according to רש"י, is the justification for losing the מלכות and כהונה (פחו כמים). One can see the concept of מעשה אבות סימן לבנים illustrated by Datan and Aviram, descendants of ראובן (see במדבר ט"ז). When they lead a rebellion, they turn against משה in their uncontrollable rage and animosity and challenge both his convictions and leadership capabilities. Datan and Aviram meet their fate when they are swallowed up by the ground; this illustrates an ironic theme based on the fact that water, to which they are compared, always aims for the lowest point.

שמעון ולוי אחים כלי חמס מכרתיהם: בסדם אל תבוא נפשי בקהלתם אל תחד
כבדי כי באפם הרגו איש וברצנם עקרו שור: ארור אפם כי עז ועברתם כי קשתה
אחלקם ביעקב ואפינם בישראל:

Shimon and Levi are comrades, their weaponry is a stolen craft. Into their conspiracy, may my soul not enter! With their congregation, do not join, O my honor! For in their rage, they murdered people and at their whim they hamstringed an ox. Accursed is their rage for it is intense, and their wrath for it is harsh; I will separate them within Jacob, and I will disperse them in Israel.

שמעון and לוי, in פסוקים ה-ז, are commended for their אחדות, but are reprimanded for their means of acquiring that which they desired. יעקב accuses them of harboring hatred and not properly ridding themselves of this enmity. This was evident both in the incident of שכם as well as with respect to יוסף. רש"י believes it was שמעון and לוי who directed the sale of יוסף, for it was they who specifically desired to eliminate him. In a later generation, Korach, stemming from לוי, שבט לוי, is in contempt of משה and conspires against him. An important lesson is revealed in this ברכה: Although שמעון and לוי had a remarkable strength and combined אחדות and justice, they used those qualities in the wrong measures. They employed war and חמס to achieve their goal. We see here that the end does not justify the means.

*Translations in this article are taken from the ArtScroll Stone Tanach.

יהודה אתה יודוך אחיך ידך בערף איביך ישתחוו לך בני אביך: גור אריה יהודה
 מטרף בני עליית כרע רבץ כאריה וכלביא מי יקימנו: לא יסור שבט מיהודה
 ומחקה מבין רגליו עד כי יבא שילה ולו יקהת עמים: אסרי לגפן עירה ולשרקה
 בני אתנו כבס בין לבשו ובדם ענבים סותה: חכלילי עינים מיין ולבן שנים מחלב:
 Judah — you, your brothers shall acknowledge; your hand will
 be at your enemies' nape; your father's sons will prostrate them-
 selves to you. A lion cub is Judah; from the prey, my son, you
 elevated yourself. He crouches, lies down like a lion, and like an
 awesome lion, who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not de-
 part from Judah nor a scholar from among his descendants until
 Shilo arrives and his will be an assemblage of nations. He will
 tie his donkey to the vine; to the vine branch his donkey's foal;
 he will launder his garments in wine and his robe in the blood
 of grapes. Red eyed from wine, and white toothed from milk.

חייח imparts that יהודה backed away from יעקב when he saw
 that יעקב had rebuked the first three sons; יהודה feared that he would be
 reproached due to the incident with תמר. Instead, in the first part of the
 ברכה, יהודה comforts and consoles יעקב. Moreover, throughout the rest of the
 ברכה, יהודה reassures יעקב that by virtue of the fact that יהודה was able to
 implement his מידת הדין in the incident with תמר it is befitting for him to
 carry the seed of the משיח. יהודה openly admitted his sin of having relations
 with תמר in order to further the pursuit of justice (בראשית לח). This trait
 reappears much later in יהודה's descendant דוד, who also readily admits his
 sin concerning בת-שבע. Rav Hirsch adds that יהודה receives the מלכות simply
 because יהודה's eldest brothers were not worthy and he was next in line. He
 continues to explain the later segment of the ברכה invoking imagery of the
 משיח and the גאולה. יעקב does not envision the משיח entering on a proud
 white stallion, but rather on a young donkey's foal. The donkey symbolizes
 pleasant peacefulness, while a stallion signifies military might. Jewish kings
 are forbidden to own too many horses (דברים יז:טו). In addition, a Jewish
 king cannot be crowned until after a sense of ירושה וישיבה has been estab-
 lished (דברים יז:יד). This emphasizes the lack of importance placed upon
 military conquests; rather the focus is on *settlement*. To confirm this פירוש of
 the donkey alluding to the coming of the משיח, one notes the פסוק in זכריה
 ז:ט which does indeed state that the משיח will arrive mounting a pleasant,
 peaceful donkey. The משיח does not have clothing stained with the blood of
 his military conquests, but with "דם ענבים".

זבולון לחוף ימים ישכן והוא לחוף אניה וירכתו על צידון:
Zebulun shall settle by seashores. He shall be at the ship's harbor,
and his last border will reach Zidon.

זבולון is the next to receive a ברכה. רש"י inquires as to why זבולון received the next ברכה as opposed to his older brother, יששכר. רש"י responds by referring to the ברכה of משה, found in לגיט: "שמח זבולון בצאתך ויששכר – דברים לגיט: – דברים לגיט: – באהליך" wished to bless זבולון that his ships would be the most successful in all the harbor. The result will be that his ships will yield the financial support needed to provide for יששכר's learning. רש"י supports ספורנו's explanation and says that it is impossible for man to exclude himself entirely from the world, and learn Torah without any means of support. As it says in גי: "אם אין קמח אין תורה", פרקי אבות גי: Therefore, זבולון is foremost in the two brachot.

יששכר חמר גרם רבץ בין המשפתים: וירא מנחה כי טוב ואת הארץ כי נעמה ויט
שכמו לסבל ויהי למס עבד:

Issachar is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw tranquillity that it was good, and the land that it was pleasant, yet he bent his shoulder to bear and he became an indentured laborer.

יששכר, following זבולון, is compared to a spiritual donkey; as the donkey pulls the plow, יששכר is the cultivator of Judaism. ספורנו states that יששכר is prepared for war against those who do not follow the Torah and that he accepts the עול of תורה and of דרך ארץ and strives to have good מידות. In contrast, יששכר's ברכה changes tone in the second half of טו: "פסוק טו: – לסבל ויהי למס עובד". Rav Hirsch, digressing from ספורנו, maintains that יששכר does not work too hard; rather, only enough so that he can earn a sustenance. יששכר works in order to earn leisure time. He realizes that there are other conquests and treasures to be won only through leisure. When דוד requests that every שבט bring men following the death of שאול, the שבט יששכר chooses two hundred men, who all possess בינה. This בינה, which Rav Hirsch defines as practical knowledge and understanding of the real relationship of men and matters which the חכמת התורה gives, was obtained during the leisure time יששכר earned while working. Rav Hirsch asserts that, because יששכר realizes that Torah is important, he is the backbone of the Jewish people.

דן ידין עמו כאחד שבטי ישראל: יהי דן נחש עלי דרך שפיפן עלי ארח הנשך
עקבי סוס ויפל רכבו אחור: לישועתך קויתי ה':

Dan will avenge his people, the tribes of Israel will be united as one. Dan will be a serpent on the highway, a viper by the path, that bites a horse's heels so its rider galls backward. For Your salvation do I long, O Hashem!

דן will judge בני ישראל and avenge their enemies. שמשון, a descendent of דן, is told of in this ברכה; he is likened to a נחש when he knocks down the pillars of the building to destroy the פלישתים (שופטים כ"ט:ל). Rav Hirsch adds that דן will defend בני ישראל not with strength, but rather with strategy.

גד גדוד יגודנו והוא יגד עקב:

Gad will recruit a regiment and it will retreat on its heel.

גד, fresh, bold, and courageous, excels in military arts. He is described as quietly resting at the frontiers, not disturbing his neighbors. Only when גד is attacked does he zealously fight back and pursue his raiders over the borders. The importance of גד and דן is shown by external means in that their worth extends beyond the borders of Israel; hence, גד and דן are placed together before אשר and נפתלי.

מאשר שמנה לחמו והוא יתן מעדני מלך:

From Asher — his bread will have richness, and he will provide kindly delicacies.

While, as previously stated, גד and דן defend their rights externally and militarily fight the land, אשר and נפתלי show their notability internally within the Land of Israel. According to Rav Hirsch, אשר provides the abundant array of delicacies, because his land is more suitable for growing luxuries than the simple necessities of life. The רד"ק portends that אשר's rich "fit-for-a-king" produce will be sought by many kings. רש"י adds that the people of לודקיא were desperately in need of oil and sought aid from אשר (מנחות פה:). When they finally received the oil, there was not even a single donkey, camel, mule, or horse in א"י who rested simply in an attempt to carry the oil to the needy people. This certainly emphasizes אשר's overabundance.

נפתלי אילה שלחה הנתן אמרי שפר:

Naphtali is a hind let loose who delivers beautiful sayings.

נפתלי is compared to a deer who acts speedily, but not of his own accord. יעקב foretold מלחמת סיסרא (שופטים ד) when ברק gathered 10,000 men to fight כנען שבט נפתלי. Those 10,000 men did not act on their own initiative; it was only when Barak gathered them together that they took recourse against the פלישתים. Rav Hirsch defines the etymology of the word שפר: a שופר is a hollow animal horn, and a שפרור is a rounded pavilion. Both the shofar and the שפרור suggest an inner focus. Thus forth, נפתלי does indeed prove his worth by internal means.

בן פורת יוסף בן פורת עלי עין בנות צעדה עלי שור: וימררהו ורבו וישטמהו בעלי חצים: ותשב באיתן קשתו ויפזו זרעי ידיו מידי אביר יעקב משם רעה אבן ישראל: מאל אביך ויעורך ואת שד-י ויברכך ברכת שמים מעל ברכת תהום רבצת תחת ברכת שדים ורחם: ברכת אביך גברו על ברכת הורי עד תאות גבעת עולם תהיין לראש יוסף ולקדקד נזיר אחיו:

A charming son is Joseph, a charming son to the eye; each of the girls climbed heights to gaze. They embittered him and became antagonists; the arrow-tongued men hated him. But his bow was firmly emplaced and his arms were gilded, from the hands of the Mighty Power of Jacob — from there, he shepherded the stone of Israel. [That was] from the God of your father and He will help you, and with Shaddai — and He will bless you [with] blessings of heaven from above, blessings of the deep crouching below, blessings of the bosom and womb. The blessings of your father surpassed the blessings of my parents to the endless bounds of the world's hills. Let them be upon Joseph's head and upon the head of the exile from his brothers.

We now arrive at the ברכה of יוסף, the beloved son of יעקב. The first part of the ברכה recounts the negative animosity which befell יוסף on account of his beauty, namely from the brothers and אשת פוטיפר. However, יוסף was able to rise to distinction despite the enmity he experienced. The latter part of the ברכה concludes with יעקב blessing יוסף with children. Rav Soloveitchik points out that, particularly in פרשת ויחי, יעקב carries the identity of the “Jewish Grandfather” (*Man in the Modern World*, “First Jewish Grandfather”). יעקב is referred to, throughout the story, as “הזקן” (בראשית מד:כ, מג:כז, מח:י). Of note is the fact that יעקב did not live longer than the other two Avot; yet he is the prototypical grandfather because he simply had the disposition of a grandfather. Furthermore, יעקב, in contrast to the other two Avot, is shown as having an active role in his grandchildren's lives. He blesses אפרים and מנשה and includes them in his last will and testa-

ment. Therefore, it is only appropriate that יעקב mention child-bearing and child-rearing in his ברכה to יוסף.

בנימין זאב יטרף בבקר יאכל עד ולערב יחלק שלל:

Benjamin is a predatory wolf; in the morning he will devour prey and in the evening he will distribute spoils.

Finally, we come to the ברכה given to בנימין. He is depicted as being a mighty, fearless, wolf-like warrior. The רד"ק points out the incident of the פילגש בגבעה; the lawless men of the city who raped and killed the פילגש were from בנימין. שבט בנימין. However, on a more positive note, one can see the transference of the ברכה of בנימין in examining the actions of שאול. שאול was known as a brave belligerent; in his short reign, he was able to defeat מואב, אדום, and the פלישתים. Rav Hirsch interprets the ברכה given to בנימין to mean that יעקב sees the devastating power of גלות and says that the youngest will eventually drive out the “wolf,” Amalek, from the flock of sheep, בני ישראל. This vision is actualized in מגילת אסתר by virtue of the fact that Esther and Mordechai, both descendants of בנימין, were able to defeat Haman, the Amalekite. As it states, presumably with respect to בנימין, in ירמיהו מט:ט: “אם, ירמיהו מט:ט:” “The youngest of the flock will indeed drag them along.”

דברים ל"ג:א-ה

וזאת הברכה אשר ברך משה איש האלוהים את בני ישראל לפני מותו: ויאמר ה' מסיני בא וזרח משעיר למו הופיע מהר פארן ואתה מרבבת קדש מימינו אשדת [אש דת ק] למו: אף חבב עמים כל קדשיו בידך והם תכו לרגליך ישא מדברתיך: תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהילת יעקב: ויהי בישרון מלך בהתאסף ראשי עם יחד שבטי ישראל:

And this is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, bestowed upon the Children of Israel before his death. He said: Hashem came from Sinai — having shone forth to them from Seir, having appeared from Mount Paran, and then approached with some of the holy myriads — from His right hand He presented the fiery Torah to them. Indeed, You loved the tribes greatly, all its holy ones were in Your hands; for they planted themselves at Your feet, bearing [the yoke] of Your utterances: “The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Jacob.” He became King over Jeshurun when the numbers of the nation gathered — the tribes of Israel in unity.

משה בני ישראל are standing together, united as a single nation, before משה.

Because the twelve sons of יעקב have grown into a complete nation, ready to enter א"י and claim their land, the brachot of משה tend to convey a combination of individuality and national responsibility. Rav Hirsch says that משה focuses on the אסף aspect, that is uniting the bond of בני ישראל. Rav Hirsch also maintains that משה, in giving the brachot, is termed איש "הא-להים". He is the man of G-d, the man who was closest to G-d. Though the rest of the Torah was said by משה directly מפי ה', these brachot told to the rest of the שבטים came directly from the depths of משה's heart rather than בדרך נבואה. The רמב"ן comments on the organization of משה's brachot that משה was granted רוח הקודש, in arranging the ברכות in the order in which the שבטים received their נחלות in א"י.

יחי ראובן ואל ימת ויהי מתיו מספר:

May Reuben live and not die, and may his population be included in the count.

The רמב"ן maintains that the brevity of ברכה's ראוּבן is indicative of the fact that it is a תפילה. משה prays on behalf of ראוּבן that his שבט will not be destroyed as a result of ראוּבן's anger. רש"י comments that ברכה's ראוּבן is that he should "live" in עולם הזה (and not "die" in עולם הבא), and should not be remembered for his hasty actions with Bilhah. He should be counted along with the rest of his brothers as יעקב stated in the previous brachot (בראשית). Rav Hirsch adds that ראוּבן receives no spiritual, material, or moral ברכה, whereas the other שבטים are characterized according to territory and power.

Without much effort, one must note the conspicuous absence of שמעון in the brachot of משה. The אבן עזרא states that שמעון is not mentioned because the sinners in the horrible incident of בעל פאור were from שמעון שבט שמעון (זמרי). However, the רמב"ן disagrees with the אבן עזרא, pointing out that there were six families involved in the horrible incident at Baal Peor; one descended from שמעון, while the remaining five came from בנימין. Instead, the רמב"ן suggests that שמעון is not mentioned in order to prove יעקב's words in the earlier ברכה that he be scattered and dispersed throughout Israel; thus, שמעון is given territory within נחלת יהודה. Nechama Leibowitz dissents from this פירוש. She instead points out that שמעון lacks a characteristic which לוי possesses. She quotes רש"י's explanation that לוי had much zealotry as seen at the incident of העגל. As soon as משה declared "מי לה' אלי", all of שבט לוי united together, as it says, "ויאספו אליו כל בני לוי" (שמות לב:כו). This occurrence emphasized לוי's unique ability to utilize all of their talents and inclinations to fulfill the word of Hashem. She quotes the רמב"ם who

states that the unique characteristic embodied in לוי שבט was "לעשות רצון אביך שבט לוי" (פירוש רמב"ם לפרקי אבות ה:כ) שבשמים "שמיים לשם".

Regarding שמעון שבט Nechama Leibowitz introduces a משל as quoted from the Sifri (לג,ה). Two men once borrowed large sums of money from their king. One man returned the sum of money, and even lent his own money to the king. The other man failed to return the money as he had promised and even borrowed a second time. The first man portrays לוי שבט; in uniting together as a nation responding to "מי לה' אלי", it was as though לוי שבט had returned the money as promised. Lending out money to the king is likened to פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן's heroic deed of stabbing the two adulterers (במדבר כה:יד). One can see that לוי שבט corrected his former misdeeds through these two significant acts. שמעון שבט, on the other hand, was never able to rectify his misdeed and instead added another infraction in that specific instance by virtue of the fact that one of the two adulterers, שמואל בן סלוא, stemmed from שמעון שבט. The ברכה of יעקב given to לוי and שמעון in ספר בראשית denoted גנאי, while the ברכה of משה given to לוי alone in ספר דברים denoted שבח; לוי שבט was able to correct its former mishaps and thus stand as an exemplary role model for a nation of people poised on the brink of disaster. שמעון שבט only served to exacerbate its predicament.

וזאת ליהודה ויאמר שמע ה' קול יהודה ואל עמו תביאנו ידיו רב לו ועזר מצריו
תהיה:

And this to Judah, and he said: Hearken, O Hashem, to Judah's voice, and return to him his people; may his hands fight his grievance and may You be a Helper against his enemies.

ראובן, explaining why ברכה ליהודה immediately follows that of ראובן, states that both ראובן and יהודה confessed to their respective sins of switching the beds and having relations with זונה. But, the Gemara Sanhedrin tells us more details. During the forty years in the מדבר, יהודה's bones were ashamedly turning over in his coffin because he failed to care for בנימין as he had promised his father (בראשית מד:לב). משה therefore noted that, as reparation for his earlier misdeeds, יהודה persuaded ראובן to confess to his sin. Noting this, "יחי ראובן" refers to ראובן's confession. The phrase "וזאת ליהודה" therefore refers to יהודה himself, as opposed to בני יהודה. This could perhaps explain the juxtaposition of ראובן's and יהודה's brachot.

וללוי אמר תמיד ואוריד לאיש חסידך אשר נסיתו במסה תריבהו על מי מריבה
האמר לאביו ולאמו לא ראיתיו ואת אחיו לא הכיר ואת בנו לא ידע כי שמרו

a haven or an enclosed protective area, stems from the word chupah to which the bride and groom enter. Metaphorically speaking, the chupah is a remarkable expression for the location of the three aforementioned areas which serve to renew the loving union between Hashem and בני ישראל. Furthermore, the Sifri points out that בנימין was the only brother who was born in ארץ ישראל, the only one who never felt the extreme enmity of the brothers towards יוסף, and the one who became the prop and support to his dying father.

וליוסף אמר מברכת ה' ארצו ממגד שמים מטל ומתהם רבעת תחת: וממגד תבואת שמש וממגד גרש ירחים: וממגד ארץ ומלאה ורעון שכני סנה תבואתה לראש יוסף ולקדקד נויר אחיו: בכור שורו הדר לו וקרני ראם קרניו בהם עמים ינגח יחדו אפסי ארץ והם רבבות אפרים והם אלפי מנשה:

Of Joseph he said: Blessed by Hashem is his land — with the heavenly bounty of dew, and with the deep waters crouching below; with the bounty of the sun's crops, and with the bounty of the moon's yield; with the quick ripening crops of the early mountains, and with the bounty of eternal hills; with the thornbush may this blessing rest upon Joseph's head, and upon the crown of him who was separated from his brothers. A sovereignty is his ox-like one — majesty is his. And his glory will be like the horns of a re'eim; with them shall he gore nations together, to the ends of the Land; they are the myriads of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh.

Rav Hirsch tells that, because the מלוכה, the עבודה, and the site of the משכן were given to יהודה, לוי, and בנימין respectively, יוסף therefore was deserving of the richest abundance of soil. רש"י says that "גרש ירחים" suggests two thoughts: it refers to the fruits which the moon yields, for example cucumbers and pumpkins; or it simply means that the moon brings forth fruits from month to month. The Sifri says that ברכה 'יוסף alludes to נזירות because יוסף was separated from his brothers when he was sold into slavery. The "בכור שור" cited in this ברכה is used to indicate greatness and מלכות; this is proven through two usages of the word, in תהלים פט:כח and in שמות ד:כב.

ולזבולן אמר שמח וזבולן בצאתך ויששכר באהליך: עמים הר יקראו שם יזבחו זבחי צדק כי שפע ימים יינקו ושפני טמוני חול:

Of Zebulun he said: Rejoice, O Zebulun, in your excursions, and Issachar in your tents. The tribes will assemble at the mount, there they will slaughter offerings of righteousness, for by the

riches of the sea they will be nourished, and by the treasures concealed in the sand.

Rav Hirsch attributes the sharing of one *ברכה* by יששכר and זבולון to the fact that the brothers worked together in each other's territory. They, in a fraternal union, brought about the first secular world acquaintance with spirit, life, and laws; they caused strangers, upon meeting them, to love Judaism and its halachot.

רש"י adds that the concluding five שבטים were mentioned last because they were the weakest tribes, as can be seen in בראשית מז:ב when יוסף brought them before פרעה. Hence, משה restated their names in each of the concluding brachot to strengthen them.

ולגד אמר ברוך מרחיב גד כלביא שכן וטרף זרוע אף קדקד: וירא ראשית לו כי שם חלקת מחוקק ספון ויתא ראשי עם צדקת ה' עשה ומשפתיו אם ישראל:
Of Gad he said: Blessed is He Who broadens Gad; he dwells like a lion, tearing off arm and even head. He chose the first portion for himself, for that is where the lawgiver's plot is hidden; he came at the head of the nation, carrying out Hashem's justice and His ordinance with Israel.

According to Rav Hirsch, גד has already rightfully won his נחלה and can now peacefully rest like a lion in his possession. The מחקק alludes to משה, whose קבר rests in גד נחלת משה. משה blesses and thanks Hashem for He decreed that no battles will occur near משה's קבר. רש"י brings down the Sifri which says that משה blesses Hashem for enlarging גד's portion. The אבן עזרא, however, says that the blessing is really an appreciation for bestowing upon גד the quality of גבורה and is thus compared to a lion. The רמב"ן, though, points out that the two שבטים who gained נחלות in הירדן did not take them by chance; instead, they were granted to them by Hashem who enabled them to receive these נחלות from מלכות סיחון. This fact is not mentioned in ברכה ר'אובן because בני גד received a larger portion as a result of their greater strength.

ולדן אמר דן גור אריה יונק מן הבשן:

Of Dan he said: Dan is a lion cub, leaping forth from the Bashan.

Rav Hirsch maintains that דן was not satisfied with his נחלה. This can be seen by the fact that they began with one נחלה and conquer several more territories. ספורנו comments on the usage of the word "יונק" to mean that just

as a lion cub leaps onto his prey and continuously tears it to shreds, even after it is declared dead, simply to be more secure in its newly-found acquirement, so too, דן extends beyond his natural boundaries and attempts to conquer more lands simply in order to become more secure in his possessions. The Bashan refers to the “chosen of the flock” as is shown in תהילים עמוס ד: כב: as well as in

ולנפתלי אמר נפתלי שבע רצון ומלא ברכת ה' ים ודרום ירשה:
Of Naphtali he said: Naphtali, satiated with favor, and filled with Hashem's blessing; go possess the sea and its south shore.

The *רמב"ן* asserts that the ים is a משל for עולם הבא and the דרום is a משל for עולם הזה. The former can be seen by the fact that איוב begs Hashem to give him the שכל to fathom Hashem and His ways, but “רחבה מני ים” (איוב יא: ט). The latter can be seen by the fact that עולם הזה is constantly referred to as being an arid desert, “כי ארץ הנגב נתתני” (יהושע טו: יט). The *חוקוני*, citing the *שור*, says that all who enter the Land will see the palatable fruits of נפתלי, and bless and thank Hashem. Thus says the *Sifri* “מלמד שהיה נפתלי שמח בחלקו”

ולאשר אמר ברוך מבנים אשר יהי רצוי אחיו וטובל בשמן רגלו:
Of אשר he said: The most blessed of children is אשר; he shall be pleasing to his brothers, and dip his feet in oil.

אשר evidently received the best נחלה רש"י however does not understand how he received the best ברכה. Perhaps, says אשר, was blessed with sons (expressed by “מבנים”) as opposed to the rest of the שבטים who only received גבורה or simple נחלות. But, the *רמב"ן* disagrees with רש"י, saying that it is not clear if אשר's ברכה was ever fulfilled. The *רמב"ן* believes that the ברכה refers to an overabundance of oil found in אשר's נחלה; the brothers would always rush to אשר to get the proper minerals, oils, etc. (This is mentioned earlier with respect to the ברכה given to אשר by יעקב.) According to *רמב"ן*, this is why אשר is the most blessed and loved by all his brothers.

The notion of the two brachot is striking; they contain the legacy and will of two dying men to a nation of people. Regarding the brachot of יעקב, one might say that some seem to be more like קלות rather than ברכות. But, (בראשית מט: כח) “ויברך אותם איש אשר כברכתו” After יעקב described each's personality, he blessed each accordingly so that they might find happiness and satisfaction. Rav Hirsch states, “For, against [one's] will and without [one's]

cooperation, G-d can make no man happy. And the reverse also holds true, the true Jew changes the bitterest experience into a source of the richest blessing, מעין ישיתוהו, 'עוברי בעמק הבכא, 'Not', runs a saying of our sages 'because he apportioned the strength of lions to Judah, the boldness of wolves to Benjamin, the speed of deer to Naphtali, should you think that all were not included in the blessing, that is why it says, each one according to his blessing, he blessed them, not him אותו, but all of them אותם 'each one participated in a general blessing, and the special blessing of each one was for the benefit of all.' "

משה imparted his brachot with a remarkable mixture of love and praise. Unlike previous threats of G-d abandoning and punishing בני ישראל, these last words contain both a blessing and a reassurance. And, like the brachot of יעקב, these brachot too give a lasting hope that, ultimately, the גאולה will come.

ספר ישעיהו in Animal Imagery

Melissa Rothenberg

SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE of his generation as well as to future generations of Jews. ספר ישעיהו includes words of rebuke and punishment, as well as encouragement, all of which are still very relevant today. To strengthen his message to כלל ישראל, ספר ישעיהו uses many examples, metaphors and parables containing animal imagery.

This style of writing is a popular tool in תנ"ך, as well as in תורה שבעל פה. For example, the Torah itself uses animals, such as the נחש, as representatives of certain human characteristics and failings. There are also numerous examples of this style throughout תנ"ך, such as the נמלה in ספר משלי (1:1). The נמלה is a visibly hard worker, which is why שלמה המלך deems it necessary for man to learn from the ant and eschew laziness. Similarly, the Gemara in עירובין teaches the trait of עניעות through the actions of a cat. ספר ישעיהו uses animal imagery in prophecies to the Jewish people and to the world, specifically to emphasize the idea of בני ישראל's punishment for disobedience, the description of the אחרית הימים and the revenge in store for the oppressors of כלל ישראל.

One can ask why the תנ"ך, and חכמים after it, would refer specifically to animals to portray human behavior? The רבי מקלם describes the difference between man and beasts through references to both דוד המלך's words "והירות" (מלאכים א', ב:ב) "וחזקת והיית לאיש" in his book and רב משה חיים לונטו's discussion of "והירות" in his book. The רבי מקלם interprets דוד's words as an instruction to man to remain an איש, as opposed to allowing oneself to be lowered to the status of an animal. The רמח"ל, who explains that man's lack of watchfulness reflects a moral level lower than that of an animal, agrees with דוד המלך that man and animal are closely related.

The רבי מקלם explains that every man is created with both a טבע הבהמות, an animalistic nature, and a שכל, human intelligence. One must use his/her שכל to reign over the טבע הבהמות. Only after the animalistic behavior in man is conquered by the spiritual or intellectual element in human life can

man achieve his purpose on this earth. If one does fall prey to his/her animalistic instincts then, in essence, he/she descends to a level lower than that of the animal. This is due to the fact that every creation has its own individual purpose. Therefore, animals that follow instinct, which is what they were created to do, are on a level above those humans who harm themselves spiritually, by ignoring their human, spiritual instincts. Since man was created in the image of G-d, בעלם א-להים, he has an obligation to act on a level above the animal. ישעיהו, like the other sources we have mentioned, recognized the innate animalistic tendencies in humans and therefore chose to refer to the familiar in the human psyche, in order to further emphasize their particular lessons.

ישעיהו's first usage of animal imagery comes to admonish בני ישראל for their lack of recognition of Hashem. He phrases his rebuke as follows: "ידע פֿרשנים שׁור קונהו וחמור אבוס בעליו וישראל לא ידע עמי לא התבונן" (א:ג). The different פרשנים all conclude that ישעיהו is describing a fallacy in בני ישראל, but each commentary differs in the interpretation of why ישעיהו specifically uses imagery of the ox and donkey to emphasize his point. The מלבי"ם explains that the ox and donkey are two animals that recognize the sources of their sustenance. The ox recognizes his master and the donkey, his food. ישעיהו, according to מלבי"ם, tries to emphasize to בני ישראל how much they have wronged Hashem. Not only do they refuse to recognize their master, but they deliberately overlook the One who sustained them throughout all these years.

Like מלבי"ם, רש"י describes two different levels of recognition: the ox that identifies his master after a few whips, and the donkey that has a lower level of recognition; until he is fed his owner is unknown to him. ישעיהו tries to show בני ישראל that although they witnessed מַצְרַיִם, and saw Hashem's strength plus the sustenance they received in the desert, they remained *intentionally* unaware of their Master. They were thus on a lower level than the ox, and even than the donkey. רש"י then suggests an additional interpretation which deviates from the initial responses of the other מפרשים. He refers back to his interpretation of the beginning of פרק א, when he describes ישעיהו's use of שמים and ארץ as being representative of beings that continually fulfill their purpose, even though they receive no reward. Here again, רש"י feels ישעיהו's mention of the ox and donkey is a general reference to obedient animals that serve their masters unquestionably, even though they receive absolutely no promise of reward.

רד"ק, like מלבי"ם and רש"י's first interpretation, is bothered by ישעיהו's use of these specific animals. Therefore, he explains the פסוק according to other phrases in Tanach. רד"ק speaks of the ox and donkey as animals devoid of all שכל, and uses them to represent בני ישראל who, ישעיהו is implying,

are themselves absent of intelligence because of their intentional blindness to their Master. פסוק רד"ק refers to each part of the פסוק as an additional rebuke towards בני ישראל. He says that even after Hashem, the "קונה שמים וארץ", identified Himself to the Jewish people, they refused to recognize Him. All three מפרשים, in their different ways, demonstrate the power of the donkey and ox imagery to strengthen ישעיהו's lesson.

ספר ישעיהו follows a theme which begins with rebuke to בני ישראל and then continues to relate the punishment the nation would receive for not heeding his warning. In פרק ז' (י"ח-י"ט) ישעיהו speaks of a fly and a bee which wreak havoc on the Jewish people. Once again, ישעיהו uses an analogy depicting animals to relate an idea. רש"י, רד"ק, and Malbim agree on the understanding of משל and explain the symbolism in reference to the nations of מערים and אשור, who assume the role of בני ישראל's attackers. רש"י attempts to explain why ישעיהו uses a fly to represent מערים and a bee for אשור. He explains that flies attack in large numbers, and thereby alludes to מערים's gargantuan armies, while a bee is a stronger creature than others of its size, and therefore signifies אשור's strength. The Malbim adds that just as the bee is stronger than the fly, אשור was stronger than מערים. רד"ק, although he too tries to fit the משל of the bee and the fly into מערים and אשור, interprets the פסוק in a slightly different way than רש"י and Malbim. He refers back to the preceding פסוקים in פרק ז' in which נביא tells of Hashem's plan to have the enemy nations attack quickly. The fly and bee are two creatures that strike in haste and, since the two most threatening nations of that time were מערים and אשור, it can therefore be assumed that the fly and the bee refer to these two nations. Thus, when ישעיהו speaks of the haste of the fly and the bee, he uses meaningful animal imagery for בני ישראל's punishment and their punishers.

The Vilna Gaon interprets these פסוקים on a more philosophic level. He too relates the fly and bee to nations, yet he does not limit the analogy to מערים and אשור, for he feels the message of ישעיהו through the animals applies even after the terrible reign of אשור's oppression. The fly, he says, is known to attack when its victim has a physical deficiency, just like the enemies of the Jewish people who strike when בני ישראל are at their spiritual nadir.

Evidently, ישעיהו chose his analogies with great care and his messages, depicted through his various imageries, still trigger our consciousness to react with great fervor. Humans are especially aware of flies and bees, and it is extremely frightening to imagine what it would be like if the enemies that surround us would attack violently like a swarm of killer bees.

To relieve the painful image of bee stings, ישעיהו writes of the days of

Mashiach. His description of ימות המשיח is delineated in several ways, two of which also include the very poignant משלים involving animals, including the נחש. In ישעיהו יא ו-ז, there are several animals mentioned: the עגל, כפיר, נמר, גדי, מריא, זאב, בקר, אריה — all of which were familiar animals to the Jewish People for both their religious significance as well as their ubiquity. All of these animals are natives to the Middle East, and inhabited the areas surrounding ארץ ישראל.

All of the מפרשים on these פסוקים describe the analogy in terms of the peace prescribed for אחרית הימים. רד"ק, for example, interprets the משל in two ways. At first he suggests ישעיהו's use of these animals to be not an analogy, but a statement of literal significance. He feels ישעיהו speaks of a change of nature in the behavior of these animals, like the peaceful behaviors of the animals in תיבת נח. רד"ק also relates the משל to רשעים and צדיקים, for he believes ישעיהו wants to compare the different personalities of these animals to the varying personalities among כלל ישראל. The predatory animals, רד"ק says, correspond to the רשעים, and the prey refers to the צדיקים — who will be at peace with each other in the time of משיח. The Malbim also tries to find symbolic significance in the words of ישעיהו's analogy, and relates the parable to the specific animals. These animals, the Malbim explains, range from the strongest to extremely weak animals, thereby further emphasizing ישעיהו's idea that in ימות המשיח, there will be complete peace within the animal kingdom. רש"י explains this פסוק in relation to the succeeding analogy of the נחש described in פסוק ח. פרק יא, רש"י explains, like the Malbim, that there will be complete peace, beginning with the animals and then leading to peace among the animals and man. רד"ק does not refer to this second interpretation when he explains the imagery of the נחש, and suggests that the extent of the peace in אחרית הימים will allow a baby to play at the opening of the snake's dwelling place, without fear of imminent danger. ישעיהו's use of familiar animals carries strong significance in our personal understanding of the peace destined for the time of משיח.

An additional essential topic that ישעיהו chooses to describe in a משל, is the punishment of the oppressors of כלל ישראל. In both פרק כז and פרק יד, ישעיהו expresses the massive punishment in store for בני ישראל's foes, through a detailed description of the נחש and its deadly bite. In פרק יד, ישעיהו describes a נחש and a צפע, which all of the מפרשים agree to mean עזיוה and חוקיהו. The נביא warned the Nations of their impending doom which, at that time, came with חוקיהו's miraculous victory. The צפע is identified as a venomous viper that attacks its enemies suddenly and leaves a lethal remnant in its victim. The same way this צפע bites and kills, חוקיהו left his mark on the foes of ישראל. עם.

In א כז פסוק א describes a flying serpent (לוייתן) and a crooked serpent as well as a crocodile, all of which will be destroyed by ה' on the יום הנקמה — day of revenge. This time the analogy of the נחש is applied to the nations themselves, to relate the conniving characteristics of מערים, אשור and אדום, which fall to the all encompassing power of הקבי"ה. Although רש"י, רד"ק and the Malbim limit their explanations of the various references to the נחש as symbolizing מערים, אשור and אדום — the אברבנאל stretches these images to fit all of the enemies of עם ישראל and to the fact that on the day of the ultimate revenge, every nation that harmed כלל ישראל will receive restitution for their actions.

The image of קן in עז פרק טו carried the same symbolism as the נחש — namely, the punishment in store for the nation of מואב. ישעיהו, according to the Malbim, uses a bird to express his image to emphasize the idea that מואב will be left “flying” about the world, ownerless and homeless.

The many references to animals in ספר ישעיהו serve as a constant reminder of ישעיהו's messages. ישעיהו chose animals that were prevalent during his day, as well as creatures that are familiar to man today. One can analyze each משל in ספר ישעיהו for its unique significance, and find an example or an understanding that penetrates his or her psyche. Since all human beings have an animalistic nature, ישעיהו realized the importance of using aspects of life that relate to every person on some level. Whether one reacts to the stubbornness of the שור and חמור; the fear of the דבורה and יבוב; the comforting feeling of peace displayed in the animals; or the sweet revenge of the נחש — one is certain to learn a strong lesson from the animal imagery in ספר ישעיהו.

Maimonides in *Halakhic Man*: Providence and Prophecy

Tzippy Katz

RABBI SOLOVEITCHIK'S masterpiece of the 1940's, *Halakhic Man*, is an essay depicting the unique typology of the Halakhic Man and the philosophy of Halakha. The philosophical concepts and ideas quoted by Rabbi Soloveitchik are deeply rooted in his study of philosophers preceding him. Throughout the essay, Rabbi Soloveitchik quotes and develops ideas from the philosophies of various schools of thought, ranging from Aristotelian to Neo-Kantian. One of the most commonly quoted thinkers in all his works of both philosophy and halakha is Maimonides.

As is in many of his various essays and speeches, Rabbi Soloveitchik uses Maimonidean thought as the springboard for many of his own philosophical ideas. In the second half of *Halakhic Man* entitled "His Creative Capacity," particularly in his discussion of Divine providence and prophecy, Rabbi Soloveitchik bases much of what he says on quotes and ideas from Maimonides.

Often when quoting Maimonides, Rabbi Soloveitchik's own explanation diverges considerably from the classic or simple reading of the Maimonidean text, particularly when dealing with passages from the *Guide of the Perplexed*. These variations are ultimately due to Rabbi Soloveitchik's influence from other schools of thought, which impact upon his entire perception of Halakha and Halakhic Man.

In the last two chapters of *Halakhic Man*, Rabbi Soloveitchik discusses Divine providence and prophecy based on quotes and concepts from Maimonides. In his discussion of providence, Maimonides merges Aristotle's idea of providence existing only in universal forms with the Jewish idea of individual providence. Maimonides' own opinion is similar to Aristotle's with reference to plants and animals: he believes they are subject only to universal providence. However, he maintains that "divine providence watches only over the individual belonging to the human species..." (*Guide*

of the Perplexed III:17, p. 471; translations and page numbers follow the Pines edition). Because man is endowed with *tzelem Elokim*, the intellect, he is able to aspire to receive Divine providence. But in Chapter 18, Maimonides explains that not every man receives this individual providence; one must do something to take himself out of the universal realm and into the particular. The way for man to achieve this is through gaining knowledge of G-d, thereby reaching a higher level of perfection and receiving the Divine Overflow. "Divine Providence does not watch in an equal manner over all individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded" (*Guide* III:18, p. 475). The more knowledge man has of G-d, the more perfect he is; therefore, he will receive more Divine Overflow and acquire a greater individual providence. Accordingly, Maimonides states that if man is ignorant and has no Divine Overflow, he will be among the rank of animals and receive no individual providence.

In Maimonides' discussion of prophecy in *Guide* II, he again bases his own opinion on Aristotle's. As Maimonides writes in the *Guide*, Aristotle posits that prophecy is a natural process entirely up to man, "a certain perfection in the nature of man" (*Guide* II:32, p. 361). There is no G-dly aspect to Aristotle's conception of prophecy; rather it occurs automatically when man reaches intellectual perfection. "When in the case of a superior individual who is perfect with respect to his rational and moral qualities...and when he has been prepared...he will necessarily become a prophet" (*ibid*). This perfection that man must achieve is intellectual perfection, as Maimonides writes, "it is not possible that an ignoramus should turn into a prophet" (*ibid*). Maimonides fully agrees with this approach, except for one crucial detail: "it may happen that one who is fit for prophecy and prepared for it should not become a prophet, namely, on account of the Divine Will" (*ibid*). Although prophecy is a completely natural process, G-d can prevent man from achieving prophecy. But essentially, the achievement of prophecy is based in man's perfection and his intellectual cognition of G-d. In this way, both prophecy and providence are achieved in a similar vein: by man intellectualizing and cognizing G-d, he disassociates himself from the universal realm and makes himself worthy of obtaining the Divine Overflow.

Rabbi Soloveitchik's interpretation of Maimonides' view on prophecy and providence differs considerably from this more classic reading of Maimonides. Rabbi Soloveitchik adapts Maimonides' view that man has the ability to take himself out of the realm of the universal and reinstate himself into the realm of individual providence. However, for Rabbi Soloveitchik, this is achieved not only through cognition, but through *creation* as well. "The man who has a particular existence of his own is not

merely a passive, receptive creature, but acts and creates” (*Halakhic Man*, p. 125). According to Rabbi Soloveitchik, creativity is the way for man to acquire a particular existence for himself. But it is not only creation within the world which makes man distinct and awards him a particular providence. It is also incumbent upon man’s self-creation, his re-creation of himself, to give himself a particular existence in which G-d will allow His providence to rest. “When a person creates himself, ceases to be a mere species man, and becomes a man of G-d, then he has fulfilled that commandment which is implicit in the principle of providence” (*Halakhic Man*, p. 128). Man takes on the command to “create himself”, becoming a unique existence, taking himself out of the universal realm, and thereby merits individual providence. Rabbi Soloveitchik posits the same idea in reference to prophecy. A prophet “must carry through his own self-creation until he actualizes the idea of prophecy – until he is worthy and fit to receive the divine overflow” (*ibid*). For Rabbi Soloveitchik, a prophet must also do something in particular to merit his receiving prophecy from G-d. Prophecy is “a binding ethical ideal...an act of self-creation and self-renewal” (*Halakhic Man*, p. 134). Man must create a new personality for himself, a new “I” awareness in order to be someone who is worthy of receiving prophecy.

In the philosophy of Rabbi Soloveitchik, the way for man to create in the world and “create himself” is through Halakha. Man is instructed to actualize theoretical Halakha in the world and in himself and cause G-d’s Halakhic system to become part of him. By using Halakhah and implementing it within his existence, man liberates himself from the universal species and gives himself particular, unique existence. Once this occurs, man not only achieves individual providence, but can also reach the level of a prophet. “When a person actualizes the ideal Halakhah in the very midst of the real world, he approaches the level of that godly man, the prophet – the creator of worlds” (*Halakhic Man*, p. 90).

Although Rabbi Soloveitchik states that his interpretation of prophecy is based on Maimonides, he has added an important dimension and modified the ideas significantly. While Maimonides stresses man’s intellect and abstract intellectualizing, Rabbi Soloveitchik emphasizes man’s acts of creation, particularly man’s “creation” of himself. Although both ideas underscore the individuality of man and his shift from being a mere member of the universal, Rabbi Soloveitchik takes this idea even further by interpreting Maimonides’ “cognition” as “creation”. In Aristotelian/Maimonidean thought, cognition is the process by which potential intellect passes into actuality and the potentially cognizing subject becomes one with the object being cognized. “Before a man intellectually cognizes a thing, he is potentially the intellectually cognizing subject...if he has intellectually cognized

a thing...at that time the man would become one who has intellectual cognition *in actu*" (Guide I:68, p. 164). For Rabbi Soloveitchik, the same principle applies regarding creation; for man to create, "the potentiality must transform itself into actuality" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 131). When man creates himself anew, he passes his potential into actual existence. "Man, initially, must cause all the potentialities of the species implanted in him to pass into actuality," and then create a unique personality within himself (*Halakhic Man*, p. 135). He does this through implementing Halakha into himself and using his free choice to liberate himself from mere existence among the species by following the ethics of Halakha. In this manner, Rabbi Soloveitchik equates the idea of creation with Maimonides' principle of intellectual perfection because both are ways in which the potentiality is brought into actuality.

Another element that contributes to Rabbi Soloveitchik's broad interpretation of Maimonides is the significance that both Rabbi Soloveitchik and Maimonides place on the Biblical command of "And thou shalt walk in His ways" (*imitatio dei*). For Maimonides, a prophet must fulfill this command by studying the cosmos, G-d's attributes of action, and then acting on his observations by emulating them. For example, imitating G-d's ways in this world is necessary for a prophet who is supposed to be a political leader, in order to successfully be a governor of a city. "It behooves the governor of a city, if he is a prophet, to acquire similarity to these attributes [of G-d], so that his actions may proceed from him according to a determined measure and according to the deserts of the people who are affected by them..." (Guide I:54, p.126).

For Rabbi Soloveitchik, the command of *imitatio dei* is achieved by emulating G-d's act of creation and becoming a partner in creation of worlds. "The principle of 'And thou shalt walk in His ways' (Deut. 28:9) (*imitatio dei*) flows from halakhic man's normative relationship to the world" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 64), "man as a partner of the Almighty in the act of creation, man as a creator of worlds (p. 99). The most important way that man can be a creator is by actualizing the ideal ethical Halakhah into the real world. By following Halakhah, man imitates G-d's ethical attributes of action. Rabbi Soloveitchik stresses many times that "the most fundamental principle of all is that man must create himself" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 109). By imposing ethical Halakhah on himself, man implements the ethical norm onto himself. Through this process, he becomes a man of G-d, bestowing upon himself an individual existence capable of receiving Divine providence, and eventually prophecy. Both Maimonides and Rabbi Soloveitchik stress the importance of following and imitating G-d's ways and giving oneself special individual existence to achieve prophecy and providence, but again the

ways in which this is accomplished are different. For Maimonides, it is by studying the cosmos, cognizing G-d's ways and using observation to reach perfection, for Rabbi Soloveitchik it is by implementing G-d's command of Halakhah to create oneself as a Halakhic Man and eventually a "man of G-d".

Rabbi Soloveitchik's modification of the Maimonidean concept, his movement from cognition as the act that sets man apart for prophecy and providence, to self-creation by implementation of Halakhah, is ultimately due to two major influences on his thought and philosophy, which can be perceived throughout his writings. On one hand, Rabbi Soloveitchik was influenced by his Lithuanian family tradition, the Brisker school of thought and its emphasis on Halakhah and the Halakhic system. For Rabbi Soloveitchik, Halakhah is not just a group of laws that require observation, but rather a complete, ideal system with which to approach the world, "an ideal world which he bears in his Halakhic consciousness" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 23). Everything the Halachik man does is based on this system of Halakhah, for it is the way to connect him to G-d. Rabbi Soloveitchik's background of Lithuanian scholarship also focuses on this idea of the study of Halakhah as the way to connect to G-d. As R' Hayyim of Volozhin wrote, "through studying Talmud and commentaries...everything is made to cling to the Holy One, Blessed by He...and by cleaving to His Torah, it is as if one is cleaving to Him" (*Nefesh HaHayyim* IV:10).

In addition to his Talmudic tradition, Rabbi Soloveitchik's stress on the "creation of man" through Halakhah can be traced to his sources in modern schools of thought, mainly Neo-Kantian. Kant established the concept of *a priori*, ideal existence, creating an ideal structure in one's mind and implementing it into the world, as opposed to cognizing based on experience. Rabbi Soloveitchik applies this concept to Halakhah and "emphasizes the speculative and abstract nature of Halakhic creativity, its *a priori* and ideal approach to reality similar to scientific cognition" (Aviezer Ravitzky, "Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik on Human Knowledge: Between Maimonidean and Neo-Kantian Philosophy", *Modern Judaism* 6, 1986, p. 169). He interpreted "the Halakhah not only as a group of norms guiding our activities, but also as a conceptual theoretical structure, addressed toward our cognition" (*ibid*). In this way, the Halakhic system is similar to Kant's idea of *a priori* cognition, in which an *a priori* system is cognized and constructed and then actualized in the world. Creation, through actualizing an ideal, therefore, takes a central role in Rabbi Soloveitchik's philosophy because of his Neo-Kantian perspective.

Rabbi Soloveitchik also prioritizes ethical actions through Halakhah as the way to create due to his modern philosophical influences. According

to Professor Ravitzky, Rabbi Soloveitchik's main influence in this line of thought was Neo-Kantian philosopher Herman Cohen, the subject of Rabbi Soloveitchik's doctoral thesis. Cohen stressed the Platonic aspects of Maimonidean thought, mainly the focus on ethics, the "ought" rather than just cognition of the "is". Somewhat influenced by this ethical interpretation of Maimonides, Rabbi Soloveitchik changes his focus in his discussion of prophecy and providence from "human cognition of the cosmos to ethics", from pure cognition as the way to reach perfection and give oneself a particular existence, to creation and implementation of ethics through Halakhah as the way to achieve this goal (p. 173).

Due to Rabbi Soloveitchik's focus on Halakhah and creation in his works, particularly in *Halakhic Man*, these two themes take full force in his discussion of providence and prophecy. Even when interpreting Maimonides, Rabbi Soloveitchik introduces the aspects of ethical Halakhic creation, self-creation and renewal through Halakhah as the way to achieve a particular existence and reach the ultimate goal of Divine providence and prophecy.