

# יהודה and ראובן: A Study in Leadership

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יוסף and יהודה played similar roles in the story of יוסף. They both tried to prevent the brothers from killing יוסף, and both tried to persuade יעקב to let בנימין go to מצרים. However, a closer look at the פסוקים reveals that their respective responses to these situations were quite different. In both cases ראובן failed to accomplish his goal, in contrast to יהודה who succeeded. In this essay I examine why their responses to these situations led to such different results. I propose that יהודה's unique leadership skills helped him emerge as the leader. His leadership peaked when he "drew near" to יוסף on the brothers' behalf (בראשית מד:יח).

יוסף כי יוסף plotted to kill him. Their frustration with יוסף had been brewing since he had told them his dreams. This frustration culminated in the cruel and vicious plan to kill him. When ראובן heard of the brothers' sinful plan, he was the first to react. The opening speech, seems very repetitive, saying in various ways that ראובן wanted to save יוסף. "ויאמר אל הבור הזה אשר במדבר ויד אל תשלחו בו מלבים." "ראובן אל תשפכו דם השליכי אותו אל הבור הזה אשר במדבר". We suggest that it is not repetitive at all, as each phrase means something different. ראובן's first intention was – "ויעלהו מידים" – to save יוסף completely. However there was no response from the brothers, implying they were not willing to listen to him. ראובן lowered his demands - "לא נכנו נפש". We should not kill him, but should punish him in another way. Again the brothers refused. Seeing that he was not persuading his brothers, ראובן, now desperate, suggested a way to kill יוסף indirectly "אל תשפכו דם השליכי". ראובן stressed the desert, indicating that the desert would kill יוסף, rather than the brothers themselves. ראובן made this suggestion expecting that he could return to the pit to save his brother: "למען הציל אתו מידים להשיבו אל אביו". The brothers did not listen to ראובן, who failed to give them a compelling reason not to kill their brother, and who failed to implement his plan to save יוסף. By the time returned to the pit to save his brother, יוסף had already been removed and sold. Despite his good intentions, he had failed in persuading the brothers not to harm יוסף, and his plan to secretly rescue him had backfired.

יהודה also attempted to change the brothers' minds. Unlike ראובן, did not react immediately. Rather, he waited for the opportune moment when he could be most effective. Some time after יוסף had been thrown into the pit, the brothers saw ישמעאלי merchants passing by. יהודה seized the opportunity. He gave them practical reasons not to leave him in the pit. His first line of motivation was – "מה בצע כי נהרג את אחינו" (לז:כו). What value is there in killing him, even indirectly? The brothers, with their selfish desire to kill, could gain benefit by being rid of יוסף in another way. יהודה continued, revealing a flaw in their plan: "וכסיונו את דמו" (שם). To hide the evidence would be risky and troublesome. Selling him to the ישמעאליים would be more profitable and more practical. While ראובן told them what not to do, יהודה suggested an alternative plan. Furthermore, יהודה made an emotional and moral appeal to the brothers, though only after he had addressed the practical benefits of selling him: "וידנו אל תהי בו כי אחינו בשרנו הוא" (לז:כו). ראובן had also tried to convey a similar message – "ויד אל תשלחו בו" (לז:כב) - but he had left out the fundamental moral and emotional appeal: no matter how angry you are, do not kill your own flesh and blood. יהודה emphasized this by using the word for brother or relative three times in his appeal, whereas ראובן did not use it once. יהודה knew how to draw on the brothers' emotional subconscious and the brothers listened to him (לז:כו). By choosing the right moment and using reasoning - practical, emotional, and moral - יהודה managed to persuade his brothers to reconsider their position.

In both ראובן and יהודה tried to persuade יעקב to send מצרים בנימין. The results were similar. ראובן was the first one to respond when יעקב refused to allow בנימין to go. As before, in his haste, he caught יוסף in his most passionate uncompromising moment: "איננו ושמעון" (מב:לז). While יעקב was feeling so vulnerable about losing his children it would have been almost impossible to persuade him to let his youngest son leave. ראובן did not understand his father's frame of mind, so ראובן made the strange offer that יעקב could kill ראובן's two sons if בנימין did not return (מב:לז). Why, when יעקב was feeling so distraught about losing his children, would he be persuaded or comforted knowing that he could kill his grandchildren? ראובן's strategy was inappropriate to his goals. Here, as in the last situation, he failed to reach his audience. In response to ראובן's appeal, יעקב responded even more emphatically that he did not want בנימין to go to מצרים: "לא ירד בני" (בראשית מב:לח) "עמכם".

יהודה, as in the previous incident, waited for the opportune moment to speak. Only when "והרעב כבד בארץ" (מג:א) did יהודה approach his father. יהודה might agree to send בנימין if, and only if, the family was desperate

for food. Instead of alarming his father, יהודה patiently reminded יעקב of the unfortunate reality that without בנימין they were neither allowed to see the viceroy's face nor get food (מג:ג). Further, יהודה emphasized that יעקב was in charge of the situation; יעקב would make the decision: "אם ישך" (מג:ד-ה). Contemporary psychology has proven that people feel less stress when they feel that they are in control of a situation. יהודה did not make his request to take בנימין until after he had described the situation in detail to יעקב, and presented various options to react. When יהודה did make his appeal, he linked מצרים not with death, but with life: "ונקומה ונלכה ונחיה ולא נמות גם" (מג:ה). Not letting בנימין travel to מצרים would lead to almost certain death, not only for יעקב but for the whole family, placing particular emphasis on the children. While ראובן offered to kill his children if the mission failed, יהודה emphasized saving the children.

Further, both יהודה and ראובן described the punitive consequences of failing to bring בנימין back. They both began with words like, "אם לא" (מב:לז, מג:ט), which emphasize the contrast between the consequences that they suggest if they fail to return with בנימין. ראובן's suggestion to kill his sons was entirely unsuitable. יהודה raised a more honest and appropriate condition, "וחטאתי לך כל הימים", which encouraged יעקב to feel reassured. בראשית (מב:לז) רמב"ן suggests another possible reason for יעקב's reluctance to trust ראובן to protect בנימין. בראשית לה:כב says that ראובן committed a grave sin which was deeply insulting to יעקב, "וישמע ישראל", יעקב's only response was, "וילך ראובן וישכב את בלהה פילגש אביו". There is no explicit indication in the פסוקים that ראובן did תשובה for this (although some מפרשים infer that ראובן's attempt to save יוסף and return him to his father was a way to rectify his sin), or that יעקב forgave him. This may have influenced יעקב's unwillingness to make ראובן responsible for בנימין. ראובן's lack of overt תשובה for his sin compares to יהודה's response to the sin he committed with תמר. יהודה confessed and publicly took responsibility for his actions as soon as he was confronted: "ויכר" (מב:כא). This contrast between ראובן and יהודה is reinforced at the moment when the brothers finally faced up to the sin they committed against יוסף: "אבל אשמים אנחנו על אחינו" (מב:כב). ראובן separated himself from his brothers, shrugging off his own responsibility for the sin: "הלוא אמרתי אליכם לאמר אל תחטאו בילד ולא שמעתם" (מב:כב). ראובן did not accurately portray his reaction to the proposal to kill יוסף. ראובן had led them to believe that יוסף would die on his own in the pit. ראובן forgot that he had failed to convince the brothers not to kill יוסף, and that it had been יהודה's initiative that had ultimately convinced the brothers. ראובן should have accepted his share of the blame.

The language יהודה and ראובן used to assure יעקב that they would take responsibility for מצרים in בנימין also highlights the contrast in their personalities. ראובן said, "תנה אתו על ידי ואני אשיבנו אליך" (מב:לו), "deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him back to you". יהודה said, "אנכי אערבנו" (מג:ט), "I will be a guarantor for him, of my own hand you can demand him". Both brothers used the word "ידי". However, this similarity serves to accent the differences between them. ראובן began with the actions that יעקב must take, "תנה אתו", making יעקב active and ראובן passive. יהודה spoke of the actions that he would take, "אנכי אערבנו". ראובן reflected passivity, whereas יהודה reflected activism, confidence, and responsibility in his role as guardian over בנימין. יהודה stuck to his word, in that it was he who stepped forward on behalf of all his brothers to protect בנימין from prison (פרק מד).

As we would expect, יהודה's petition to יוסף was an extremely well organized and structured speech. It is made up of four sections. In the first section (פסוק יח), יהודה attempted to invoke the pity and mercy of יוסף. The second section (ט-כט) recalls the events that led up to this point. The third section (ל-לב) warns against the consequences of יוסף's intended punishment. And the fourth section (לג-לד) is a proposal for an alternative punishment, and a final appeal.

יהודה tried to see the situation through יוסף's eyes. Given יוסף's power and the evidence against בנימין, יהודה could not put forward a logical argument to save בנימין. יהודה therefore pleaded for the only things that could redeem בנימין, pity and mercy. יהודה explains his tactical approach. He went directly to יוסף - "ויגש אליו יהודה" - and spoke בי "באזני יוסף" as he was the only person who had the power to revert the decree. יהודה emphasized יוסף's authority by saying "כי כמך כפרעה" (מד:יח), i.e. you, like פרעה, can overlook this crime even if it means going against the normal justice system. יהודה spoke in a respectful and humbling tone. He used the root עבד nine times in reference to himself and אדני seven times referring to יוסף in only seventeen פסוקים. Again we see יהודה's ability to appeal to the psyche of the people he spoke to, and to respond to the circumstances at hand.

In the second section, יהודה recalled what had previously occurred. This parallels how he persuaded יעקב to let בנימין go to מצרים. He presented his audience with the relevant background, so that they could make an informed decision instead of refusing immediately. However, יהודה presented the past in such a way that would help strengthen his case. He mentioned certain things and left out others, while embellishing as he saw fit. יהודה did so in order to make יוסף more sympathetic. יהודה said that יוסף had originally interrogated them about

(מד:יט) "אדני שאל את עבדיו לאמר היש לכם אב או אח" – other family members. However, in מב פרק, as the events had originally unfolded, the brothers had offered this information of their own accord when יוסף accused them of being spies. יהודה also implied that יוסף had told them to bring בנימין down to מצרים without giving them a justifiable reason for doing so – (מד:כא) "הורדוהו אלי". In the real course of events, יוסף demanded this to prove that they were speaking the truth and were not spies. יהודה did not want to remind יוסף of the suspicion that they were spies, which would be another incentive to imprison בנימין. This tactic also gave the impression that the brothers were innocent victims being harassed and interrogated unfairly.

Additionally, יהודה added events into his speech that had not taken place. יהודה stated that when they had been told to bring בנימין down that the brothers answered, "לא יוכל הנער לעזוב את אביו ועזב את אביו ומת" (מד:כב). In fact, they had never said that to יוסף. This was the first time that anything was said to יוסף about their father's close attachment to בנימין and the sacrifice it would be to let him travel. יהודה made יוסף sound heartless and cruel to have insisted that בנימין come to מצרים given the effect it would have on their father. יהודה also embellished on what יעקב had said to the brothers on hearing that בנימין had to leave. יהודה explained, "אתם ידעתם כי שנים ילדה לי אשתי ולקחתם גם את זה מעם פני" (מד:כז). יעקב had not said anything quite as extreme as this to the brothers, probably because he would not tell his ten sons that he thought that he had only two children and one wife (who was not their mother). יהודה said this to יוסף in an attempt to arouse his compassion for יעקב, whose one son had been killed and whose last remaining son was presently being threatened with imprisonment.

יהודה made another emotional appeal in the third section, described the devastating effects that taking בנימין away from his father would have: (מד:לא) "והיה כראותו כי אין הנער ומת". He used the word אב fourteen times in these seventeen פסוקים, to emphasize the pain of the lonely father awaiting the return of his beloved son.

As in all the other occasions when יהודה had persuaded people to reverse their initial plan, he provided יוסף with a reasonable alternative, in the process demonstrating his personal responsibility and willingness to live up to his promise to יעקב. יהודה offered to be imprisoned instead of בנימין. He hoped that this would appeal to יוסף, since יהודה, who was older than בנימין, was significantly stronger, making him a more valuable and efficient slave.

This comparison between יהודה and ראובן makes it clear that יהודה had excellent leadership qualities. He was able to choose the right

moments to intercede. He understood the psyche of the people he was talking to, and gave them rational reasons for listening to him. יהודה was also practical, and offered realistic alternatives to programs that he opposed. יהודה was a responsible and able person, who encouraged people to put their trust in him. It is not surprising that יהודה was chosen to be the founding father of the מלכות of ישראל.

## Side of the ירדן

## Miriam Srolovitz

Two and a half tribes of Israel, גד, ראובן, and half of מנשה, dwelled east of the Jordan River. While Transjordan was home to a good part of the Jewish nation, is it part of the land of Israel? Why were they allowed to settle in what appears to be חוץ לארץ? To understand the dwelling place of these tribes, we must examine their request for that land, as described in במדבר לב. We must ask certain key questions. What was their motivation? What was משה's response to their request? What were the conditions of the arrangement that allowed them to live there? By answering these questions we can hopefully gain some insight into this strange situation.

The first פסוק in לב פרק sets the stage for the ensuing scenario. "ומקנה" רב היה לפני ראובן ולבני גד עצום מאד ויראו את ארץ יעזר ואת ארץ גלעד והנה המקום מקום "מקנה." Despite the apparent compatibility between these tribes and this land, בני ראובן and גד were hesitant to request the land because they understood that this land was not necessarily dedicated for בני ישראל (As we shall see below, this is itself subject to debate). Timidly, they approached the leaders, and gradually hinted their request to them. According to Nehama Leibowitz<sup>1</sup> they made their request in three steps, hoping that משה would understand the request on his own. First, they listed the cities that were captured. Then, they elaborated: this land is an "ארץ מקנה" and we have cattle. מלבים identifies the strength of their argument by emphasizing "פסוק ד הארץ אשר הכה ה' לפני עדת ישראל ארץ": "מקנה מקנה הוא ולעבדיך." What they meant, says מלבים, is that ה' conquered all the land. He did not need to conquer any more land than necessary for בני ישראל. If this land suits ראובן and גד's needs, it is only logical that this extra territory was conquered in order to be allotted to them. The next פסוק opens with the word, "ויאמרו," indicating that they stopped speaking and waited for a response, hoping that משה would suggest that they be given the land. When משה remained silent they spoke up, making

<sup>1</sup> Nehama Leibowitz, "Mammon or Eretz Yisrael" in *Studies in Bamidbar*, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 379-387.

their request explicit: "יתן את הארץ הזאת לעבדיך לאחזה אל תעברנו את הירדן" (פסוק ה). What did ראובן and גד mean by "אל תעבירו את הירדן"? Did they mean, innocently, that we would prefer to live here than to settle on the other side of the Jordan? Or did they mean that we do not want to fight with the rest of the nation, because this land is suitable for us? Let us consider each possibility.

The first approach, adopted by ראובן and אברבנאל and רמב"ן, displays ראובן and גד in a positive light. They intended to help the rest of the nation conquer the land on the western side of the Jordan, but they afterward preferred to settle in a land that was appropriate for their economic needs. While this presents ראובן and גד in a positive light, there is a weakness in this reading. If ראובן and גד intended all along to help in the war, then משה's subsequent rebuke – a full ten פסוקים long – is all the result of a misunderstanding. When משה said "יבאו למלחמה ואתם" (פסוק ו) "פה תשבו האחיכם יבאו למלחמה ואתם" (פסוק ז) he was simply misinformed about their intentions. Their response in פסוק יט "כי לא נחל אתם", clarifies their original intention, according to this interpretation. (שער פה) עקידת יצחק adds to this question. Why would משה not clarify their intentions before reacting so strongly? He could simply have said, "Will you first come to fight or not?"<sup>2</sup>

The alternate suggestion presents משה's understanding more positively, but presents ראובן and גד much more negatively. The second approach suggests that when ראובן and גד said "אל תעברנו את הירדן", they meant that we want to stay here and not take part in the war. They defended this position in פסוק ד "הארץ אשר הכה ה' לפני עדת ישראל": פסוק ד. They explained that Jewish wars have not been, and will not be, anything but miraculous. God does not need our help in order to win these wars. Therefore, let us remain here in peace, and allow God to conquer the land for the rest of בני ישראל. משה's rebuke, then, serves to open their eyes to the effects of such a request, were he to honor it. In פסוק ז he says, "ולמה תנואון את לב בני ישראל מעבר אל הארץ אשר נתן להם ה'". Don't you see that your actions will affect others? Think of how the nation will respond. Although your interests may be purely economic, the nation will view it as an expression of fear, and it will cause them to be afraid as well. The nation looks to you (particularly ראובן, the first born), as leaders, and your actions could cause them to fear entering the land. משה

<sup>2</sup> It is possible to answer this question by saying that ראובן and גד planned on going to fight, but that they did not mention it because it was not the primary concern when they originally approached משה. משה rebuked them by explaining that it should have been forefront of their minds. They should have phrased their request. "After the conquest of the land, in which we will be most active, we would like to live here."



drew the parallel between their plan and the behavior of the מרגלים who created chaos with their report that the nation had what to fear in entering the land (פסוקים ח-יד). Later on, in פסוק כב, when he insisted that ראוּבֵן and גַּד remain true to their promise, משה adds "והייתם נקים מה' ומישראל" (פסוקים כג-כד). You must consider not only how your actions stand from a theological perspective, but also from the perspective of your fellow Jew.

פסוק טז begins with the word "ויגשו", implying that ראוּבֵן and גַּד had reconvened and reassessed their position after the rebuke. They approached משה with a new proposal. They would lead the troops who will enter the land of Israel, and they will not return to Transjordan until the rest of the nation has settled into the land. משה accepted this new proposal because it would solve the problem of creating fear among the nation (עקידת יצחק, מלבים, דעת מקרא).

### משה's Rebuke

Now that we have a better understanding of the two ways to approach ראוּבֵן and גַּד's conversation with משה, it behooves us to take a closer look at various subtle rebukes which משה directed at the tribes. משה ultimately accepted the tribes' second proposal, but when he repeated it to the שבטים he made a few changes which are crucial to his message.

רש"י, commenting on פסוק טז, explains that ראוּבֵן and גַּד had said that they would build shelters for their animals and only then would they build homes for their children. משה switched the order. He mentioned the children before the animals. In פסוק כו, the tribes understood the message, and reverse the order as well.

A second rebuke becomes clear from a comparison between the שבטים's proposal and משה's expression. They described their role as being "לפני בני ישראל" (פסוק יז). In contrast, משה stressed "לפני ה'". (פסוק כא). משה explained that the tribes were trying to appease משה; it seemed fair that if they would be first to take land then they should shoulder other responsibilities for the people. משה stressed that God will be witness that you fulfill your oath. Nehama Leibowitz points out that in פסוקים כג-כד, only four פסוקים, God's name is used a total of six times. משה knew that he was not going to enter the holy land, and he would therefore not be able to ensure that ראוּבֵן and גַּד would fulfill their part of the bargain. Hence, when explaining the deal to the future leaders of בני ישראל (פסוקים כה-ל), he stressed that God is a witness to this contract. Perhaps משה was concerned that the materialism that led to their initial request could cause them in the future to return east before the ירושה of ישראל was completed. ראוּבֵן and גַּד understood the message and later used the expression "לפני בני ישראל" instead of "לפני ה'". משה's fear that they

might not keep their part of the bargain is emphasized in משה's phrase, "והיצא מפיכם תעשו", (פסוק כד), which is reminiscent of the הלכה, just a few פרקים earlier, which says "איש כי ידר נדר לה' ככל היצא מפי יעשה" (במדבר לג). משה stressed that what they've promised is now in the category of a vow, and a vow to God at that.

The tribes learned another related lesson. In פסוק כה, when swearing that they will do as they have promised, ראובן and גד said "עבדך" (לא). They seem to have learned from משה's hint that God, not only משה, will hold them accountable if they do not keep their promise.

After משה finished rebuking ראובן and גד, he seemed to be satisfied with the situation, confident that they had been sufficiently warned to keep their end of the deal. In פסוק ג:טז-כב, משה emphasized this confidence. He said that the land in Transjordan will be given to the tribes by God. "ה' אלקיכם נתן לכם את הארץ הזאת... ידעתי כי מקנה רב לכם". (פסוקים). משה and God were sensitive to the individual needs of the tribes, and therefore granted them land suitable for those needs. משה used a word that we had not seen in the discussion in ספר במדבר, namely: "אחיכם". משה stressed to the other tribes that the שבט מנשה and ראובן, גד, have not separated themselves from בני ישראל, but are part and parcel of the nation.

### The Status of Transjordan

In the context of all the rebuke which משה gave to ראובן and גד, one topic is surprisingly absent from the discussion, namely their request to live outside of ישראל. The מדרש addresses this issue (במדבר רבה כא:ז). "והבנו את ממונם וישבו להם חוץ מארץ ישראל לפיכך גלו תחילה מכל השבטים". Since they cherished their money and settled themselves outside of the land of Israel, they were the first to be exiled (see דברי הימים א ה:כו).

However, this question assumes that the land upon which גד, ראובן, and שבט מנשה settled, is, in fact, חוץ לארץ. Is this necessarily true? Halakhically speaking, are מצוות התלויות בארץ applicable in Transjordan? Would one fulfill the commandment of ישוב ארץ ישראל by living there? Historically, how long was the period during which Transjordan was actually under Jewish control?

A full halachic analysis of Transjordan is beyond the scope of this essay. I will, however, examine a few relevant sources. In an article entitled "שם וקדושת ארץ ישראל", Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik discusses the possibility that this land is part of ארץ ישראל, but does not have the same level of קדושה as the land west of the Jordan. The משנה (בכורים א:י)

says: “אין מביאין בכורים מעבר הירדן שאינה ארץ זבת חלב ודבש.” The משנה alludes to בכורים, which describes the text recited while bringing בכורים. After expressing thanks to God for taking us out of Egypt, the farmer thanks Him for bringing us into the “ארץ זבת חלב ודבש.”

Let us assume that עבר הירדן is not a land of milk and honey. Does that mean that God did not intend to take them into that land? Would that mean that גר and ראובן never completed the exodus from Egypt, in that they never really entered the land of Israel? This is supported by a מדרש (במדבר רבה כב:), which explains that “לא היה מתנתם [של ראובן וגד] מן” (הקב”ה, אלא חוספין אותה). This implies that God did not intend to give them the land, but they decided to take it anyway. God did not object, reflecting the idea that “בדרך שאדם רוצה לילך מוליכין אותו” (גמרא מכות י ע”ב). It seems that when God promised to take them into the land flowing with milk and honey, He directed that promise only to the other tribes, and not to גר and ראובן. Instead they were to inherit land with a different status.

This approach seems to contradict a different מדרש (שמות רבה כ:ד). The מדרש relates a parable of a king who had ten gifts for his twelve sons. He said to himself, “If I give the gifts to them now, I will cause a fight. Instead, I will wait until I buy two more, and then I will give them each a portion.” The מדרש explains that God had only ten portions in the land of Israel to divide among the twelve tribes. ה' waited until he had conquered two more portions before dividing the land among the tribes. This מדרש implies that God was happy to give them this land in Transjordan as their part of the land of Israel.<sup>3</sup> Whatever we make of the apparent dispute between the משנה and the מדרש, it seems that עבר הירדן does not possess the kind of קדושה that would require בכורים. Yet, it maintains some status of Israel, in that God allowed גר and ראובן to settle there.

We could also ask whether עבר הירדן was part of הקב”ה’s original promise to אברהם. ברית בין הבתרים lists the nations which occupied the land that אברהם will inherit (בראשית טו:ט).<sup>4</sup> The פסוקים list ten nations, seven of whom dwelled on the west of the Jordan and three on the east side. Yet, רש”י explains that the eastern side is reserved for the times of משיח.<sup>5</sup> Until that time, the nation would fit in the western part of the

<sup>3</sup> This raises a different, more philosophical question. If God had planned on settling them there, why were they criticized for wanting that land?

<sup>4</sup> The boundaries “מנהר מצרים עד נהר פרת” (יח) are too vague to help us to figure out whether land on the west of the Jordan is included.

<sup>5</sup> This seems to contradict the borders outlined in יחזקאל מח, which lists the future inheritance of each tribe only on the western side of the Jordan.

land. According to this רש"י, it seems that the land on the east of the Jordan was not to be settled by the tribes so early.

דברים א:יא quotes (דברים ב:ד-ה) מלכים which promises that God would cause the Jewish nation to multiply miraculously. He explains that prior to the sin of the מרגלים, God had planned to make the nation so large that they would need both side of the ירדן. After the sin, however, the nation no longer deserved this miracle and therefore would no longer need the extra land. Nevertheless, God conquered עבר הירדן anyway, not in order to attain the land itself, but to instill fear in the nations on the western side. God originally intended to include עבר הירדן as part of Israel. Retroactively, sin cancelled that promise, but the scheming of the tribes brought it back. Along the same lines, (במדבר כא:כא) רמב"ן says that משה knew that בני ישראל would not be capable of conquering all ten nations at once. He therefore planned, at least for the moment, to conquer and settle only the western side. Had גר and ראובן not requested that land, משה would have let it lay unsettled until after the conquest of the western side of the Jordan.

Another way to address this issue of the status of עבר הירדן is to examine משה's relationship to the territory. God clearly decreed that משה was forbidden to enter the land of Israel (במדבר כ:יב). משה did, however, enter the land of גר and ראובן. This would seem to demonstrate that this land is not considered part of ארץ ישראל.

There are two מדרשים that discuss משה's reaction when he was allowed to enter the territory of עבר הירדן. The first one, quoted by רש"י, says that משה thought that perhaps this meant that the decree not to enter the land had been loosened. ה' re-affirmed that the decree still stood when He brought him up to הר העברים to see the land of Israel. The ספרי קלד (ספרי קלד) compares the decree to a king who forbade his son to enter the gates of the palace. The king entered the gate and the son followed. The king entered the courtyard, the son followed. The king entered the foyer, and the son followed. When he was about to enter the bedroom, he said, "My son, from here and on you are forbidden to enter." According to this analogy, God allowed משה past the place that he was originally meant to enter. משה was not supposed to enter Transjordan, but God allowed him to anyway. משה was only prevented from entering the innermost chambers of the King's palace, the heart of ארץ ישראל. According to this, the territory of גר and ראובן is an "antechamber," so to speak, of Israel. (This echoes Rav Aaron Soloveitchik's explanation discussed above)

The second מדרש (אוצר המדרשים, איזנשטיין, שנו) says that משה asked God that even if he could not enter ארץ ישראל, at least he should be

permitted to stay in the territory of גר and ראובן. God refused to allow even this, because if משה lived there he would be unable to be עולה לרגל, and he would therefore appear hypocritical. This מדרש indicates that משה died in Transjordan not because this was ארץ ישראל, where he was not allowed to live, but for other reasons entirely.

There are a few statements of חז"ל which shed light on the attitude toward Transjordan. רבה (ד:א) קהלת רבה criticizes ראובן and גר's materialistic mindset, explaining that: "טוב מלא כף נחת בארץ ישראל ממלא חפנים עמל בעבר הירדן." Better is one palm full of satisfaction in the Land of Israel than handfuls of labor in Transjordan. Even if עבר הירדן has some kind of sanctified status, it is clearly preferable to live on the western side of the river.

In ספר יהושע, גר and ראובן fulfilled their promise to lead the nation into the land. יהושע told them, "עברו לכם אל ארץ אחזה ה אשר שכן שם משכן ה", (יהושע כב:יט). The western side of the ירדן is characterized as being the place of the משכן. עבר הירדן is more מקודש than ארץ כנען. (ז:ח) במדבר רבה relates a similar idea. משכן עבר הירדן is more כשר for the משכן, and עבר הירדן is not כשר for the משכן. This fact is demonstrated by the reaction of בני ישראל when גר and ראובן built an altar in their territory. The other tribes were prepared to begin a civil war as a response to this act (יהושע כב). There seems to be an inherent problem with building an altar in Transjordan. Notice that it does not say that Transjordan is less holy because it is not Israel. Rather, it is not כשר for the משכן. Again, we see that this territory is not exactly part of the land of Israel, but not excluded entirely from the land either.

Whether Transjordan is called Israel, חוץ לארץ, or something in between, one fact is clear: God allowed גר and ראובן to settle there. As long as they kept their end of the bargain, i.e. helped the rest of the nation conquer the land, God did not object. Throughout ספר יהושע, גר and ראובן are praised for fulfilling their promise. יהושע even referred to their territory as the "אחזה" which "משה עבד ה" gave to them (כב:ד). We see that although משה only required them to fight for seven years, גר and ראובן insisted on staying for seven more years until the nation was entirely settled. They refused to settle into their territory before the rest of the nation had all their needs taken care of. During this time, the wives, children, and livestock lived in temporary dwelling places, while the husbands and fathers fought. This must not have been an easy task for any of them.

### Half of the Tribe of Menashe

The role of half of the tribe of מנשה in the story remains enigmatic. In the account of the story in במדבר, גר and ראובן initiated and conducted the negotiations with משה. Half of the tribe of מנשה got involved only in the end of the story, when they received some of the land (פסוק לג). דעת מקרא.

suggests that perhaps גד and ראובן asked משה half of מנשה to join ראובן and גד because Transjordan was too big for only two tribes. In any case, the half of מנשה took part in conquering the land, and throughout ספר יהושע the tribe of מנשה is referred to as a unit together with גד and ראובן.

## Conclusion

What lessons can we learn from this analysis? First, it is easy for materialism to become a focus of one's life. After all, the bulk of one's time and effort is spent in the attempt to make a living. In their desire to better themselves financially, גד and ראובן lost sight of the enormous gift involved in living in ארץ ישראל. Throughout the ages it has been easier to live in חוץ לארץ than in Israel. The Land of Israel can only be acquired through suffering (גמרא ברכות ה"א). Life in Israel is not meant to be easy; it is a test of our commitment. גד and ראובן were not forced to live east of the Jordan; God let them do so after they requested it. But was that necessarily His first choice?

This story also teaches the value of community and solidarity. "אל תפרוש" (אבות ב"ד) is a cardinal principle which emphasizes the need of individuals and groups to cooperate with the larger concerns of the nation. גד and ראובן settled a land that was distant from that of their brothers. משה emphasized to them that this geographical separation must be that and that alone; they must completely fulfill their obligations to the community. To prevent separation from the rest of the nation, גד and ראובן took active steps to unite themselves with the rest of the nation. The fact that "גבול נתן ה' ביננו" (יהושע כב:כה) should not have created a spiritual division in the nation as well. Yet, when the tribes built the מזבח in יהושע, ספר יהושע, it nearly led to civil war, and only the tribes' explanation that they were concerned with the unity of the nation prevented it.

After fourteen years during which these tribes assisted in conquering the land, יהושע sent them back to הירדן. עבר. He gave them a distinctive warning against the dangers of being influenced by the foreign nations. He used the very strong language of "רק שמרו מאד" (כב:ה) - and he gave them a special blessing before they left (כב:ו). Community can also protect individuals from negative influences of the outside.

# לאה The Character of

Laya Pelzner

לאה was one of the greatest Jewish personalities of all time. She was זוכה to give birth to six of the twelve tribes. However, לאה also had negative character traits as well. Analyzing her personality can teach us a great deal about making the best of the circumstances we are given.

There are many sources that comment on לאה's righteousness. The מלאך notes that "When ה' sought to give children to her [לאה], the מלאך said 'You will give children to her!? Through her descendent, זימרי, twenty-four thousand of ישראל will be killed [in the בעל פאר incident].' ה' replied, 'Now she is righteous, and I will not withhold children from her'" (תנחומא ויצא ה'). When לאה gave birth, she was clearly on a very high spiritual level.

Yet, there are many sources that reflect on negative aspects in her character, and on fights and conflicts she was involved in. The first mention of לאה in the תורה provides a less than flattering portrait. "ועיני" (בראשית כט:יז). Her tears reflect that fact that she felt sorry for herself, rather than trusting in ה'. Later in the chapter the תורה writes, "וירא ה' כי שנואה לאה ויפתח את רחמה" (כט:ל). Though תורה stresses the importance of judging people favorably, here the תורה expresses the idea that לאה, one of the mothers of the Jewish people, was hated. רד"ק on this פסוק explains that לאה loved יעקב, but his greater love for רחל made it seem as if she was unloved, or even hated, in comparison to her sister. (בראשית פרק כט) מדרש שכל טוב, in contrast, explains that רחל, not יעקב, felt hatred towards her sister. While this מדרש does not specify the reason that רחל had feelings of hatred or negativity towards her sister, it seems likely that her feelings stemmed from the rivalry between the sisters over their husband's love and over children. This would explain the fact that the פסוק juxtaposes the fact that לאה was hated with the fact that ה' "opened her womb." ה' perhaps gave לאה children as compensation for being unloved either by her husband or sister.

וירא ה' כי" (סימן יא) פרשת ויצא on מדרש תנחומא explains the verse differently. The מדרש explains that יעקב did not hate לאה because of her character. Rather, יעקב distanced himself from her because she rebuked him on two occasions. לאה confronted יעקב for the

first time after he worked for seven years to marry רחל. She told יעקב that his mother, רבקה, said that he should only stay in the house of לבן for a short time. However, he did not follow his mother's advice, and stayed there for seven years. לאה also rebuked יעקב the morning after they wed. When יעקב awoke and realized that he had spent the night with לאה instead of רחל (כִּסְיָהּ) he told her that she had deceived him. לאה responded that he was also a deceiver. He had deceived his father when he accepted the blessing of the first born (בְּרִיִּית).

From the words “ויפתח את רחמה” the sages taught that לאה was originally barren (פסיקתא דרב כהנא כ:). According to לקח טוב “Because לאה was hated, she was given more than her share of sons. Otherwise יעקב would have divorced her” (בראשית כט). לאה was given children not because of her inherent righteousness, but in order that her husband would not leave her.

בראשית also identifies negative aspects of Leah's character. The *מדרש* explains that, "Everyone jeered at her [לאה] and said 'This לאה is not inwardly as she appears on the surface. She appears righteous, but she is not. If she were righteous she would have never deceived her sister'" (עא:ב). This *מדרש* does not specify when לאה deceived her sister, but there are several possibilities. Suspecting the deception, יעקב made secret signs with רחל prior to the wedding, to guarantee that he would marry רחל. However, רחל was concerned about Leah's embarrassment, and she "disclosed the signs to לאה" (בבא בתרא קכג ע"א). It is possible that רחל felt deceived because of Leah's relationship with יעקב, as the *פסוק* explains "בראשית לא: "ותרא רחל כי לא ילדה ליעקב ותקנא רחל באחיתה" דודאים, the flowers that Leah's oldest son, ראובן, brought her. לאה asked רחל, "תני נא לי מדודאי", however, לאה did not show compassion for her sister, and she responded "למיטו" "המעט קחתך את אישי ולקחת גם את דודאי בני". In the end, לאה only agreed to give the דודאים to her sister in exchange for spending the night with יעקב.

Until now, we have examined some sources that seem to portray לאה somewhat negatively. However, many of these incidents can also be viewed more positively. רש"י, based on the גמרא (בבא בתרא כג ע"ב), explains לאה's crying eyes more positively. לאה cried because she thought she would have to marry עשו, her evil cousin, while her sister רחל would marry the righteous יעקב. לאה's tears were really לשם שמים.

Similarly, it is possible to view in a positive light the fact that לאה was hated. Perhaps לאה was not hated because of her character, but because in the future her offspring would include bad people (אגרת (בראשית כח). Even the מפרשים quoted above can be given a more positive



רחל. spin. רד"ק explains that she only appeared hated in comparison to רחל, but this does not mean that there was anything lacking in לאה. Furthermore, perhaps when לאה rebuked יעקב, she was fulfilling the מצוה of "הוכח תוכיח" (ויקרא יט:יז). As mentioned above, לאה stood up for herself when יעקב rebuked her. She identified יעקב's mistakes in deceiving his father and staying in לבן's house for too long. לאה rebuked יעקב in order to help him improve (also see מדרש תנחומא פרשת ויצא, סימן יא).

Furthermore, there are other descriptions of לאה that are more overtly positive. לאה's raised seven righteous children. Through the birth of her children, לאה succeeded in building a happier marriage and proving her faith in ה'. The גמרא (ברכות ז:) explains, "לא היה אדם שהודה" (בראשית כט:לה) "להקב"ה עד שבאתה לאה והודתו שנאמר הפעם אודה את ה'". לאה was the first person in the תורה who realized that each of her children was a direct gift from ה'. She chose the names of her children carefully, to express her gratitude towards ה'. לאה named her first child ראובן כי ראה, "ראובן כי ראה" (כט:לב). From here we see that she realized that ה' gave her ראובן so יעקב would feel an upsurge of love towards her. Similarly, the names of שמעון and לוי reflect her desire to improve her relationship with יעקב. שמעון was given this name כי שמע ה' כי שנואה אנכי "עתה הפעם ילוה אישי אלי כי" (כט:לג) and לוי's name meant that "ויתן לי גם את זה עתה הפעם ילוה אישי אלי כי" (כט:לד). Finally, after the birth of her forth son, יהודה, she declared "הפעם אודה את ה'" (כט:לה). On this verse, חדושי הר"ם notes that לאה is known as יהודים because Jews are particularly grateful to ה'. לאה passed her gratitude to ה' to future generations.

According to the גמרא (ע"א) (ברכות ס ע"א), לאה prayed that her seventh child would be a girl so that רחל would be able to have at least as many sons as the שפכות. Because of לאה's prayers, the fetus inside of her womb changed to a female. In the next verse, the תורה says "ויבא יעקב מן השדה" (ל:טז). According to the זוהר, she informed יעקב that instead of sleeping with רחל that night he would sleep with her. This verse shows לאה's humility. "She said nothing in front of her sister. Instead, she greeted him on the road and secretly informed him of the arrangement... לאה thought 'Once Jacob enters Rachel's tent it is not polite to take him out.' Therefore, she greeted him outside" (א:קנו ע"א). The מדרש comments that לאה merited to have kings and prophets as descendants because she greeted her husband in a nice and befitting way (מדרש משלי לא).

According to the זוהר, לאה was זוכה to be buried in מערת המכפלה because she pined to marry the righteous יעקב. "All her life [until her marriage] לאה stood at the crossroads and wept because [she wanted to

marry] יעקב, whom she heard was righteous, [whereas] רחל never went out on the road. Therefore, לאה merited to be buried with יעקב while רחל's tomb stands at the crossroads" (א:קכג ע"א). Ironically, רחל, who never went out to the crossroad to cry, is buried at the crossroad. The deeds for which לאה merited to be buried with her husband show that she was on the same high level as the other אבות and אמהות buried there.

Despite the negative qualities identified by some פסוקים, מדרשים and מפרשים, לאה was one of the most righteous Jews of history. She merited giving birth to half of the twelve tribes, and she did her best to fulfill ה' will and improve her marriage. From her childhood, לאה understood the importance of marrying a righteous man, and she was devastated when she thought she had to marry a sinner. ה' had sympathy for her, and she married יעקב and was blessed with seven children. לאה was the first person who praised ה' upon giving birth, and she saw each of her children as a tool to come closer to her husband and to God. While the תורה portrays לאה more negatively than the other אבות and אמהות, the negative descriptions help make her positive characteristics seem more telling. לאה אימנו experienced both suffering and rewards in her life. Life is full of experiences that can be viewed as positive or negative. People should learn from לאה, and use the difficulties in life as a way to develop a closer relationship with ה'.

# ויהי בנסע הארון

Miriam Lipsky

The פרשה of "ויהי בנסע הארון" appears in the midst of the detailed descriptions of the travels and encampments of the Jewish people in ספר במדבר פרשת בהעלותך. These פסוקים raise three distinct issues. First, why do they interrupt an otherwise self-contained narrative of historical events? Second, why is the פרשה set off by two distinctive upside down and seemingly out-of-place ns. Third, what exactly do the פסוקים mean? This paper looks at various מפרשים who have addressed some, if not all, of these issues.

The פסוקים read as follows: "ויהי בנסע הארון ויאמר משה קומה ה' ויפצו: "And it was, when the ark set forward, that Moshe said, 'Rise up, ה', and let Your enemies be scattered, and let those that hate You flee before You'. And when it rested, he said, 'Return Hashem to the myriads and thousands of Israel.'" (במדבר י:לה-לו) These פסוקים appear between the topic of the ענן, which accompanied בני ישראל in their travels in the desert, and the חטא, in which ה' sent a fire to punish members of בני ישראל who complained to ה'. Why is this פרשה placed here? Furthermore, what do the "נונים הפכות" mean? Why was משה commanding the ארון? Did he have full command of the ארון? Who are the "enemies" mentioned? In short, what is this important biblical interlude actually referring to?

גמרא begins to answer some of these questions, providing a source of inspiration for later commentators. The גמרא explains the reversed ns, suggesting that the n's segregate these פסוקים from the neighboring פרשיות. As the גמרא explains, "איו זה מקומו." Contextually, these פסוקים do not belong with the travels of the Jews in the desert. Rather, they belong with the organization of the camps of the Jews by הר סיני. The letter נ, which represents fifty in גימטריא, indicates that the true placement is 50 פרשיות beforehand, during the first travel of the מועד אהל מועד (במדבר ב:יז). The גמרא goes one step further, saying that the ns illustrate the unique importance of this short פרשה. The "ויהי בנסע הארון" פסוקים are so crucial that they can be categorized as a separate book of תורה, thereby dividing חמשה חומשי תורה into seven books (by turning במדבר into three).



three infractions, they would have merited immediate entrance into ארץ ישראל.

While רמב"ן himself does not comment on the upside down *סנ*, there is a גמרא that seems to coincide nicely with רמב"ן's interpretation. The גמרא relates the following story. רבי עקיבא broke the Roman law by teaching תורה publicly. He explained his behavior with a parable that compared the Jewish people to fish. A fox once spotted a group of fish. "Why do you group together in such a way?" the fox asked. "In order to avoid the nets of the fishermen", the fish answered. The fox then invited them to come live with him on the "safety" of the dry ground. The fish answered scornfully, "ומה במקום חיותנו אנו מתיראין במקום, מיתתנו על אחת כמה וכמה." If we are afraid when we are in a place where we can survive, how much more afraid should we be in a place of certain death!" רבי עקיבא explained that the Jews are in a state of danger when they are not connected to תורה; without the תורה they have no chance to survive. This parable matches the issue of "ויהי בנסע" כל יקר. explains that the word *נן* in Aramaic means fish. A fish naturally turns toward the water. It does not turn its back on its life-providing environment. However, when the Jews sinned by fleeing הר סיני הספר, "כתינוק הבורח מבית הספר", they were acting in the opposite way of the fish – hence the backwards *נ*.

רמב"ן's reading of שבת קטז ע"א, in his commentary on מהרש"א, echoes רמב"ן's reading of "ויהי בנסע הארץ". He notes that "הר ה'" always refers to permanent sanctity. He cites two examples to demonstrate this. "יראה, אשר יאמר היום בהר ה' יראה אברהם, עקדת יצחק (בראשית כב:יד)". After יראה, the future site of the המקדש, as "הר ה'". Second, "מי יעלה בהר ה' ומי יקום במקום קדשו" (תהילים כד:ג), an apparent reference to מקום המקדש. On the other hand, הר סיני, where the תורה was given, is usually referred to not as הר ה', but as הר האלקים. For example, "ויקם משה" (שמות כד:יג) "ויהושע משרתו, ויעל משה אל הר האלקים ויקם [אלהיו] ויאכל" (מלכים א ט:ח). "והיה וילך... עד הר האלקים חרב", מהר ה' ויסעו. "והיה וילך... עד הר האלקים חרב" is the only occasion in תנ"ך where הר סיני is called הר ה'. When Jews fled from הר סיני they sinned by not realizing that they were distancing themselves from the place where ה' could be most closely felt. Their frame of mind was the root cause of all subsequent tragedies.

פסוקים emphasize the military elements in these *ספורי* and אבן עזרא views this interlude as a prayer on behalf of the Jews for salvation during wartime. *ספורי*, on the other hand, introduces the idea of כניסה לארץ. Neither of the two commentaries addresses the curious upside-down *סנ* or the mysterious placement of the text, but they support their interpretations by a close reading of the text.

explains “קומה ה'” as a request for ה'’s divine assistance in a time of war. משה is pleading with ה'. “ויפצו” means that if ה' intervenes in the war, then the enemies will scatter. The redundancy of “ויפצו” and “וינוסו” emphasizes the need for ה'’s help during war. The prayer continues with an appeal for ה'’s שכינה to rest on the Jews’ encampments in a time of peace.

ארץ ישראל explains that this is a prayer that the Jews enter ארץ ישראל quickly and safely. Had the Jews not sinned with the מרגלים, they would have been worthy of entering ארץ ישראל without war. ה'’s direct intervention would have been enough to cause the residents of ארץ ישראל to flee. “שובה ה'” beseeches ה' to disperse the enemies of the Jews who would otherwise prevent them from entering the land. “רבות אלפי”, in the ספורנו’s view, is an attribute of ה' (much like צבאות ה'). ה' is the God of the Jewish masses, and He has the power to bring the Jews home swiftly.

Rav Hirsch, in his commentary on the תורה, extends these military interpretations. He explains that the פסוקים belong precisely in this place. These פסוקים reflect on the two possible scenarios regarding the Jews’ entrance into ארץ ישראל. The first possible scenario is included in the first “book” of ספר במדבר, up to פרשה העגל. חטא העגל was the ultimate sin, and ה' סיני was the atonement. The next step should be “ויהי בנסע”, the travel of the earthly people of God, following the holy ארון, into the land of Israel, as a pure representation of what God wants from humanity. Had the story progressed with the Jews’ increasing spirituality and atonement, they would have merited a quick entrance into ארץ ישראל. Yet, the ספר of “ויהי בנסע” transitions between this optimistic scenario and the less fortunate reality. Immediately following these פסוקים, in the third book of ספר במדבר, the people sinned again. The sins that followed caused them to be unworthy of entering ארץ ישראל right away, thus transforming the course of history. Had the Jews not sinned, they could have remained in ארץ ישראל permanently, as an example of a nation who serves God properly. Instead, Jews have suffered the numerous trials and tribulations, both in and out of the Land.

Rav Hirsch also sheds light on the problem raised by “ויאמר משה.” Did משה really have the authority to command the ארון? The תורה itself explains that (במדבר ט:כג) “על פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו”! Rav Hirsch cites רבן עמרם’s statement in אבות, “עשה רצונו כרצונך”, אבות of משה had made his will so identical to God’s will, that there was no difference between them. ה'’s will was משה’s will. משה’s attitude is in sharp contrast to that of the people, who immediately sinned in rebellion against God’s will.

Rav Hirsch defines “איבק” and “משנאיק” as factions within Jewish society. These factions disrupt Jewish unity of purpose, preventing

inspiration and the collective desire to go into the Land of Israel. Upon realizing this, משה's hopes were dashed, and he quickly switched approaches mid-prayer. "ובנחה" is משה's vision of a future time when the תורה will be at rest, free from the groups of Jews who scorn and condemn it. At that time, ה' will dwell peacefully amongst "רבבות אלפי ישראל", the future generations of Jews who will merit to feel God's presence.

Nehama Leibowitz addresses all three of our opening questions<sup>1</sup>: the placement, the unusual letter enclosure, and the specific nuances of the text. She assembles many of the aforementioned מפרשים into a comprehensive compilation. Quoting גמרא שבת, she explains that the two upside-down סנ indicate the worthiness of "ויהי בנסוע הארון" to constitute its own ספר. Prof. Leibowitz quotes the ספר's take on משה's commandment of the ארון. "למלך שהיה מתהלך בדרך ונהג". משה למד הדבר דומה. "אויביו עמו. כשהוא נוסע אומר, איני חונה עד שיבוא אוהבי. נמצא מקיים, 'ויאמר משה' 'קומה ה' ומקיים 'על פי ה' יסעו ועל פי ה' יחנו' משה had such an intense relationship with ה', that משה became ה's partner in moving the Jewish people. Alluding to רש"י, she stresses that "משנאיק" are not literal enemies of ה', but rather enemies of those who love ה' and believe in Him. Prof. Leibowitz reconciles the syntactical difficulty in the verse, "ויפצו" שובה ה' ויפצו, "איבק". Although שובה is grammatically an intransitive verb, it is used here as a transitive verb to request from ה' that His שכנה rest within the Jewish encampments. The whole context is a plea, a רצון יהי from משה, asking ה' for the return of the Jews to ישראל ארץ without military casualty.

ויהי " explains the travels of the ארון in a mystical fashion. "בנסוע הארון" is strategically placed between חטא המתאננים and the Jewish encampments because the Jews were overwhelmed upon leaving ה' סיני. They rebelled because their immersion into the vast and empty desert left them depressed and disillusioned: "הדרך כי אמרו: איך נוכל לסבול הצער והעינוי והיו מצטערים מאד ומתאננים על פרוד". The desert had stimulated this sin. Upon entering the vast wasteland, they saw the mountains and barren terrains. Coming from Egypt, they were unaccustomed to landscape variation. They became bewildered, and "סרו מאחרי ה'". משה's job was to re-strengthen and confirm the national אמונה. "ויפצו" was a reiteration of ה's power and ability to scatter the Jewish enemies. This would calm their fears of being attacked in the immense wilderness. The ארון is a symbol of the presence of ה' within the Jewish population.

בחי רבני relays several opinions about the peculiar upside-down סנ. He cites the גמרא שבת to illustrate that the פרשה is out of place, and in the

<sup>1</sup> Nehama Leibowitz, *Studies in Bamidbar (Numbers)*, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 88ff.

future will be returned to its proper place. He presents three opinions regarding the placement of this פרשה. First, it really belongs in פרשת דעת תנא קמא שהיתה ראוייה פרשה זו. "ק. במדבר when the camp was first set up. להכתיב בדגלים בפרשת במדבר סיני, שכתב שם: ונסע אוהל מועד מחנה הלויים בתוך פרשיית נ. The נ symbolizes that it belongs fifty פרשיית earlier, near "ונסע אהל מועד" (במדבר ב:יז). Second, this is the right location for the topic of ויהי בנסע הארון. This placement indicates a pattern in the way the Jewish camp would arrange itself when traveling. The order of the פרשיית follows the order of movement of the camp. First, the cloud arose, "ויסעו בני ישראל," (במדבר ט:כא) "נעלה הענן," (במדבר י:יב). Afterward was מסעות הדגלים (וכי' מסעות הדגלים), ending with "ויהי" (במדבר י:יב). This opinion disagrees with those who say that the ארון preceded the Jews in travel. According to ר' בחיי, the ארון traveled last. Third, רבינו בחיי speaks of a time when the correct placement of the topic of the ארון will be restored. "עתידה שתעקר ממקומה לימות המשיח שיהיו כל." Upon the arrival of the משיח, all פורענויות will be obliterated from the world and the topic of the ארון will return to its intended setting.

One short פרשה can motivate a vast array of interpretations. From novel theological concepts, like the new division of the תורה into seven books, to national history, as in the reading of R. Hirsch, these unsuspecting nineteen words open up numerous interpretive possibilities. Two small פסוקים, set aside seemingly arbitrarily by two unsuspecting נ, merits the attention of so many diverse פרשנים.



## Hudi Green

(תנחומא יד) מדרש תנחומא explains these **מסוקים** by citing the **ה'** speaking from within the bush represents that fact that **ה'** was with the Jewish people at that difficult time: **"עמו אנכי בצרה"** (תהילים צא:טו). **ה'** is not a distant king who rules His empire from afar. He is actively involved in the everyday lives of **בני ישראל** put Himself, **כביכול**, in a thorn bush, which inflicts pain on anyone or anything that comes into contact with it, to show that He was feeling the pain of their enslavement in **מצרים**. **משה** showed a similar concern for the Jewish people: **"וירא בסבלתם"** (שמות ב:יא). **משה** felt the pain and burden of his brothers, the Jewish slaves. **משה**, despite his upbringing in the Egyptian palace, was able to see past his education and realize **בני ישראל's** pain. **משה**, in an act that would later be revealed as imitating **הקב"ה**, was willing to lower himself to feel the suffering of the people.

Perhaps this was why משה was chosen as the leader of בני ישראל, the one appointed by ה' to rescue them from their slavery. רש"י follows the same idea in explaining פסוק ז' "כי ידעתי את מכאביו". ה' paid attention to בני ישראל. He listened to their cries for help. This also explains why He appeared now. ה' had heard their cries for help, and He was prepared to end this pain by bringing them out of Egypt.

רש"י's explanation of the סנה by stating that ה' can never be lowered to such a degree that ה' could suffer with ישראל בני ישראל. Instead, "עמו אנכי בצרה" means that ה' was incomplete while בני ישראל were in גלות.

משה agrees with רש"י that an angel appeared to משה initially. He also explains other aspects of משה's נבואה. משה had to deal with three issues: the fire, the angel, and the שכינה. Initially, משה saw nothing but a fire that was not able to destroy the bush. He assumed that this was a natural occurrence, but did not know if this was because it was a unique type of fire or a unique type of bush. משה approached the bush in order to examine the strange occurrence. Had משה thought there was something miraculous about the occurrence, he would not have approached the bush. Once he got closer, he saw the angel of ה' within the flames - "וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש". Once משה realized that this was a divine event, he gathered himself so that he would be able to encounter the שכינה and meet ה' Himself. This was משה's first experience as a נביא. ה' initiated משה into prophecy slowly, introducing him to a מלאך, and only later to the שכינה. Later in his life, משה would reach the level of speaking to God "פנים אל פנים", but early on he was not yet at that level.

רמב"ן joins both רש"י and רבינו בחיי in their opinion that משה saw an angel of ה'. Yet, unlike רבינו בחיי, who thinks that ה' Himself eventually replaced the מלאך, רמב"ן argues that the שכינה was there together with the מלאך all along. Initially, משה saw only the מלאך, because he had not prepared himself for prophecy. Once he had prepared himself, he saw the שכינה that had been there throughout. רמב"ן also explains the words, "אל תקרב הלום". If משה was such a great נביא, why was he unable to approach the bush? רמב"ן argues that משה was not yet prepared for the highest levels of נבואה, and at this early stage he still had to keep his distance.

מלבי"ם agrees that an angel appeared to משה, but he disagrees with aspects of the interpretations of the other מפרשים. He begins by asking why the Torah said "וירא מלאך ה' אליו" when usually it would say, "וירא אליו". Why was the word "אליו" put at the end? מלבי"ם explains that when "אליו" comes first, it emphasizes the person to whom ה' appeared. The fact that ה' was appearing to that person was a special

and unusual occurrence. However, when “אלי” appears at the end, it indicates that revelation to that person was not uncommon. According to this explanation, there was no חידוש in the fact that משה received this נבואה; he was already on a high level of prophecy.

מלבים also wonders why משה was shocked by the fiery bush, but not by the appearance of the angel – “מדוע לא יבער הסנה”. He explains that the fire and the angel were the same thing; the angel appeared in the form of a fire. If this is so, and if (as מלבים says) משה was already on a high level of נבואה, why did משה see this revelation in such an indirect way, through an angel in the form of a fire? מלבים explain the difference between משה’s נבואה and that of all other נביאים. Normally, משה could receive נבואה in the form of אספקלריא המאירה, while other נביאים could only receive אספקלריא שאינה מאירה. However, in this case משה lost this ability because בני ישראל were not worthy that he receive it. בני ישראל were in exile and were descending to lower and lower spiritual depths. This interpretation corroborates the point mentioned above regarding משה’s personal involvement with בני ישראל.

פסוק ג and פסוק ב both raise the contradiction between רמב”ן and מלבים. If the bush was “מדוע לא יבער הסנה” why does משה ask “בער באש”? רמב”ן explains that the Torah often uses one word to mean two different things. For example, in שופטים יד the word “עירים” means both cities and horses. Similarly, here, the word “בער” means both burning and being consumed. “הסנה בער באש” indicates that the bush was on fire, while the question “מדוע לא יבער הסנה” asks why the bush was not being consumed. מלבים, who generally argues that each word has a very specific meaning, distinguishes between three verbs: בער, דלק, and אכל. בער refers to when something begins to burn, when flames grab onto something. דלק refers to a fire that spreads slowly. Finally, אכל is when something is consumed and turns to ashes. The Torah says, “הסנה בער באש”, despite the fact that normal usage would be האש בער בסנה (as in הר סיני, which is described as “ההר בער באש”). Therefore, מלבים concludes that the fire was burning on its own, and had not caught onto the bush at all. When משה asks, “מדוע לא יבער הסנה” he wants to know why the fire, which was burning on its own, had not spread to the bush.

הר סיני cites a different connection between this event and חזקוני. He says that the “לבת אש” that surrounded the bush helped to familiarize משה with miraculous visions of fire, so that he would be prepared for what would occur at הר סיני, with the miraculous fire, thunder, lightening, etc. This implies, again, that משה was not yet at a high level of נבואה; he needed training before the revelation at הר סיני. חזקוני continues, explaining the burning bush as a משל. The bush symbolizes בני ישראל

inside the fire of גלות. The bush was not consumed, symbolizing that בני ישראל were not being destroyed by the hardships of גלות. חזקוני adds that ה' appeared in a bush because one cannot carve an idol out of a bush. The bush represents the beginning of ה' nation, which could spiritually survive in גלות without reverting to idolatry. חזקוני also explains the meaning of "מדוע לא יבער הסנה". He says that the פסוק should be divided into two sections, the "מדוע", which is a question, and the "לא יבער הסנה", which is an exclamation. The word "מדוע" asks, "How is it that the bush is not being consumed?" This question is followed by an exclamation: "לא יבער הסנה", i.e. "Don't I see that the bush is burning!"

יקר offers an alternative symbolic interpretation of the סנה. The thorns represent the way in which בני ישראל were treating one another during their times of difficulty. Instead of unifying as a nation, the Jewish people degenerated into infighting and מחלוקת. Even when the bush is burning – i.e. when בני ישראל are in trouble – the thorns can still cause pain. This approach supports מלבי"ם's claim that משה received a weaker נבואה because בני ישראל were not worthy of more. יקר reassures us, however, explaining that the bush not being consumed symbolizes the fact that even intra-Jewish infighting cannot destroy עם ישראל. עם בני ישראל will not be destroyed by any forces, neither internal nor external.

נצי"ב asks why the fire is described as being "מתוך הסנה" instead of "בסנה"? He answers that the flame was inside the middle of the bush, but did not spread to above or around it. He bases this on other places in חומש where the term "בתוך" is used: "ומפרי העץ בתוך הגן" (בראשית ג:ג) and "והנה אנחנו מאלמים אלמים בתוך השדה" (בראשית לז:ז). The natural order of events would be for the fire to spread to the branches, growing greater and greater. Part of the miracle was that the fire remained in the center of the bush. Further, נצי"ב explains that "בער באש" means that the bush was actually extinguishing the fire. The first time the fire was mentioned it was described as "לבת אש", implying that the flames were large and active. Later, it is described as "הסנה בער באש", implying, according to נצי"ב, that the flames had diminished. This is different from the description of the burning ב"ב (דברים ד:יא) "וההר בער באש", הר סיני the fire was above the mountain, but here the fire was inside the bush. It is interesting that so many מפרשים identify the similarities between the סנה and הר סיני, while נצי"ב argues that the situations were different.

נצי"ב also clarifies what משה saw, and why it was such a strange sight. משה saw two startling things. First, the bush was burning in the middle of the desert, though nobody was around to have lit it. Second, he saw that the flames were diminishing, and recognized that this

violated the laws of nature. He came to the conclusion that this was a miraculous event. When the פסוק says, "וירא מלאך ה' אליו", it means that משה was able to recognize on his own that something divine and mysterious was occurring. This approach disagrees with רבינו בחיי, who said that משה did not on his own recognize the miracle. נצי"ב explains why משה did not ask who lit the fire. משה understood that the burning bush represented בני ישראל in Egypt; he did not need an explanation of why the bush was burning. But, משה did not understand why בני ישראל were not being destroyed by the slavery. He therefore asked, "מדוע לא, בני ישראל?" משה wanted to know what was preventing בני ישראל from being consumed.

Whether it was an angel or ה' Himself who appeared to משה, most מפרשים agree that the event actually happened. ספורנו, however, suggests that the event was a מראה נבואה, a prophetic vision. ספורנו explains that the bush was a משל, but he explains the משל differently than חזקוני. The angel inside the bush represents the צדיקים of בני ישראל within the horrors of מצרים. The Egyptians will burn in the sorrows of the מכות, but the righteous ones of בני ישראל will remain unhurt. Interestingly, ספורנו views this event as the turning point in משה's life as a נביא. Before this, he did not speak to ה' directly; from this point on, he spoke to ה' directly, reaching the level of speaking to God "פנים אל פנים". This fits with the opinions of the נצי"ב, מלבי"ם, and כלי יקר, who agree that משה was already a great נביא. It opposes the views of the חזקוני and רמב"ן, who see this as משה's initiation into prophecy.

Like all episodes of the תורה, there are many lessons which can be learned from this situation. First, ה' challenges people in ways that allow them to grow. He did not reveal Himself to משה too directly when משה was not ready for it. Rather, He waited until משה was prepared and stable enough to receive the words of ה'. Second, this incident reinforces the idea that ה' is always with בני ישראל. He listens to our cries for help, even when we cannot see Him. Through the good times and the bad, we must always remember, "עמו אנכי בצרה".



## Dalia Ebert

These incidents point to wider differences in the roles and lives of these אבות. אברהם moved. Born in ארץ לארץ, he left his land, came to ארץ ישראל, and left it again, all before he finally returned for a second time. He walked on paths that no one had traveled before, thereby conquering the land for his descendents. אברהם was an initiator. He found God on his own. The ברית that ה' gave אברהם established a new ברית between ה' and אברהם's descendents. יצחק, on the other hand, stayed in place. He was born in ארץ ישראל and was told not to leave. If אברהם conquered the land by traveling, then יצחק maintained that ownership by remaining there. Rather than initiate, יצחק had to continue. יצחק inherited the knowledge of God from his father. His essence was ישיבה ושמירה, and therefore the ברכות given to him were replicas of those given to his father.

יצחק's life was similar to his father's because יצחק was responsible for firming up what אברהם had initiated. יצחק did not do anything very different from אברהם. His role was to uphold that which his father had established. Compare their respective relationships with אבימלך. In כ"א:כב, אבימלך came to visit אברהם and made a request to establish a ברית between them. The terms of the covenant stipulated that their respective descendants would deal kindly with one other. In addition, אברהם gave אבימלך seven sheep, as a witness to the fact that the local well belonged to him. After this, אבימלך and his officer returned to their land. Five chapters later, אבימלך seemed to break the terms of the treaty. יצחק hid the identity of his wife because he was afraid that members of אבימלך's community would kill him. Additionally, the shepherds of גר fought over possession of the well. (כ"ז:כ) "ויריבו רעי גר עם רעי יצחק לאמר לנו המים". Shortly thereafter, אבימלך visited יצחק, who was upset at the fact that אבימלך had violated the ברית. אבימלך replied that he wanted to renew the terms. Immediately thereafter, יצחק's servants found a well, hinting to us that יצחק had emerged from the battle successful. יצחק reinstated what had been established in his father's day.

The differences between father and son may hint at two different styles of people who serve ה'. Some initiate. They create חידושים or travel to influence those with whom they come in contact. Others maintain the connection, implement the חידושים of others, and continue on a path that was started for them. Neither model is better than the other; both are necessary. Some need to be leaders and initiators; others need to be followers and strengtheners. What use is a leader if there is no one to follow? What use is a follower if there is no one to lead?

The chapters dealing with the lives of אברהם and יצחק shed light on another facet of their lives. We know little of יצחק's life, while the narratives regarding אברהם are lengthy and detailed. אברהם traveled



around the land of Israel, interacted with many people, and spoke a great deal more than אברהם. יצחק was very outspoken when he argued with ה' about destroying סדום. He was friendly and confident when he spread the name of ה' to the places he visited and the people he met. His interaction with the בני חת indicates the ease with which he dealt with strangers, as does his enthusiasm in inviting people to his tent for a meal.

יצחק, in contrast, appears passive. He did not speak until age 37, he went willingly and quietly to the altar, and he was passive when others went to find him a spouse. The פסוקים describe יצחק just before he met רבקה (כד:סג) "ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה": רבקה bases his interpretation on "וכל שיח השדה" (בראשית, ב:ה), explaining that יצחק was in the field viewing trees and plants. רש"י and ספורנו derive the meaning from "ישפוך שיחי" (תהלים קב:א). יצחק was praying in the field where no one would bother him. Both these explanations paint a picture of יצחק as an introverted character who finds solace in a quiet and pastoral atmosphere.

This background can help us understand אברהם and יצחק's relationships with their respective wives. בראשית רבה לט:יד indicates that אברהם and שרה worked together to convert the people around them to the truth. אברהם and שרה had numerous conversations with each other: planning to prevent שרה from being captured, speaking about their lack of children, and preparing a meal for the three guests who arrived at their home. On the other hand, יצחק and רבקה exchanged no more than seventeen words. This is particularly significant in light of the fact that רבקה relayed the prophecy about her sons to her husband, it is possible that the saga of the ברכות may have been avoided. העמק נצ"ב explains that the silence derived from their first meeting: "ותשא רבקה את עיניה ותרא את יצחק ותפל מעל הגמל... ותקח הצעיף ותתכס" (כד:סד). נצ"ב explains that רבקה was immediately awed by her future husband. This awe and fear remained with her for the rest of her life, which made communication difficult.

Rav Dessler - in an elaborate interpretation of a מדרש in בראשית רבה, "תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם" פסוקים - connects the "רמב"ן (מז:ו), and a related "ופחד יצחק היה לי" (מיכה ז:כ, בראשית לא:מב). Rav Dessler uses these sources as the basis for a theory of character development. חסד means using one's social talents to help other human beings. The fear of God is the force where one turns inward to perfect oneself. Truth is the power

<sup>1</sup> R. Eliyahu E. Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, Jerusalem and New York, 1999, pp. 50-63.

which clarifies the right path for a person in his or her 'עבודת ה'. Each one of these qualities can help to guide a person to attain the other two. Someone involved in חסד will move from loving people to loving God. One who fears God will realize that חסד is important too, and will understand that he is failing his obligations if he is not completely truthful. The person committed to truth will perceive that it is unfair not to give to others, and that one must stand in awe of ה'. Rav Dessler explains that each person has a dominant character trait. Each person must find his or her own dominant character trait, and use it as a jump off point to achieving success in these and other traits as well. Each of the אבות was dominated by one of these character traits.

By studying the narrative in greater detail we will see that this theory is grounded in פשט. אברהם was constantly involved in חסד, from the "נפש אשר עשו בחרן" to the altars that אברהם built throughout the land of Israel, which according to רמב"ם, were places for people to gather to learn about the Master of the world (הלכות עבודה זרה א:ג). Having reached such a high level of חסד, אברהם was challenged to face tests of גבורה as well. He had to leave his home and birthplace and he had to battle with the four kings to save his nephew. ברית מילה challenged him to separate from the rest of mankind. Later the trials became more difficult as he had to drive his first born son, ישמעאל, from his house. The תורה records the pain that אברהם felt in response to this demand from שרה: "וירע הדבר" (כא:יא). Despite this, אברהם worked hard to strengthen his גבורה, as he got up early in the morning to send ישמעאל and הגר away. The hardest challenge though, came with the command to offer his son, an action that completely opposed his instinctive חסד. אברהם's success in the story proves that he had perfected the quality of גבורה, in conflict with his inborn trait of חסד. Subsequent to this achievement, he is proclaimed as a "ירא אלוקים" (כב:יג).

יצחק's passivity reflects an introverted character who strove for internal perfection, and whose basic character was fear of God, the "פחד" "פחד". His willingness to follow his father to the עקדה reflects a character who could block out all concerns other than the will of God. Similarly, יצחק's prayers in the field and on behalf of רבקה for a child (כח:כא) indicates an intense personal relationship with ה'. In contrast to אברהם, we do not find that יצחק interacted with people, traveled to spread the name of God, or even built altars. He traveled only as result of famine. In the course of his travels, he was forced to interact with people, but these experiences were often quite unpleasant. He protected his wife from a kidnapping and fought with אבימלך over wells which actually belonged to him. It should not surprise us that יצחק preferred to avoid

interaction with others and continually moved away from populated settlements. Eventually, יצחק experienced a positive interaction with people: the פלישתים did not challenge יצחק's servants over possession of the third well. Perhaps as a result of this success, יצחק felt the confidence and responsibility to move to באר שבע, the place where his father had spent many years of his life successfully converting people (כא:לג-לד). There, ה' had to boost יצחק's confidence by assuaging his fears: "אל תירא" (כא:לג-לד). Still, this ברכה came "בעבור אברהם עבדי" (כו:כד). Perhaps יצחק's introverted nature and his lack of experienced in dealing with the general population meant that יצחק's success in the city required the זכות of his father. Eventually, יצחק became capable of building his own מזבח, and he called in the name of God (כו:כה). As a natural consequence, יצחק then increased his interaction with people, and in the next recorded story יצחק reinstituted the ברית between אבימלך and himself.

As with אברהם, the hardest challenge to יצחק came last: the giving of the ברכה. It is hard for a person who is introverted and constantly focused on personal improvement to accept that someone needs the external aid of a ברכה. According to this reading, יצחק knew that יעקב was self-sufficiently holy, and he therefore preferred to leave him to reach his potential unaided. On the other hand, יצחק realized that עשו was a more extroverted person. יצחק felt that עשו required outward encouragement to help him control his desires. יצחק came to realize that even introverted and self-sufficient people like himself and יעקב can benefit from outside contact and assistance. Therefore he was capable of giving the ברכה to יעקב. יצחק had overcome the challenge of his introverted self-sufficient nature. He realized the importance of חסד, the importance in spiritual growth of positive contact with others.

Character traits are often passed from father to son. In this case, we have noted that the similarities between father and son can also help highlight the differences. אברהם's character was dominated by the מדה of חסד, while יצחק's was dominated by נחד. Each had the opportunity to create his own individual and unique service of ה'. In a related way, we are all created with inherently different character traits. The stories of the אבות open our eyes to the responsibility we have as individuals to recognize the dominant forces within us and to refine them such that we can reach the highest peak in our relationship with God. The lives of the אבות prove just how challenging and difficult it can be to reach that goal. Perseverance, however, often ends with triumph.



# תוכחה and Its Fulfillment: מגילת איכה A Study of

Rivke Pianko

There are two primary places where תנ"ך deals with the issue of why bad things happen to good people: ספר איוב and מגילת איכה. I would like to address the latter example, by comparing מגילת איכה to the various תוכחות in the תורה. There are three places in the תורה where ה' explains specifically what will befall the nation if they do not keep the commandments. They are דברים לב, ויקרא כו, and דברים כח:טו-סח.

אם לא תשמעו לי ולא תעשו את כל "explains what will occur" דברים כו:יד-טו מצות האלה. ואם בחקותי תמאסו ואם את משפטי תגעל נפשכם לבלתי עשות את כל מצותי. "להפרכם את בריתי. אף אני אעשה זאת לכם." The תורה specifies five types of punishments: 1) lack of food 2) desolation of the land 3) death by sword 4) cessation of strength to fight enemies. The תוכחה says, "והיה אם לא תשמע בקול ה' אלקיך לשמר לעשות את כל מצותיו" כח:טו in וחקתיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום ובאו עליך כל הקללות האלה והשיגוך." These punishments can be divided into eight categories: 1) no food 2) lack of strength/inability to be healed 3) attack by an unknown nation 4) dishonor and embarrassment 5) lack of a savior 6) fear 7) theft and inability to accomplish goals 8) suffering and death of children.

Reading these punishments, it is difficult to believe that such atrocities could come true. Yet, if we examine מגילת איכה closely, we will see that חורבן בית ראשון was a fulfillment of these horrible prophecies.

The authorship of a number of ספרים, including ירמיהו, ספר מלאכים, and מגילת איכה, attributes the authorship of a number of ספרים. Taken as a unit, these three ספרים record the successes of the Jewish people and their gradual degeneration, which eventually led to destruction and חורבן. מגילת איכה describes what actually happened during the destruction of ירושלים from the perspective of one who lived through it. ירמיהו conveys to us the terrible sadness, desperation, and depression that the people felt. The בית המקדש was taken away, sanctity was desecrated, people died in the streets, little children begged for food, and no one came to בני ישראל's aid. The מגילה describes ה' anger, and the sins the Jews had performed to deserve such terrible tragedies. The מגילה also provides insights into how to deal with the tragedy. מגילת איכה records how the words of the תוכחה came true.

The תוכחה in דברים כח can be broken up into three literary sections. Each one begins with a general phrase like “because you did not listen.” The first group begins with פסוק טו - beginning with “והיה אם לא תשמע” - and continues through פסוק מד. Within that section, פסוקים טו-יד describe general curses, which serve as a foil to the ברכות that were mentioned previously and as an introduction to all of the punishments that will be mentioned. פסוקים כ-מד are much more specific in their description of the punishments. This second literary section begins with פסוק מה - which includes the expression “כי לא שמעת בקול ה' אלקיך” - and continues through פסוק נז. In this section, the people are portrayed as besieged and captured by a foreign nation. The last literary section includes פסוקים נח-סח - opening with the expression, “אם לא תשמר לעשות את כל דברי התורה”, פסוקים נח-סח, again, describe specific punishments that will befall the people.

What is the difference between the specific punishments described in the first section, and the specific punishments described in the third section? It is possible that the פסוקים speak of a downward regression. The first section deals with בני ישראל when they are living in the land. If they do not follow the תורה in the land of Israel, they will suffer, as will the land itself. The second group of פסוקים speaks about a siege, indicating the fall of ישראל ארץ and the ensuing גלות. Finally, the last group of פסוקים deals with בני ישראל when they are in גלות. ה' says that בני ישראל must keep the תורה even in גלות. If they do not, the punishments will get worse. The punishments in the last section do not speak about the land at all, but with things that will occur to individuals. It seems, then, that this last section reflects punishments that will occur once עם ישראל has entered גלות.

### Rain and Food

The גמרה in ע"א ב דף כ' holds three keys: the key to rain, the key to birth, and the key to reviving the dead. Each of these three keys deals with sustaining the human race. Throughout תנ"ך, adequate rainfall is a reward for proper behavior. For example, דברים יא:יד says, “ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו יורה ומלקוש ואספת דגן ותירשך ויצהרך”, אליהו brought about a drought as punishment for worshipping the בעל (מלאכים א'). Too much rain can also be a punishment, as indicated by the מבול, which was a punishment for חמת ייג (בראשית י:יג). Drought can destroy the food supply; floods can destroy the entire civilization.

The תוכחה describes the lack of rain and the lack of food. ויקרא כו:יט says, “ונתתי את שמיכם כברזל ואת ארצכם כנחשה”, The people will work hard, but in vain, because there will be no rain, and therefore no produce will grow. פסוק כב says that ה' will destroy the people's cattle. The best

illustration of the lack of food is in פסוק כו: "עשר נשים לחמכם בתנור אחד" "Since they have no food, and have no way of acquiring any, they will turn to the last possible thing, and eat the flesh of their children."

also emphasizes the difficulty in getting food. The skies will be like copper, and the ground will be like iron (כג). The skies will provide rain made of dust, and it will descend until בני ישראל are destroyed (כד). A foreign nation will eat the produce (לג). The people will plant but not gather, because locusts will devour the food (לח). The people will plant and work the vineyards, yet they will not drink because worms will consume the crop. The olives will fall from the trees before they can be turned into oil. (לט-מב). Again, when things reach their worst, the Jewish people will be forced to eat their own children. (נג וכו')

The accounts of lack of food in מגילת איכה echo the threats of the תוכחה. The leaders were like rams who continued to walk because they had found no food (א:א). The whole nation sighed and begged for food. They traded their most precious possessions for food (א:יא). The נבאים and the wise men of the city died when they failed to find the food that they needed (א:ט). They felt that it is better to die by the sword than by famine (ד:ט). Children fainted in the streets; they sat in their mothers laps and begged for food (ב:ג). The tongues of children stuck to their palates due to thirst. Young children pleaded for bread, but no one could provide it (ד:ד). Compassionate women boiled their children to eat them (ב:כ, ד:י). The מגילה reflects fulfillment of the punishments predicted in the תוכחה.

## Children

The first mitzvah in the תורה is "פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ" (בראשית א:כב). The commandment is to fill the world with children. Children bring people's emotions alive. Children represent a wholesomeness and innocence, which is often lacking in adults. There is a much stronger sense of tragedy when a young child dies than when an elderly person dies. Many of the punishments listed in the תוכחה have to do with children.

One punishment is that children will be taken into captivity. There are two פסוקים in דברים כח that describe their plight. לב explains that "בניך ובנותיך נתנים לעם אחר." This verse emphasizes the experiences of those children who will leave all familiar things and will be forcibly sent away to a foreign nation. Their relationship with God will also change, because they will be influenced by the religions of the other lands. פסוק מא similarly predicts that "בנים ובנות תוליד ולא יהיו לך כי ילכו בשבי" This פסוק

emphasizes the experiences of the parents. All of the parents' efforts will be in vain, because the children will be taken captive. Parents will never see their children grow into adulthood and fulfill their potential.

Children are also affected by the lack of food. Five פסוקים (דברים כח:גא-נו) describe the plight of the people living under the siege. These פסוקים describe a "הרך בן ועונג מאד" and a "הרכה בן והענגה": tender, delicate, and compassionate people who will become so transformed that they will not only eat the flesh of their own children, but become so selfish that they will refuse to share any of it with their family members. ויקרא כו:כט also describes parents who eat the flesh of their sons and daughters.

בני דב shows the realization of these punishments. בני דב says "ציון היקרים המסלאים בפז איכה נחשבו לנבלי חרש מעשה ידי יוצר". The children of Zion, who were once like fine gold, became like cheap, man-made ceramic jugs. The children were extremely hungry. The פסוקים describe them as fainting in the streets and dying in their mothers' laps (ב:כ). The young girls were in pain. They were being afflicted, and some of them were raped (ה:יא). The young boys were no longer singing by the gates. Some of them were working in lowly professions, while others were killed by the sword (ה:יב-יג).

There are two פסוקים that describe the children being taken into captivity. א:א says, "עולליה הלכו שבי לפני צר". These youngsters, who were constantly watched and protected by their parents, were taken by the enemy to an unknown place. The punishment occurred not only to helpless infants who could not defend themselves, but to "בחורים", the healthy, strong youth who were also led away (א:יח). The vividness of these פסוקים gives the reader a sense of the destruction. These children, who were supposed to be leaders of the next generation, were taken into captivity.

The גמרא גיטין נו ע"ב speaks about a particularly horrible incident near the end of חורבן בית שני. A ship of four hundred children was led away from Israel. As soon as the children realized that they were being taken to a foreign country in order to be used for עריות גלוי, all four hundred children jumped overboard so they would not have to participate in the sin. Clearly, children were set apart for suffering during the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem.

ראה ה' והביטה למי עוללת כה אם תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי, איכה ב:כ states, ראה ה' והביטה למי עוללת כה אם תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי. רש"י cried out to ה', asking him to examine what happened to His people. רש"י cites a מדרש (א:א) to explain the phrase "עוללי", the infants who were lovingly attended. רש"י says that טפחים can also mean hands. One woman used to measure her child with her hand



each day. Whenever he would grow, she would bring that amount of gold to the המקדש. During the siege, she measured him in order to see how much food he would yield her. פרק ד shows the reader what the siege looked like. The מגילה describes the people wandering through the streets with blood on their clothing. פסוק י of this פרק echoes most explicitly the dire threats of the תוכחה: "תוכחה היו לברות". The people had reached just the point described in the תוכחה. They were willing to eat their own children in order to get some food into their bodies. מגילת איכה describes to us the sufferings of the children.

## Desolation

פרקי אבות ה:ו describes ten miracles that occurred daily in the בית ירושלים, reflected in God's choice of the city as His dwelling place. According to this פרק, attackers would flee when they realized that there was no way to enter the fortified city.

One of the most heartbreaking punishments described in the תוכחה is the fact that the land will be abandoned and the מקדש lost. ויקרא כ:לא says, "ונתתי את עריכם חרבה והשמותי את מקדשיכם ולא אריח בריח ניחחכם." The cities will be filled with swords; the מקדש will be desolate; and ה' will no longer accept any קרבנות. He will destroy the land, which will become desolate, empty even of enemies and conquerors. The cities will be in ruin, and the land will be bare (לא-לג). בני ישראל say that דברים כח:כה, לו. (לא-לג) will go to גלות, where they will be a source of terror and confusion among the nations of the world. פסוק סא goes further. Punishments, sicknesses, or blows that are *not* described explicitly in the פסוקים will occur to בני ישראל.

The מגילה begins with "איכה ישבה בדד" (א:א). The once flourishing city became empty and desolate. "דרכי ציון אבלות מבלי באי מועד" (א:ד). The once busy highways became empty of travelers. The old men who once sat at the gates disappeared, and the young men stopped their singing (ה:יד, ט). The מגילה emphasizes that ה' is the one who destroyed the מקדש. ב:א-ט and ב:יא describe the destruction of the place where שכינה ה' had dwelt, and portray ה' as the one acting like the enemy. He burnt the fortresses of the daughter of יהודה to the ground. He bent His bow like an enemy. His right hand was poised like a foe. He killed all those who were once pleasant in His eye. He poured out His anger like fire in the tent of the daughter of ציון. The פסוקים describe at length the way in which ה' Himself was responsible for the destruction and desolation. The place that was supposed to symbolize ה' love for His people had turned into

a source of anger. ה' took an active part in bringing about the punishments that He described in the תוכחה.

Throughout the מגילה there are references to the fact that בני ישראל could not believe what had happened to the people or the land. They were astonished at what had happened. ב:טו points to mockers, who laughed at the city that once represented perfect beauty and joy on earth. ד:יב indicates that neither kings of the earth, nor anybody else, could believe that the enemy could actually enter the gates of ירושלים. (א:יב, יח) also turns to onlookers asking them to see the destruction (א:יב, יח).

The nations of the world took advantage of the position of בני ישראל. Her enemies were happy at her downfall (א:ז). The nations spread their hands over all of Israel's treasures, and they entered the מקדש which was forbidden to them (א:ז). Enemies heard of the bad that had occurred, and were happy about it (ב:טז, א:כא). These mocking bystanders were the worst type of enemies because they had no real quarrel with ישראל. עם ישראל. The only reason for them to join the battle was to disgrace ה' and be part of the looting. ירמיהו begged ה' to punish this group - look at all of their wickedness, and hurt them as You have hurt me (א:כב). You have seen all of their vengeance against me, and the plans that they weaved against me (ג:ט). Give them the punishment that they deserve, and may Your curse be upon them (ג:ט).

The תוכחות are read in the בית כנסת quietly and without pause, because the punishments they contain are incredibly disheartening and the atrocities are difficult for us to bear. The תוכחות and the מגילה make us scream out to God, "Why have you done this to us?!" פרקים א-ב of the מגילה describe the horrible things that occurred during חורבן. ירמיהו describes the roads, the people, the destruction of the מקדש, and the cruel behavior of our enemies. In ג פרק, he questions God's mercy. The first eighteen פסוקים describe the tragedies which ירמיהו himself underwent. Other נבאים predicted the חורבן, but ירמיהו actually lived through it. יח represents a transformation in his thought process, for it is here that ירמיהו mentions God's role in the suffering. As soon as he mentions ה' name, he remembers that ה' brought this upon him. In פסוק לח, he explains that both good and evil emanate from the Most High. This sheds new light on the חורבן. After the understanding of ה' role, ד פרק views the atrocities in a different light. The description here is less personal; it is a factual account of what happened, in part because it understands some of the causes of the destruction. ד:יג describes some of the reasons for the punishments: the sins of the prophets and the iniquities of the priests, who had shed the blood of the just. Before the destruction, many false prophets told the people that no bad would

befall them, and that 'ה would never destroy His people or His מקדש. The people were led astray by the corrupt leadership of the time. But the blame could not be placed on the leadership alone. The people chose to listen to the false hopes that they were being sold.

We have seen that there are many parallels between the תוכחות and the description of the destruction in מגילת איכה, particularly regarding the issues of food, children, and desolation. This analysis could lead one to depression or hopelessness. But, there is a way in which the descriptions of destruction can be a source of נחמה. In the middle of מגילת איכה there are surprising פסוקים, which describe God's unending mercy. "חסדי ה' כי לא. תמנו, כו לא כלו רחמיו. חדשים לבקרים רבה אמונתך. חלקי ה' אמרה נפשי על כן אוחיל לו. (ג:כב-כד). The מגילה continues to explain that the Lord does not reject His people forever. He first afflicts, then pities, due to His abundant kindness (ג: לא-לב). Punishments are not given merely to inflict pain, but are given to enforce a lesson, so that we will improve our behavior and be worthy of God's mercy and kindness.

The גמרה at the end of מכות speaks about the תנאים walking past the ruins of הבית החרב. Everyone started to cry, while רבי עקיבא laughed. They ask רבי עקיבא why he was laughing, and he explained that the חורבן demonstrates that the prophecies of destruction were fulfilled. If the prophecies of destruction were fulfilled, the prophecies of comfort will most certainly be fulfilled at the right time. 'ה did not promise us only punishment; he promised us overflowing goodness. The two תוכחות that we have been discussing are prefaced with the ברכות that will come if בני ישראל follow the תורה. 'ה does not want to hurt us; he wants us to change our actions. It is our job to look at the תוכחות, and derive חיוק from them. The goal is "נחפשה דרכינו ונחקרה ונשובה עד ה'" (ג:מ).



## בקשת רחמים על סדום

### אשירה לויקה

בבראשית יח: כ-לג, אנו קוראים על סדום ובקשת הרחמים של אברהם עליה. כאשר קוראים את הקטע לראשונה, מתעוררות שאלות רבות. הדבר נכון במיוחד לגבי פסוק כא: "ארדה נא ואראה הכצעקתה הבאה אלי עשו כלה ואם לא אדעה". פסוק זה קשה מאד להבנה. האם ה' היה צריך לרדת כדי לדעת אם הם באמת חטאו? מה בדיוק רצה ה' לראות? לדעת?

הבעיה השנייה הבולטת לעין היא הדרך שבה דיבר אברהם עם ה' בשעת בקשת הרחמים. בקריאה פשוטה של הפסוקים מתקבל הרושם שאברהם מדבר בחוסר כבוד אל ה'. הוא אומר "חלילה לך" פעמיים, "האף תספה צדיק עם רשע", "השופט כל הארץ לא יעשה משפט". האם זה דיבור מכובד כלפי הקב"ה? אין ספק שיש משהו עמוק יותר בדבריו ובבקשתו, כי, ככל הנראה, ה' לא כעס עליו.

השאלה האחרונה שנתייחס אליה היא מה חשיבותם של המספרים שאברהם הזכיר? מדוע בחר אברהם ב-45 ולא ב-35? האם יש חשיבות למספרים עצמם או האם הם מספרים מלאכותיים, ואם כן, מדוע?

רש"י מנסה להסביר את הביטוי "ארדה נא ואראה". הוא טוען שהפסוק הזה מלמד אותנו מסר. כאשר רש"י קורא את המילים "ארדה נא ואראה", מציקה לו השאלה, למה ה' צריך לרדת ולראות? רש"י מביא סיבה המבוססת על התנחומא נח:יח. ה' עשה את מה שעשה משתי סיבות. הראשונה, כדי ללמד את הדיינים ל"רדת" לעומק העניין שהם עוסקים בו, כי רק בדרך זו ייראה הצדק. הדיין צריך להיות ברור כמו "ראיה" כדי שיהיה מובן. הסיבה השנייה היא, כדי ללמד אותנו על מידת ה' שהוא ירד/הסתכל "לסוף מעשיהם". הספר *לפשוטו של דש"י* מסביר שרש"י התכוון לכך שה' הסתכל על כל הצאצאים שיבואו ומעשיהם העתידיים, לראות אם יש בהם זכאי אחד שבגללו כדאי להצילם.<sup>1</sup>

אבן עזרא (ד"ה "אם לא אדעה") משתמש בפסוק זה כדי להראות לנו את הדרך שבה נהג ה' עם אנשי סדום בבואו להענישם. ראב"ע מסביר שפירוש המילה "ידע" אצל ה' מתייחס לרחמים. דוגמא לכך ישנה בשמות ב:כה, "וירא אלוקים את בני ישראל, וידע אלוקים". מיד לאחר הפסוק רואים שה' התנהג עם בני ישראל ברחמים. ראב"ע מוסיף על כך שבמקרה שלנו רחמי ה' כלפי סדום התבטא בכך שההשגחה עליהם לא היתה השגחה פרטית, אלא ה' "התנהג" אליהם בהשגחה כללית. אם כן, הירידה היא ירידת מדרגה בהשגחה, לשם הרחמים, והרמז לכך מצוי במילה "ידע". כמו רש"י, רד"ק מדגיש את המסר לאברהם ולדיינים. ראשית, ה' רצה למשוך את אברהם להתפלל בעד סדום. יש לציין שמוצאים את אותו רעיון במקומות אחרים בתורה. לדוגמא, ה' כבר ידע את התשובה כששאל את אדם וחוה "איכה" (בראשית

<sup>1</sup> שמואל גלברד, *לפשוטו של דש"י*, פתח תקוה, 1989, 7-186.

ג:ט). הקב"ה רצה למשוך אותם לתגובה ולתפילה. ה' גם רצה ללמד את אברהם איך לבדוק ולדון בנושא. קודם כל יש לרדת ולבדוק. אחר כך ניתן לראות את העניין מקרוב. ורק לאחר מכן אפשר לדעת על המקרה הנידון. ה' חורץ דין בהדרגה, כדי ללמד אותנו איך לקיים דין צדק. ה' מראה שהוא נכנס לעומק העניין ולכל הפרטים, ורק בשלב זה היה יכול לתת דין צדק.

אברבנאל מסביר שה"צעקה" היא הגזירות הבלתי מוסריות שגזרו בסדום: שלא להכניס אורחים ולא לרחם על המסכנים. אבל אברבנאל מסביר שגזירות אלה עוד לא יושמו, ולכן יש צורך במילים נוספות – "ארדה נא". בגלל זה, המילה "אראה" נכתבת בלשון עתיד. אנשי סדום טרם הגשימו את משנתם ולכן ה' שלח מלאכים כדי לראות איך תגיב סדום לאורחים האלה.

השאלה הבאה המפריעה לנו היא, מה באמת היתה תפילתו של אברהם לטובת סדום? מה משמעותן של המילים עצמן?

לפי רש"י, יש מה ללמוד על ה' נעימה של אברהם מכל מילה שהוא בחר. בדרך כלל, המילה "ויגש" מרמזת לשלושה דברים: פיוס, מלחמה ותפילה. במקרה זה אברהם בא לפני ה' עם כל שלוש הגישות הללו. כאשר אברהם אמר "האף תספה" הוא רומז שהוא חושב שבמקרה זה ה' התנהג מתוך רוגז, כביכול. כלומר, האם הרוגז יגרום לה' למנות את הצדיק יחד עם הרשע?! כאשר אברהם אמר "חלילה לך" הוא מחה על כך שהקב"ה מתכוון להרוג את כל אנשי העיר, הצדיקים יחד עם הרשעים, כמו שעשה ה' לדור המבול ולדור הפלגה. מהעובדה שאברהם חוזר על הביטוי אנו גם לומדים שאברהם כאילו מאשים את ה' וטוען שהוא לא עשה כאן משפט צדק! הביטוי האחרון שממנו לומד רש"י על כוונתו של אברהם בדבריו, הוא "אנכי עפר ואפר". אברהם מזכיר לה' שלולא רחמיו, אברהם עצמו היה הופך לעפר בגלל נמרוד, ולאפר בגלל מלחמת סדום. כך מבקש אברהם שה' ירחם גם על סדום. רש"י מתבונן בכל המילים ומהן הוא לומד שאברהם מנסה פעם ועוד פעם למצוא דרך, כאילו, להכריח את ה' לרחם על סדום.

אבן עזרא טוען שכאשר אברהם אמר "חלילה לך", לא היתה בכך חוצפה, אלא סימן שאברהם לא האמין שזה אכן גזר הדין. ויחד עם כל הדברים האלה, אברהם גם אמר "אנכי עפר ואפר", כדי להנמיך את עצמו בפני ה'.

מזוית אחרת, ספורנו רואה פסוק אחד כמרכזי וממנו הוא לומד על המכנה המשותף לכל דברי אברהם בבקשתו: "השופט כל הארץ לא יעשה משפט". ספורנו מדגיש את המילים "השופט כל הארץ". אם הקב"ה מתנהג עם אנשי סדום במידת הדין והמשפט, הוא יצטרך לעשות כך גם לגבי כל העולם. ובוודאי שאם היה נוהג לפי מידת הדין והמשפט כלפי כל העולם כבר מזמן היה העולם נחרב.

מדרש רבה (בראשית רבה לט:ו) אומר משהו דומה לדבריו של הספורנו. המדרש מצטט את ר' לוי, שאומר ש"השופט כל הארץ" איננה שאלה רטורית אלא קביעה. אחרי החטא הראשון, ה' בחר להתנהג עם העולם מתוך רחמים ולא מתוך דין. הוא לא יכול לשנות את זה עכשיו. "אם עולם אתה מבקש אין דין, ואם דין אתה מבקש אין עולם". אברהם מזכיר לה' שהוא צריך לרחם על סדום אף על פי שהם (אנשי סדום) אינם ראויים לכך!

רד"ק מבין את העניין אחרת ממה שראינו עד כה. לפי גישתו, אברהם אינו מתפלל בעד הרשעים, שמגיע להם למות, אלא בעד העיר עצמה. "האף תספה..." היא

שאלה רטורית – האם זה צודק שהצדיק ימות בגלל חטאותיו של הרשע. אברהם ביקש להציל את העיר, ולהתחיל את היישוב מחדש על בסיס הצדיקים הקיימים. כאשר אברהם אומר "חלילה לך", הוא מתכוון לומר לה' שזה בניגוד לכבודו להעניש צדיק יחד עם רשע. מיד אחרי זה אברהם אומר "אנכי עפר ואפר" - הוא לא יכול להמשיך לדבר כך ולהתנגד למשפט ה'.

רמב"ן רוצה לדעת למה יש שינוי כל כך גדול בטון של אברהם, בדבריו. בפסוק אחד הוא אומר "חלילה לך", ואחר כך פתאום הוא אומר "אנכי עפר ואפר". רמב"ן אומר שכאשר אברהם התחיל להתפלל בעד סדום הוא לא ידע איך ה' רוצה לטפל בענין. האם ה' ינהג מצד הדין או מצד הרחמים. לכן כאשר אברהם התפלל הוא פנה אל שתי הגישות. מצד הדין אברהם אמר שה' חייב להפריד בין צדיק ורשע. מצד הרחמים אברהם ביקש שה' יחפש כל צדיק בכל העיר. אברהם אומר "חלילה לך" פעמיים: פעם בשביל מידת הדין ופעם בשביל מידת הרחמים.

השאלה האחרונה הבולטת היא מה חשיבות המספרים שאברהם ביקש? לפי רש"י כל המספרים התמקדו בענין אחד – מנין. ללא מנין של עשרה, אברהם לא חשב שהוא יוכל להציל עיר ולכן הוא מתחיל עם 50 – עשרה לכל חמש הערים. אחר כך הוא יורד ל-45. לפחות תשעה מכל עיר וה' ישתתף כדי להעלות את המספר לעשרה. אחרי שלא מצא 45, אברהם הבין שהוא לא יספיק להציל את כל חמש הערים, ואמר שלפחות יציל 4 ערים וירד במספר ל-40, ואחר כך ל-30, 20 ו-10. בדומה לרש"י, אבן עזרא גם ראה חשיבות במנין. הוא מסביר שפחות מעשרה אינם נחשבים כציבור אלא ככמה יחידים, ויחידים אינם יכולים להציל ציבור. רק ציבור יכול להציל ציבור. רד"ק רואה חשיבות במנין מסיבה אחרת. הוא טוען שאי אפשר לבנות יישוב מחדש בפחות מעשרה. כמו שראינו לפני כן, רד"ק סובר שאברהם התפלל לה' כדי להציל את העיר. רד"ק מוסיף שלפני שאברהם ביקש עבור עשרה, הוא אמר "אך הפעם" - להראות שזו האפשרות האחרונה שלו לדבר בענין ואחרי זה הוא יאלץ לשתוק.

הרב קנוטופסקי<sup>2</sup> מסתכל בכל הפסוקים ומוצא תהליכיות בתפילה של אברהם. הרב קנוטופסקי סובר (1) שלאדם יש אחריות לעקור חברה שהיא מושחתת ו-2) לחברה מושחתת עשויות להיות זכויות מסוימות, אם בשל האנשים בקירבה הלוחמים נגד הרשע או בשל ציבור הצדיקים שחיים בתוך החברה (אפילו אם הם אינם עושים דבר). כל מספר אחר של צדיקים מסמל משהו אחר. 50 אנשים מסמלים ציבור שלוחם נגד החברה המושחתת. 45 מסמלים מספר משמעותי של צדיקים אבל הם אינם מהווים "ציבור" ולכן אינם יכולים להלחם נגד הרשע. ואברהם במפורש אומר "אנכי עפר ואפר" לזכר נמרוד ומלחמת חמשת המלכים (כמו שראינו ברש"י) כדי להזכיר לה' כמה קשה להתמודד נגד רשע. המספרים 40 ו-30 מראים שברוב הערים יש ציבור של צדיקים. המספרים 10 ו-20 מראים שרק במיעוט של הערים יש ציבור של צדיקים.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Zvi Dov Kanotopsky, בספרו *The Depths of Simplicity* ("עומק הפשטות"), ירושלים, 1994, עמ' 30-32.

הרב קנוטופסקי מסביר כל שלב ושלב בטיעונים של אברהם.

ה'	אברהם	
מחילה גמורה	"ונשאתי לכל המקום בעבורם"	1. "ויאמר...אמצא בסדום <u>חמישים</u> צדיקים"
עונש בלי השחתה	"לא אשחית"	2. "ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי לדבר... <u>יחסרון חמישים הצדיקים חמשה</u> "
לא יעשה עכשיו דבר אלא יחכה לראות לאיזה צד יחליט, של 45 או של 10	"לא אעשה"	3. "ויסף עוד... <u>ארבעים...שלושים</u> "
עונש חמור בלי השחתה גמורה	"לא אשחית"	4. "ויאמר הנה נא הואלתי לדבר... <u>עשרים...עשרה</u> "
השחתה גמורה		5. אם אפילו אין עשרה

מתברר שלא מדובר בהשחתה מוחלטת לעומת מחילה מוחלטת אלא ישנם שלבים שעל פיהם ה' ימחל או יעניש לפי צדקת, או רשעת, סדום. למרות כל התשובות שקבלנו לשאלות שלנו, נשארת שאלה אחת בולטת. שאלתו של אברהם "האף תספה צדיק עם רשע" כלל אינה נענית. הרב קנוטופסקי טוען שה' איננו מוכן לענות על שאלה זו. המילים האחרונות בקטע שלנו – "וילך ה'" – מתייחסות להסתר פנים. שאלת צדקתו של הקב"ה, מול סבלם של צדיקים, היא שאלה שאנשים בשר ודם לעולם לא יקבלו עליה תשובה.



# נזירות and the Year in Israel

Ariel Belson

קרבנות discusses the rules governing a נזיר, and the kinds of קרבנות he must bring upon completion of his period of נזירות. "וזאת תורת הנזיר ביום". מלאת ימי נזרו יביא אתו אל פתח אהל מועד. והקריב את קרבנו לה' כבש בן שנתו תמים אחד לעלה וכבשה אחת בת שנתה תמימה לחטאת ואיל אחד תמים לשלמים. וסל מצות סלת חלת (במדבר ו:יג-טו). Why does the נזיר need to bring these קרבנות upon completion of his נזירות?

The first קרבן the נזיר is told to bring is an עולה. A קרבן עולה is completely burnt, symbolizing the person who gives himself entirely to ה'. Rav Hirsch derives from the words "כבש בן שנתו תמים" that the נזיר has the characteristics of youth and perfection. He has the youthful energy to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to service of God. He is also one of the flock, working together with others to bring the whole nation closer to ה'. Even though he already completed his נזירות, he is making a statement that he will always try to live a life dedicated to ה' עבודת.

After living with the קדושה of נזירות, what could he have done wrong that he needs to bring a חטאת? רמב"ן holds that נזירות is an ideal, and therefore explains that, "הוא צריך כפרה בשובו להטמא בתאוות העולם" (במדבר ו:יד). The נזיר must atone for leaving the קדושה of his נזירות, and entering the atmosphere of טומאה that exist in the world. His new surroundings will surely effect him, and therefore he needs to bring a חטאת.

While the נזיר needs to face the difficulties associated with the טומאה that exists in the world, he also needs to be proud of what he has accomplished. אבן עזרא says that the reason he brings the שלמים is that the נזיר should have "שמחה שהשלים את נדרו" (במדבר ו:יד, ד"ה ואיל), happiness at the fact that he was able to reach the spiritual goals he had set for himself in becoming a נזיר.

Still, how does the former נזיר maintain his previous level of spirituality and asceticism without coming across as a גאווה? The next תורה speaks of includes מצות לחם עוני. While the literal meaning refers to the bread of poverty, it may symbolically refer to the גאווה of מדה and a "low" attitude. Yeast can be compared to the גאווה. It causes bread to rise and get bigger, as when somebody gets "big headed" about something. The נזיר brings מצות as part of his קרבנות to

symbolize the modesty that he should adopt upon leaving the protection of נזירות and going out to face the challenges of the world.

What is true ענוה? מסלת ישראל writes in "את האדם לפי התנשאות וגאווה" (פרק כב). Wisdom, as critical as it is for spiritual growth, is potentially dangerous because it can lead to pride and haughtiness. He continues, explaining that a בעל נפש will know that God gave him his particular talents. Rather than haughtiness, the wise individual should learn to share his wisdom with others. *True ענוה means the realization that you were given your strengths by ה' to share with others.*

The process of the נזיר leaving his נזירות is comparable to leaving our year of study at MMY. We must leave with the attitude taught by the קרבן עולה. Everything we do is an opportunity to serve ה', and we should constantly strive to grow closer to Him. As רמב"ן teaches, we must be realistic and realize that there are dangers and תאוות in the outside world. We should go out cautiously, eager to take the opportunities and grow in our service of ה' through new experiences. But we should be wary of the dangers. At the same time, we should take pride in what we have accomplished this year. As אבן עזרא teaches, just as the נזיר must be happy with his accomplishments during his נזירות, we must be happy that we were able to complete our year so successfully.

The most important message we must take with us upon going our separate ways, is the message of the מצה. With assimilation and ignorance running rampant in עם ישראל, we have been privileged to gain this opportunity to study תורה. We have had the incredible זכות to be עוסק תורה, undistracted for an entire year! We should be grateful for the opportunities that we have had to learn and become more active in our observance of God's תורה. Yet, it is easy to take these things for granted and to look down upon others. We must listen to the words of מסלת ישראל and know that this opportunity was given to us by ה' (with some help from our parents and teachers). It is nothing to be haughty about. As it says in אבות: "אבות כי לכן" נוצרת. (ב:ט).

Rav Hirsch, commenting on פרשת נזיר, says that the נזיר withdrew from society in order to work on his inner self. "But these efforts directed more to his own inner self were only to be an exceptional educational condition!" True נזירות is temporary. When the נזיר completes his period of inner focus, he must "give himself up with a fuller and stronger force, purified and elevated to carry out the tasks of life indicated by God." He can now be a "model example of how in the midst of the efforts, aspirations, and enjoyments of social communal life" he can dedicate himself to a "life lived in the presence of God." Like the נזיר,

we withdrew this year in order to work on ourselves. But this year was only an exceptional education condition. The year in Israel is temporary. When it is over we must give of ourselves with a fuller, stronger force. Now that we have strengthened ourselves, we can dedicate ourselves to working toward having an impact on the spiritual wellbeing of the Jewish people as a whole.

ברכת כהנים also contains פרשת נשא. The last phrase of ברכת כהנים is "וישם לך שלום" (במדבר כ:כו). The word שלום echoes the concept of שלמות, completion. We must realize that we are part of a greater whole - the complete collective of כלל ישראל. This concept is epitomized in the famous greeting of "שלום עליכם", and its response "עליכם שלום". By greeting a fellow Jew in this fashion, we are indicating that we are part of the same collective nation, striving for completion and perfection.

Judaism is a religion of action. This year, the עיקר of our learning was to improve our מעשים. As פרקי אבות explains, "ישמעאל בר רבי יוסי", "אומר... הלומד על מנת לעשות, מספיקין בידו ללמוד וללמד, לשמור ולעשות (אבות ד:ה)". By virtue of learning for the sake of action, we will, God willing, be able to have an influence on others merely by being ourselves. As we finish our period of "נזירות" may we leave with שמחה, ענוה, and a dedication to elevating ourselves and כלל ישראל to be a nation of עובדי ה'.



# Waste Not, Want Not: The Halachic Implications of תשחית בל

Chani Ozarowski

“לא תשחית את עצה...כי ממנו תאכל” commands us דברים כ:טז. When besieging a city for capture, we are prohibited from destroying its fruit trees because they serve as a source of food for humans. We learn from various other sources that this prohibition extends beyond destroying trees during a siege, and even beyond the realm of trees altogether. The broader prohibition to destroy valuable things is known as תשחית בל.

Rabbi Eli Turkel discusses a possible purpose for this prohibition.<sup>1</sup> (בראשית א:כח) that they should “conquer” the world and אדם blessed ה'. Humans have permission, indeed the obligation, to utilize the resources of this world. While humans are supposed to use the resources that ה' gave us, we do not have free reign to use those resources in wasteful and destructive ways. The מצוה of תשחית בל reminds us that we are not only above nature, but also part of nature. We cannot abuse our God-given position in His world, nor can we misuse the tools He gave us.

Keeping מצוה ספר החינוך, מצוה תקל points to another reason for this מצוה. This commandment teaches us to develop certain positive character traits. By not using resources unnecessarily, a person learns not to take those resources for granted, and comes to love purposeful productivity. This concept is reflected in עז'ב שבת, where the גמרא notes that nothing that ה' created in His world is for naught. It is inappropriate to pointlessly waste any of those resources.

Virtually all commentaries - the (שם) ספר החינוך, (הלכות מלכים ו:ח-י) רמב"ם, and (י"ד כח:כא) רמ"א - indicate that the תורה's ban on destroying fruit trees in time of war is expanded to the broader prohibition of wastefully destroying trees and other objects, even when there is no war taking place. (שם) רמב"ם lists other instances where תשחית בל applies: “ולא האילנות” בלבד, אלא כל המשבר כלים, וקורע בגדים, והורס בנים, וסותם מעין, ומאבד מאכלות דרך נודע (הלכות שמירת גוף ונפש סימן יד) שולחן ערוך הרב. “השחתה, עובר בלא תשחית (תנינא” חיד"ד סימן י) ביהודה (שם) ספר החינוך, however, states that the prohibition is “שלא לעשות שום הפסד” without

<sup>1</sup>R. Eli Turkel, “Judaism and the Environment,” *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, Vol.22, Fall 1991, pp. 44-61.

explicitly distinguishing between whether the object is useful or not. As we shall see, the distinction between these positions will have various consequences in the הלכה.

According to (ספר המצוות עשין נוספות מצוה ו) רמב"ן and רמב"ם, destroying is only prohibited if done *דרך השחתה*. It is not clear if this means that the intent is to destroy, or if this refers to the manner in which one does the act. If it refers to the manner in which the act is done, it will be hard to pinpoint exactly what is considered such a manner and what is not. Other sources may help answer this question. The (שופטים אות רג) ספרי and רמב"ם state that destroying fruit trees is even forbidden when done indirectly, for example by diverting their water source. While this manner of destruction is only *אסור מדרבנן*, it apparently qualifies as *דרך השחתה*. רמב"ן explains that diverting water can be considered *דרך השחתה* if he is doing so in a situation of war, and the sole purpose of eliminating the tree is to cause hardship to the enemy. However, says רמב"ן, destroying fruit trees, even by cutting off their water source, would be permissible if it is done in order to find the enemy's hiding place, or to clear place to lay a siege. Perhaps רמב"ן understands that *דרך השחתה* refers not to the means used to destroy the tree, but rather the purpose for which it is done.

שלטי גבורים? בל תשחית an object considered partially damaging an object (חולין ז ע"ב, ד"ה "עקרנא") רש"י (מסכת ע"ז פא), following (מסכת ע"ז פא), holds that as long as the object is not totally destroyed and can be used in some way by people, it is not prohibited. This explanation fits with הרב's and שולחן ערוך הרב's definition of the *אסור*: destroying something from which humans could *otherwise* derive benefit. By this definition, there would be no prohibition of chipping an expensive utensil, even if its monetary value was diminished, as long as it could still be utilized. However, by ספר החינוך's definition of the *אסור* – a prohibition of causing any loss through an act of destroying – partial destruction would also seem to be prohibited. This position is supported by the גמרא in בבא קמא צא ע"ב, which says that one who tears קריעה more than necessary is *עובר בל תשחית*, which says that one who tears קריעה more than necessary is *עובר בל תשחית*.

By ספר החינוך's definition of the *אסור*, there is another category of objects to which *בל תשחית* would apply: ownerless objects, including any wildlife or natural resources not usually utilized by humans. For example, pulling up wild grass or killing ants for no reason would be forbidden. We would suspect, then, that by שולחן ערוך הרב's and הרב's definition of the *אסור*, destroying would only be *אסור* if the object benefits humans, and ownerless objects might be permitted to be destroyed. However, they say otherwise. נודע ביהודה explains that "maybe ownerless objects might have [a prohibition] of *בל תשחית*", because

people might be able to gain benefit from them as well. (טס) שולחן ערוך הרב explicitly says that destroying ownerless objects is אסור. He bases this on a קל וחומר: if we may not destroy the trees of an enemy we are trying to defeat, how much more so must not we destroy trees that belong to no one.

Many objects other than trees are subject to the prohibition of **בל תשחית**. For instance, the **גמרא** (**שבת קה ע"ב**) explains that one who smashes vessels, tears material, or scatters money out of anger is considered as one who worships idolatry. **ספר החינוך** links this **גמרא** to the issue of **בל תשחית**, explaining that our rabbis discourage destructive behavior. **כסף משנה** (**שם**) cites this **גמרא** as **רמב"ם**'s source for the idea that other objects are included in the prohibition of **בל תשחית**.

רמב"ם includes destroying buildings in this prohibition as well. גמרא יבמות מד ע"א, based on the רמב"ם, indicates that it is prohibited to stop-up a spring so that its water becomes unattainable and unusable. גמרא שבת סז ע"ב even prohibits covering oil and kerosene lamps such that the fuel would burn more quickly. Preservation of useful natural resources is valuable. Hence, Rabbi Turkel concludes that one should not leave electric lights on when not in use, because this wastes the fuels that generate the electricity. This could be expanded to prohibit wasting other types of natural energies as well, such as wasting gasoline by leaving your car running for extended periods of time when not in use. If we combine this conclusion with the opinion cited above, that ownerless objects are also included in the prohibition, we would conclude that causing oil spills, industrial pollution, and similar acts that destroy wildlife or decrease the world's natural resources would be prohibited.

states that one is not allowed to eliminate food in a wasteful way, even if higher quality food is available. From here, רמב"ם learns that wasting food is included in the prohibition as well. (שם) ספרי derives this from a קל וחומר. If the תורה commanded us not to destroy fruit-bearing trees because they might eventually provide food, certainly the fruits themselves must not be wasted! Thus, having a food fight would certainly constitute halachic destruction, which is אסור.

According to רמ"א and שולחן ערוך הרב, the prohibition includes wasting money – "זורק מעות לאיבוד". If this is the case, being careful with your money would be more than just common sense, but perhaps even an obligation! Certainly, throwing coins into a well or fountain where they remain useless would be prohibited.

There are some exceptions to the law of תשחית. For instance, רק עץ – דברים כ"ט: – extrapolates from the verses in בראשית א' and ב' that it would be permissible to

destroy a tree that is sterile. The רמב"ם explains that this refers to a fruit tree that cannot produce fruit for humans to eat. Both he and the ספר החינוך add that one may chop down a sterile fruit tree even if there is no constructive reason to do so. This exception would seem to support the position of the הרב שולחן ערוך הרב and the נודע ביהודה, who hold that the איסור applies to resources from which humans would otherwise be able to derive benefit. But, this law does not seem entirely consistent with ספר החינוך's own expansive definition of בל תשחית, in which destruction seems prohibited even of non-useful objects. ספר החינוך and רמב"ם define the קו שיעור that a fruit tree must produce to be protected as a quarter of a קו for an olive tree, and a whole קו for a date palm. It is not clear what the קו שיעור is for other types of fruit trees.

Another היתר for chopping down fruit trees and for destroying other resources comes from עין יעקב and גמרא שבת ע"ב, which speak of the היתר of לצורך. One may use natural resources for constructive purposes, even if it necessitates destroying those resources (וספר רמב"ם וספר החינוך). For example, one may kill an insect to use for medical treatment. This principle is in line with רמב"ם's description of דרך השחתה. As discussed earlier, רמב"ם understands that one may destroy a fruit tree if it would be helpful in war, such as when removing the tree would reveal the location of the enemy or if the land would be used for a siege.

The broader category of לצורך can be divided into a number of sub-categories. Something may be destroyed based on לצורך if a) its prolonged existence would cause damage to things around it, b) in order to use its location, or c) to gain money or something else more valuable as a result of the destruction.

בבא קמא צא ע"ב חס רש"י writes that a tree may be chopped down if that is necessary to prevent a hanging branch from endangering passers by in a רשות הרבים. Similarly, ספר החינוך and רמב"ם hold that one may chop down a tree that is damaging other stronger and more productive trees, or the fields of others. רמב"ם's language - "אם היה מזיק אילנות אחרים" - implies that this is permitted only if the tree is already causing damage, but not if one fears it might cause damage in the future.

דברים כ"ב רש"י implies and רמב"ם states explicitly that it is also permissible to cut down a tree in order to use the location to lay a siege. פסחים נ ע"ב חס רא"ש holds that even if there is no war or siege, one may cut down a tree in order to use the location. שו"ת חוות שולחן ערוך הרב and שו"ת חוות יאיר (קצה) are even more lenient, allowing one to chop down a tree even if it blocks the window of a house. טו (על שו"ע, שם) however, is more strict. He only allows destroying לצורך if doing so will yield more profit than leaving the object as it was.



These disputes depend on the general definition of לצורך, allowing destruction which will yield increased gain. The היתר of לצורך derives from the גמרא שבת עז ע"ב, which indicates that one may kill insects to make medicine. This implies that לצורך refers not only to monetary gain, but even other gains in quality. The שולחן ערוך and רמ"א (יורה דעה כח:בא) indicate that this is the הלכה.

In גמרא שבת קכט ע"א, רבה states that if there is no firewood to be found, one may burn expensive wooden furniture in order to warm up someone who is ill. רבה אבי asks, "Isn't that בל תשחית?" רבה's response is, "I care more that a person's body not be destroyed." One could explain this גמרא as a general principle. One can destroy a less valuable object to save a more valuable object. However, one could also understand this גמרא more narrowly. This was a case of סכנת נפשות, a consideration for which almost all מצוות in the תורה are put aside. Perhaps an outside value other than monetary gain would still be an insufficient reason to excuse wasteful destruction, or to render it not wasteful. רמ"א, however, indicates that destroying one object for the sake of another object is permitted. Commenting on the שם שולחן ערוך which discusses the חיוב חסדי הדם, he holds that someone on a boat may slaughter a bird, and may burn a garment or grind up money in order to make ashes with which to do חסדי הדם, since no other dust is available to him. Apparently, one may destroy one object for the sake of another object, even if it is not a case of סכנת נפשות. Yet, one may only burn garments or grind the coins to make dust if their value is less than the bird for which they are being destroyed. In other words, one may destroy an object only to save a more valuable object. This indicates that the definition of לצורך revolves around financial gain and loss.

The example in רמ"א also raises another issue: בל תשחית in a case of מצוה. Can בל תשחית override a מצוה or be pushed aside in the interest of a מצוה? The גר"א implies that one may not destroy something for the sake of a מצוה unless its destruction is otherwise justified by the laws of בל תשחית. However, one could argue that that שחיטה case only proves that בל תשחית applies to a מצוה that could not be done otherwise.

There are other examples of מצוות which involve destroying otherwise useful goods. The משנה ברורה ס' תקס ט"ק explains that the practice of breaking a glass at a wedding and a plate at the תנאים are not problematic since they are done זכר למקדש. Furthermore, tearing קריעה over the death of a relative is not only permitted, but obligatory. Similarly, we bury the dead in תכריכים, even though the garments will be destroyed by doing so. It is obvious that doing a מצוה is a constructive

purpose, and ה' can command us to do מצוות that involved destroying property.

There are other examples where destroying things is permitted even though the letter of the law does not require it. The גמרא עבודה זרה יא אומר says that one may cut the hooves of the horses of a dead king or נשיא, so that nobody else will use the horses, thus showing honor to the dead leader. The גמרא also permits burning clothing in order to mourn the death of a great person. Similarly, רב יוחנן tore thirteen silk garments after the death of רבי חנינא. While all of these acts render previously useful objects unusable for people and are also not מצוות explicitly commanded by God, they are permitted because they encourage appropriate behavior and attitudes toward Jewish leaders and toward מצוות.

However, there are limits on the destruction that is permitted for מצוות. גמרא בבא קמא צא ע"ב prohibits tearing any more than the amount required for קריעה. Similarly, according to many פוסקים, it is אסור to put more than the regular garments required by הלכה on a מת. This seems to imply a more general principle. Even when destroying is permitted, one should be careful not to destroy more than necessary.

The גמרא שבת סז ע"א says that one should pray for a diseased tree and care for it physically. In a situation where chopping down a fruit tree is permitted but the tree itself is still healthy, the חתם סופר says one should try to uproot the tree and replant it elsewhere (ש"ת חתם סופר ב:רפז). If replanting it is not possible, some say one should sell the tree to a non-Jew prior to chopping it down, or, alternatively, leave the tree to dry out on its own before cutting it down. This way the person can avoid actually destroying living creatures.

This extra sensitivity is illustrated by ארבעה פרקי דרבי אליעזר (לג), which says that whenever someone cuts down a fruit tree, a voice travels from one end of the world to the other. (לה:ב) שמות רבה says that ה' commanded to make the משכן out of acacia wood specifically because it is not from a fruit tree. This teaches us that we, too, should not build our houses out of wood from fruit trees. Some people are extra careful to avoid cutting down trees as much as possible, whether or not it is technically forbidden. The גמרא בבא קמא צא ע"ב says that the son of רבי חנינא died because he cut down a fig tree. Based on this, ספר חסידים explains that some believe that there is a סכנה associated with cutting down fruit trees. (שם) ספר החינוך says that the way of the pious is to love peace and rejoice in the wellbeing of all creations, and therefore such a person would not even want to see the loss of anything, not even a mustard seed.

In conclusion, we can see that from this one commandment in the not to destroy, one can learn a general תורה outlook on the world. ה' wants us to use the resources He gave us and the tools we have built with them wisely, and not take them for granted. Only if there is a necessity or constructive purpose may we break them down or destroy them. Even human masters over the earth must follow God's rules.



# Learning in כולל

Orlee Levin

Throughout the generations a small minority of Jews have dedicated themselves to learning תורה, receiving support from their communities. Today it has become a widespread phenomenon for men of all ages to spend time in ישיבה, dedicating their time exclusively to learning. At first glance this may seem ideal. A Jewish man has a חיוב to learn תורה. Dedicating all day to learning תורה seems the best way to fulfill this commandment. However, does תורה expect every Jewish male to dedicate all of his time and energy to the study of תורה, without earning money to support his family? Is this in fact the ideal?

First, we must ask if it is permitted to use תורה study or teaching as a way to earn a living. רבי צדוק explains in the משנה (אבות פרק ד) that one should not turn דברי תורה into an "עטרה להתגדל בה ולא קרדו לחפור בה", indicating, apparently, that one should not earn a living from תורה הלל. הלל explains in the same משנה, that one who benefits from תורה in this world gives up his life in עולם הבא. רמב"ם, based on this משנה, holds that it is a חילול for someone to be supported by צדקה so that he can spend his time learning תורה. Instead, the person should work for a living. Someone who is supported by the fact that he learns תורה makes it seem that תלמוד תורה is no different from any other profession (הלכות תלמוד תורה). (פרוש המשניות, אבות ג' and ג' ג').

The text of the כתובה, cited in סימן ע, טור, אבן העזר, seems to support רמב"ם's position. It states clearly that the husband is obligated to support his wife. The גמרא explains that a husband not only has to provide for his wife, but he must provide for her at the standard of living to which she was accustomed before the marriage. The husband, rather than the community, bears the primary responsibility to support his wife.

רמב"ם explains (שם) that all of the great אמוראים had jobs through which they supported themselves and their families. They made sure that תורה was not their source of income. Both אלישע and שמואל were meticulous about not accepting money for their נבואות. אלישע never accepted money and שמואל did not eat at peoples' homes when performing his role as נביא. The גמרא נדרים לה ע"א describes this idea of not accepting money for תלמוד תורה: "מה אני בחינם אף אתם בחינם". תלמוד תורה gave us the תורה for free. How can anyone accept money for it?

There are other sources which look at a כולל life more positively. תלמוד אבות in משנה (תלמוד תורה ג:) כסף משנה understands the משנה differently than משנה, which He says that רבי צדוק is commenting on the previous משנה, which deals with different levels of לשמה in תלמוד תורה. רבי צדוק indicates another level of לשמה. לא לשמה. A person should not use תלמוד תורה as a means toward the end of bettering his reputation. Similarly, according to הלל, if you learn תורה for the purpose of making a פרנסה, then you lose your עולם הבא. However, someone who learns with a genuine love for תורה, whose only motivation in learning is to get closer to הקב"ה, does not lose עולם הבא if he accepts a salary for his study. Furthermore, someone who has no other way of making a living can accept money for learning or teaching תורה.

כולל שבט לוי was the first כולל. Even as their brethren were enslaved in Egypt, בני לוי separated themselves from mundane affairs and were involved in תלמוד תורה. לב אליהו explains that the Egyptians slowly coerced the Jews into becoming slaves. At first they paid them for their labor, thereby enticing the Jews to leave their homes in גושן and come to Egypt proper. Thereafter, the conditions slowly got worse. The לויים were not enticed, and were therefore able to dedicate their time to the study of תורה while being supported by the rest of the Jews.

הלכות (הלכות) in another place, also provides support for a כולל life (רמב"ם). רמב"ם explains that שבט לוי did not receive a נחלה in ארץ ישראל because they chose to separate themselves and not fight in wars. Instead, they fought the spiritual war by dedicating themselves to the service of God. רמב"ם continues. Anyone who separates himself from the mundane and concentrates on תלמוד תורה will also be a part of נחלת ה'. לא שבט לוי בלבד אלא כל איש ואיש מכל באי העולם אשר נדבה רוחו אותו והבינו מדעו. להבדל לעמוד לפני ה' לשרתו ולעובדו לדעה את ה' והלך ישר כמו שעשהו האלקים ופרק מעל צוארו עול החשבונות הרבים אשר בקשו בני האדם הרי זה נתקדש קדש קדשים ויהיה ה' חלקו ונחלתו לעולם ולעולמי עולמים ויזכה לו בעולם הזה דבר המספיק לו כמו שזכה לכהנים ללויים."

גמרא ברכות לה ע"ב explains that at a time when the Jews are involved in serving ה' properly others will provide for them. If Jews are not serving ה' properly, then they will have to work for their own living. This indicates that theoretically it is possible to be involved exclusively in learning תורה and serving ה', without the difficulties of earning a living. Similarly, שולחן ערוך, יורה דעה רמז: כא, says that תורה requires complete dedication, without taking breaks to indulge in eating, drinking, and sleeping. If so, constant involvement in a profession would be even more damaging.

הלכה למעשה at the level of כולל (כסף משנה, שם) רב יוסף קארו. First, we do not פסקן like רמב"ם, as evidenced by the fact that through the ages Jews have accepted money for תורה תלמוד. Furthermore, even if we did hold like רמב"ם, the current age can be considered "עת לעשות לה' הפירו" . If people would not accept money for learning, then תורה might be forgotten, חס ושלום. Rav Moshe Feinstein (חלק, יורה דעה, חלק) שו"ת אגרות משה, יורה דעה, חלק) not only agrees with the מחבר, but explains that being supported to learn תורה is an ideal. The יצר הרע tells people that they can learn and work at the same time. The only way one can gain genuine and deep progress in learning is through full-time dedication.

So, what is the right thing to do, get a job or learn in כולל? The answer to this question undoubtedly differs from person to person. If someone is interested in and capable of spending time learning rather than working, or if someone is going to become a great גדול, perhaps he should be supported while learning in כולל. However, communities should not force men to sit and learn and not offer another option. As the הלכה באור states, not everyone is able to reach this high level of learning where they can sit and learn all day.





# בן סורר ומורה The Mystery of

Melissa Goldenberg

בן סורר ומורה is one of the most complex and puzzling פרשיות in the תורה. Not only do the פסוקים themselves leave many questions unanswered, but the גמרא סנהדרין (עא ע"ב-עב ע"א) raises many more questions. חז"ל make two extremely puzzling statements in regard to בן סורר ומורה: "בן סורר ומורה נהרג על שם סופו... ימות זכאי ואל ימות חייב": בן סורר ומורה is not killed for what he has done, rather for what he will do in the future. His בחירה is taken away from him, and he is killed by one of the harshest modes of execution, סקילה. How can the תורה leave him no room for תשובה? Furthermore, חז"ל state that: "בן סורר ומורה לא היה ולא עתיד": (שם) "להיות" (שם). There never was, and never will be, a case of a rebellious son. If this case has no practical application, why does the תורה address the topic? Perhaps a closer analysis of the פרשה and the relevant commentaries can help explain these enigmas.

אבן עזרא and רש"י (דברים כא:יח) "כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורה", פסוק says, both use the root "סר" to explain what this son does. רש"י explains פסוק as "סר מן הדרך", i.e. strayed from the path of תורה. רש"י cites the פסוק as "סר מן הדרך", i.e. strayed from the path of תורה, so too בן סורר ומורה strayed from the correct path. אבן עזרא defines סורר based on a different פסוק: "כפרה סוררה" (הושע ד:כט), like a cow which strayed off the path. This "בן סורר" strayed from the path of תורה, just as the cow has strayed from the path which has been laid out in front of him. אבן עזרא further explains that סורר denotes not doing the מצוות עשה, while מורה denotes violating לא תעשה. רש"י explains מורה as the son rebelling against the words of his father. The rebellious behavior of בני ישראל toward God in the מדבר – "ממרים" (דברים ט:ז) – is similar to the rebelliousness בן סורר ומורה shows towards his parents. אבן עזרא continues, explaining that סורר refers to not performing מצוות בני אדם לחברו while מורה refers to violating לא תעשה.

סורר על דברי: "בן סורר ומורה" explains what the מורה does: ספרי (דברים יח:א) ספרי explains what the סורר does: "אביו ומורה על דברי אמו, סורר על דברי תורה ומורה על דברי דיינים העמק נצי"ב". The פסוק which says, "שמע בני מוסר", interprets this ספרי based on the פסוק which says, "שמע בני מוסר", (משלי א:ח) "אביו, ואל תיטוש תורת אימך", referred to as "מוסר אביו", while a mother teaches a son the correct way to act in life, known as "תורת אימך". "סורר" refers to rebellion against the

father's instruction, which reflects instruction in 'תורת ה'. "מורה" alludes to the rejection of his "תורת אימך", the way of life which the דיינים try to enforce. נצי"ב connects the teaching of the דיינים to the teachings of תורת חדושי תורה. Just as a mother does not usually teach her children תורה, the דיינים do not teach us new הלכות. Rather, they enforce and remind us of proper behavior, just as תורת אימך does.

The פסוקים describe the response to the behavior of the wayward son: (דברים כא:יח) "ויסרו אתו ולא ישמע אליהם": Who disciplines this child? רש"י explains that the דין בית דין disciplines him, first by warning him in front of three witnesses and then by giving him lashes. אונקלוס disagrees with רש"י, and says it is the parents who discipline the child. רש"י bases his argument on a close reading of יח-יט פסוקים: "ויסרו אתו ולא ישמע אליהם. ותפשו בו אביו ואמו". If the subject of the verb "ויסרו" is the parents, then there is no reason for the פסוק to repeat the words "אביו ואמו". אונקלוס argues that there is no mention of a דין בית דין or anyone else in these פסוקים. In addition, parents are usually the ones to discipline a child. אונקלוס's approach follows the פשט, while רש"י bases himself on ע"א גמרא סנהדרין ע"א.

(כא:כט) "ותפשו בו אביו ואמו והוציאו אתו אל זקני עירו ואל שער מקומו". Despite the warnings, the rebellious son does not listen. He is captured by his father and mother who bring him to the elders of his city, sitting by the gates. His parents tell the elders "בננו זה סורר ומורה איננו שמע בקולנו זולל וסבא". What do the expression זולל וסבא refer to? The גמרא סנהדרין ע"א explains this expression based on a פסוק in משלי: "אל תהיי בסובא יין בזוללי", משלי in פסוק: "Do not be among the guzzlers of wine, among the gorgers of meat for themselves." "זולל" refers to one who eats ravenous amounts of meat in a disgusting manner. סבא refers to a drunkard, one who constantly fills himself with alcoholic beverages. These disgusting habits, according to רמב"ן, are direct violations of the command of "קדושים תהיו"; eating gluttonously and drinking alcohol can be an extreme form of התורה. The גמרא provides specific measurements for the amounts of wine and meat one must consume in order to be considered "בן סורר ומורה אינו חייב עד שיגנוב ויאכל תרימטר בשר ושתה חצי לוג יין". "זולל וסבא" These gross amounts of meat and wine portray his disgusting tendencies.

Once the בן סורר ומורה is found guilty, the people of the city gather to stone him: "וכל אנשי עירו באבנים ומת ובערת הרע מקרבך וכל ישראל ישמעו": רמב"ן explains the expression "וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראו" (כא:כא) "יראו" clarifies that the בן סורר ומורה is not killed because of his actions at the present moment, but because of the influence he could have. רמב"ן explains that "ישמעו ויראו" (ז:יג) also appears in reference to the

because the זקן was not himself deserving of execution. Rather, he is killed to prevent rebellion against the institutions of תורה authority. גמרא explains that the דין בית דין fulfills the commandment of "וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראו" by making a public announcement that "So-and-so is a בן סורר ומורה."

Rav Hirsch notes in his commentary on "וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראו" (ז:יט), that the connection between בן סורר ומורה and זקן ממרא also serves as a lesson to בני ישראל. He cites סנהדרין פט ע"א on ר"ן, who says that these two cases are given specific public attention because the תורה is trying to teach בני ישראל the crucial importance of education for children. Such frightening examples will teach the child to constantly obey the תורה רבנים, שבכתב, תורה שבעל פה.

### סמיכות פרשיות

פרשת כי תצא is organized in a specific and deliberate pattern. The פרשה begins with יפת תואר: a man who goes to war, sees a beautiful woman, and takes her home. He puts her through a long process to transform her from a beautiful maiden into an unattractive woman. If the man still desires her, he may choose to keep her as a wife. The next issue in פרשת כי תצא addresses the אישה שנאה, a woman who is hated by her husband. The פסוקים detail the division of the inheritance between the hated and loved halves of the family. בן סורר ומורה appears next. רש"י notes the connection between these three topics: a man takes an אישה שנאה and since she far from the ideal wife, eventually she turns into the אישה שנאה, and בן סורר ומורה is born (also see חלק שלישי, מעם לעז, עבירה גוררת עבירה). This seems to be based on the principle of עבירה גוררת עבירה, one bad action leads to another. Each problem occurred because of the inappropriate action prior to it. Taking an אישה שנאה can lead to the eventual סקילה of a young boy.

Both חזקוני and Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, commenting on the פרשה of בן סורר ומורה (כא:יח), see the סמיכות פרשיות as practical advice for parents on how to deal with their children. They note that the topic discussed immediately prior to בן סורר ומורה is the notion that the בכור receives a double inheritance. They emphasize the contrast between these two sons. חזקוני teaches the father that if he has a בן סורר ומורה he should not treat him as the בכור, but should kill him instead. If the son is worthy of death, the parents must have יראת שמים and kill the child. Rav Hirsch explains that the בכור who receives a double portion represents successful education, the son who carries on the personality of the father. A father must instill his values in his child, since this child is the one that will be carrying on the father's lineage. The בן סורר ומורה, on the

other hand, represents the opposite, a son who is a failure. If a father does not educate his son, neglecting to transmit the father's physical and spiritual inheritance, the son may become a complete failure.

After discussing the *בן סורר ומורה*, the *תורה* goes on to discuss the topic of not letting a dead body hang on the gallows for a long period of time. Rav Hirsch (כא:כב) connects these two topics by emphasizing the theme of, "כל ישראל ישמעו ויראו". The *בן סורר ומורה* is stoned by the whole city so that his death will deter people from sinning. But the body of the executed criminal must still be removed and buried civilly; it should not be used as an intimidating spectacle.

### Why mention something that will never happen?

The *גמרא* indicates that there never will be a real case of *בן סורר ומורה*. If the case will never happen, why is *בן סורר ומורה* mentioned in the *תורה*? The *גמרא* explains that the topic is mentioned so that we can "learn it and gain reward". As we have seen, this topic can teach us, among other things, important lessons about education and proper family relations.

A *בן סורר ומורה* will never occur because of the plethora of conditions before a youngster could qualify as a *בן סורר ומורה*. First, the *בן סורר ומורה* must specifically be a *בן* and not a *בת*. *לוי' (שם) מעם לוי'* explains that women have less of a tendency than men toward drunkenness and gluttony. Further, the word *בן* connotes youth. Yet, as *רמב"ן* (כא:יח) comments, based upon the *גמרא*, "קטן פטור מכל עונשין שבתורה ובכל המצוות", *בן* is still a *קטן*, then he is not accountable for his actions. If he is an adult, then he is no longer a *בן*. The *גמרא* (סנהדרין סח"ב) answers that the *בן סורר ומורה* must be between the ages of thirteen and one day and thirteen and three months. This makes him older than the age of a *בר מצוה* and still younger than the age which is no longer deemed a son. Rav Hirsch<sup>1</sup> views these three months of early adolescence as a critical period in the boy's life. During this period, all those who maintain some influence over him must exercise their power to shape his character toward *יראת שמים*. During this period, good and evil are "waging a war" within the young man. The boy must fight against his vulgar passions, find the good within himself, and use his new found goodness in order to fight against his sensuality. According to Rav Hirsch, a boy's *בר מצוה* is "something more than just a few hours of practice over a six-month period culminating in a melodramatic puppet show of 'confirmation.'" Rather,

<sup>1</sup> R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Collected Writings*, Jerusalem, 1993, Vol. 7, pp. 333-348

the years prior to the *בר מצוה* should prepare the boy to accept his heritage and the *מצוות*, so that after the *בר מצוה*, when he is responsible for his own actions, he will continue to behave properly of his own free choice, and not act like the *בן סורר ומורה*. A boy becoming a *זולל וסובא* at this time is much worse than the same sin at a different point in time. If his first three months of moral responsibility result in drunkenness and gluttony, it is apparent that the efforts to help the child will result in utter failure. Thus, parents, at this crucial time in their son's life, must devote themselves to guiding their son on a path of *תורה* and *מצוות*.

"איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו". What is a *קול*? מהר"ל says that *קול* does not always mean "voice". Rather it can mean a "noise," something difficult to understand. Thus, מהר"ל explains that the son only listens to his parents when they make sense to him and when he agrees with what they say. When he does not understand them, he simply ignores them. A father must teach his son to listen even when the son does not understand. According to מהר"ל, a child must listen to the parents; at the same time, the parents should always try to explain the rules to their children. Communication between parents and children is critical, but children must be taught that they must always listen to their parents "קול" even if they do not understand or agree.

The *גמרא* learns from the statement "איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו" (סנהדרין ע"א) that the *בן סורר ומורה* must have a father and a mother. If one of them were absent, it is conceivable that the boy had chosen the wayward and rebellious path because he lacked a strong parental figure. Furthermore, the *גמרא* learns from the *פסוק*, "איננו שומע בקולנו", that the parents must share *one* voice, they must sound the same (שם). We can learn from this that parental harmony affects children. In order to rear children successfully, a mother and father must treat their children with the same seriousness, have the same goals and ideals, and maintain equal authority over the children.

ר' יהודה. *בן סורר ומורה* further limits the applicability of *בן סורר ומורה*. ר' יהודה claims that לא היתה אמו שווה לאביו בקול במראה ובקומה אינו נעשה *סורר ומורה* "שם). Just as the parents must share a voice, they also must be similar in appearance and stature. We can learn from this that physical characteristics can also affect a child. The only way the parents can be viewed as equal in the eyes of a child is if they possess the same stature. Furthermore, the *גמרא* also insists that if either of the parents suffers from blindness, deafness, dumbness, or a physical handicap, the son cannot be considered a *בן סורר ומורה*. "ותפשו... והוציאו... ואמרה... בנו זה... בקולנו" refers to *פסוקים*, because the

Rabbi Zev Leff<sup>2</sup> explains that the parent is required to *look* at each child as an individual, examine his or her strengths and weaknesses, and then teach the child in the manner that the child needs. If a parent is “blind” to the gifts and weaknesses of the child, the child cannot be blamed for not following the correct path. Further, the parents’ physical infirmities can negatively affect a son. The child’s moral wickedness cannot necessarily be blamed on him, but on these outside factors.

There are other qualifications for a בן סורר ומורה. First, the son must steal from his parents in order to sustain his gluttonous and drunken habits (רמב”ם, הלכות ממרים, ז:ב). Stealing money from his parents reflects a distorted outlook on life. This glutton feeds only himself, seeking pleasure in this world; the בן סורר ומורה has no regard for עולם הבא. Although everything he ate was כשר (רמב”ם שם), his parents failed to teach him that the letter of the law is not enough. Parents must stress to their children the reasons and spirit behind the מצוות. It is not enough to teach a child *how* to do the מצוות. The child must also know *why* we do them, so that he may think, and not only act, as a proper Jew.

Why is a בן סורר ומורה חייב if the food he eats is not כשר? This makes it seem as though it is worse for the בן סורר ומורה to defy his parents’ wishes than the wishes of ה’. Why would gluttony with permitted foods (against the wishes of his parents) be a greater sin than indulging in forbidden foods (against the wishes of his parents and God)? Rav Hirsch, in his article on בן סורר ומורה, suggests that some children regard their parent’s “parental wishes” as more important than their parents’ “religious wishes” because the children sense what their parents view as more important. When parents command their children to fulfill a מצוה, children can sense whether the command is out of אהבת ה’ and יראת החטא. If a child senses that God is not an integral part of his home, the child may become more willing to follow his parents’ rules than ה’’s rules. According to Rav Hirsch, “children who have gone over to the un-Jewish ways must have sensed a difference between the mood in which their parents asked them to do their personal bidding and that in which their parents told them to do something commanded by God’s will. Were this not so, these children would not show such ready devotion in obeying the personal wishes of their parents and, at the same time, such cruel indifference when those same parents tell them the Will of God.”

Rav Hirsch speaks of the kind of education that has the best chances of encouraging the child to remain a תורה Jew throughout his

<sup>2</sup> R. Zev Leff, *Outlooks and Insights*, Brooklyn, 1993.

life. Parents must cling to ה' in every way. It must be apparent to the child that the parents' will is identical to God's will. Parents must live their lives according to the משנה "עשה רצונו כרצונך": Parents must make sure that they are as ready to do what ה' wants as they are to do their own will. Thus, the פסוקים continually speak of actions which the parents do together: "ותפשו...והוציאו... בננו זה... בקלנו". Further, the גמרא explains that both parents together must agree to prosecute the בן סורר ומורה. The actions, voices, and wishes of both parents must be the same. We can learn a critical lesson about education from these rules. In order to succeed in raising a child, both parents must be equally committed to the service of ה'. Both parents must put aside their individual wills and desires, and demonstrate to their children that, above all, they strive to serve ה'. The only way for a father and mother to achieve such a unity, is to share the same voice – "בקלנו". They must unify their voices with the voice of ה'. By conveying the importance of דבקות בה' to their children, the concept of בן סורר ומורה will forever remain a situation that "לא היה ולא יגיע".





## מחיצה בבית הכנסת

Yael Grunseid and Aliza Rosenstock

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In addressing the issue of מחיצה בבית הכנסת, we need to answer three main questions:

1. What are the sources in תנ"ך and הלכה for the מחיצה in a בית הכנסת?
2. What is the purpose of מחיצה?
3. Practically speaking, what is the definition of a valid מחיצה?

בית וספדה הארץ משפחות משפחות לבד משפחות "זכריה יב:ב" in פסוק reads that this פסוק indicates that "דרך צניעות שלא יהיו נשים וגברים ביחד." Modesty requires that men and women should be separated. There are also two sources in the משנה dealing with the separation between men and women in בית המקדש. עזרת נשים "תיקון גדול" a סוכה on relates that משנה סוכה ה:ב of the המקדש defines "תיקון גדול" as the creation of a "גוזזטרא מסביב," some kind of balcony in which the women sat above and the men danced below at the השואבה בית. This was done to prevent socializing between men and women, which could result in "קלות ראש". This echoes the משנה מדות ב:ה, which indicates that a balcony was present in the המקדש, with the women overlooking the men's section below, in order to prevent mixing between men and women. רמב"ם's commentary on the משנה offers another interpretation. He explains that the object of the "תיקון גדול" was not to prevent ראש, but rather to prevent "הסתכלות." The רמב"ם may derive this position from the גמרא "ונשמרת מכל דבר רע," דברים כג: which quotes עבודה זרה כ ע"ב to steer clear of improper sights and thoughts that might lead to קרי.

The גמרא discusses the "תיקון" in greater detail. Originally, the women's section of the המקדש had been located in front of the men's. This, however, encouraged קלות ראש. In response, a תקנה was made that the women's section would be repositioned behind that of the men's. Alas, this too allowed קלות ראש. Finally, a second תקנה was made in which the women's section was raised to a balcony above the men. The גמרא asks a question. The המקדש was constructed according to God's plan, and may not be altered (דברי הימים א' כח:ט). How could the Rabbis change the structure of the המקדש? רב answers this question based on the פסוק זכריה יב:ב, which says that in the end of days men and women will mourn separately. "ד"ה קרא" רש"י (סוכה נא ע"ב, ד"ה קרא) רש"י.

explains "שצריך להבדיל אנשים מנשים ולעשות גדר בישראל שלא יבואו לידי קלקול". The גמרא draws the following *קל וחומר*: if during the times of משיח, with the destruction of the *הרע*, men and women will be *mourning* separately, how much more so must care be taken to guard against the ploys of the *הרע* in an atmosphere of *celebration* in the *בית המקדש*. The *גמרא* adds a twist to this *הבחינה* in תלמוד ירושלמי. The eulogy that took place in זכריה was over the demise of the *הרע* itself. If the men and women must remain separate while mourning the death of the *הרע*, how much more so should they remain separate when it continues to exist. The *גמרא* concludes that the problem of *קלות ראש* was so dangerous to the *בית המקדש* that it allows modifying God's blue-print for the *בית המקדש*.

The הלכות לולב ח"ב in רמב"ם states that the purpose of the separation of the sexes in the *בית המקדש* was "שלא יתערבו אלו עם אלו". In *בית המקדש* he also mentions that the women's section in the *בית המקדש* was "מוקפת בגזוזטרה", constructed in the form of a balcony.

These sources indicate that there was separation of the sexes in the *בית המקדש*, and that the Rabbis were willing to make dramatic modifications in order to maintain this separation. The separation prevented both the socializing that might lead to *קלות ראש* and the *הרהורים* that might lead to *הסתכלות*.

Interestingly, there are sources that indicate that *הסתכלות* might be a problem for women as well. שמואל א פרק ט relates the story of a group of women who guided שאול in his search for הנביא. Instead of giving direct answers to his questions, the women gave wordy and winding answers. The *גמרא* explains that they gave long-winded answers so that they would be able to gaze at שאול's beauty for a longer time. The *גמרא* concludes that women also desire to stare at the opposite sex. רבי יוסי quotes ילקוט שמעוני. He explains "Do you mean to say that בנות ישראל are promiscuous? It cannot be! The reason that the women rambled was because שאול had not yet reached the moment in time that would render him worthy of the kingship" (רמז קח). The women did not have a desire to stare at שאול's beauty; rather, they were instruments in the Divine plan to distract שאול until the right moment for his anointment.

Rav Moshe cites the *ויקרא* (יט:ל) "מקדשי תיראו", *ויקרא* in פסוק, to help connect the *קדושה* of the *בית המקדש* to the "מקדש מעט" of our synagogues. In his opinion, a מחיצה between men and women is *דאורייתא*, because that is the only way this "holy fear" can adequately occur (א"ח א, ס').

Rav Soloveitchik in his article "On Seating and Sanctification,"<sup>1</sup> agrees that separate seating is a דאורייתא commandment, as intermingling would remove the atmosphere of קדושה, as well as imitate the Christian way of worship. However, he thinks that the physical מחיצה is דרבנן. He adds a philosophical element as well. Prayer should come from "מעמקים" (תהילים קל:א), from the pit of abject loneliness. Rav Soloveitchik does not put in writing the precise qualifications for a valid מחיצה, though in practice, under the particular historical and communal conditions of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century American Orthodoxy, he at times permitted מחיצות that were quite low (little more than waist high).

Rav Moshe's תשובות in אגרות משה (מא-מד) א' ס' לט, deal with מחיצה on the levels of both קלות ראש and הסתכלות. He says that a מחיצה reaching the shoulder height of an average women (60 inches) is minimally acceptable, enough to avoid the issue of קלות ראש. Ideally, the מחיצה should be six feet tall or more, as this prevents both conversation and הסתכלות. The material of the מחיצה may contain holes, but they must be small enough to maintain a serious atmosphere. While clear glass would be problematic, one-way glass that allows only the women to see the men would be acceptable. ציץ אליעזר ז"ח disqualifies any מחיצה that allows men to see women. He therefore insists on a six foot tall מחיצה.

To conclude, מעיקר הדין the מחיצה must separate the men and women enough to prevent קלות ראש. It is preferable that the מחיצה prevent הסתכלות as well. Rav Moshe adds that all those who are careful about these issues will receive a ברכה.

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<sup>1</sup> In Baruch Litvin, *The Sanctity of the Synagogue*, Hoboken, NJ, 1987.



# ברכות Forgetting

Arielle Bresler and Rachel Berley

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A tantalizing aroma fills the kitchen, drawing you through the doors in curiosity and hunger. You see a plate of freshly baked chocolate chip cookies on the kitchen counter. Without a moment of thought or hesitation, you grab a moist cookie and take a huge bite out of the side. Just as your teeth sink into the melted chocolate chunks, you remember the presence of ה', and you remember the ברכה that you forgot. You quickly put the chomping to a halt. What should you do?

The גמרא discusses what happens when, "שכח", "והכניס לתוך פיו משקין או אוכלין בלא ברכה". ר' יהודה holds that if one puts food in one's mouth and forgets to say the ברכה ראשונה, one must "מסלקן לצד" - push it to one side and then make the ברכה. The גמרא continues to describe the position of three תנאים. One תנא says, "בולעין" - one should swallow it. Another תנא says, "פולטין" - one should spit it out. Yet another תנא says, "מסלקין" - one should move the food to the side. These three opposing viewpoints seem to contradict one another. However, the גמרא explains that there is no contradiction because each תנא refers to a different case. The תנא that averred "בולעין" was referring to משקין, liquid. The תנא that stated "פולטין" was alluding to types of food that are "לא נמאס", that are not disgusting and can easily be removed from one's mouth while still intact. The third תנא, who said "מסלקין" was talking about food that is disgusting, including chewed or dissolved food.

This גמרא implies that it is acceptable to make a ברכה with food in one's mouth. The גמרא therefore asks: if one may make a ברכה with food in one's mouth, then why not do so also with food that is not disgusting? The גמרא answers by quoting a פסוק in תהילים that says "ימלא" (תהילים עא:ח), which is taken to mean that it is preferable not to have food in one's mouth while reciting a ברכה. However, when it is necessary to say a ברכה while food is in one's mouth, as in a case of a דבר שנמאס, it is acceptable.

Thus far, the גמרא has addressed a person who remembers while he is still eating that he has not made a ברכה. The גמרא continues: what happens if someone forgets to make a ברכה, and only remembers after he has finished eating? The גמרא answers with a משל. If someone eats garlic,

which causes his breath to reek, would this person eat more garlic and make his breath stink more? נמשל explains the רש"י. If someone does an improper act, eating without a ברכה, should he make matters worse by then making a ברכה לבטלה? Yet, רבינא disagrees that a ברכה recited after eating would be a ברכה לבטלה. He cites the example of the ברכה on טבילה, which is recited upon emerging from the מקוה, after the מצוה has been completed. The גמרא does not accept רבינא's parallel, explaining that there is a difference between טבילה and a ברכה on food. A person goes into a מקוה because he is a בעל קרי, who is prohibited from saying a ברכה until he becomes טהור. He has no choice but to recite the ברכה after emerging from the water. However, in the case of food, the person had the option of making the ברכה before eating. In this case, one may not make a ברכה after completing the meal; "הואיל ואידחי אידחי" – once you have missed the opportunity, you have missed the opportunity.

There is one case that remains ambiguous: squirting cold lemonade into one's mouth after a long walk in the sun, one realizes that the שהכל was forgotten. The גמרא had explained that if you remember to make a ברכה while you have liquid in your mouth, you swallow it. Do you swallow it and not recite the ברכה, based on the גמרא's conclusion that הואיל ואידחי אידחי? Or, do you say that you miss your opportunity only if you remember after swallowing? But, if you remember with the liquid still in your mouth, perhaps you do not miss your chance to say the ברכה. According to רמ"א and (הלכות ברכות פ"ח ה"ב) רמב"ם, (ברכות פ"ז ס' לג) רא"ש, (רמב"ם, רמ"א) (א"ח קעב ס"ב), you should swallow the lemonade, and then make a ברכה. However, רבינו חננאל, (ברכות נ ע"ב, ד"ה "בולעין") רש"י, פוסקים, including (מובא בטור א"ח קעב) and (א"ח קעב ס"ב) שולחן ערוך disagree. According to their position, the rule of "הואיל ואידחי אידחי" still applies. The lemonade loses its status as "a drink", for no one would drink it if you were to spit it out. One should simply swallow the lemonade without making a ברכה.

It is common for thirsty individuals to forget ברכות, but it is also commonplace for hungry people to place chunks of food in their mouths before remembering to recite the ברכה. Picture this: one roams into the kitchen and eyes a bowl of freshly picked apples. One reaches into the medley of colorful apples, grabs a golden delicious apple, and then proceeds to sink one's teeth into the fruit. As the delectable taste seeps into one's taste buds, the desire to thank ה' for the apple arises. Oh no! The ברכה ראשונה was forgotten once again. Fortunately the opportunity is not yet lost. Based on the גמרא above, the פוסקים (רמב"ם, רמ"א, ושר"ע שם) פוסקים agree that food which has not disintegrated or become disgusting should simply be spit out, after which one can recite the ברכה ראשונה. Both the רמ"א and the שר"ע emphasize that it is important to proclaim a

ימלא פי תהילתך ברכה without food in one's mouth, based on the concept of ברכה. Now try to alter the scene slightly. Instead of biting into a juicy apple, you shovel a handful of chocolate chips into your mouth ברכה. As the chocolate morsels hit the surface of your tongue, they immediately begin to melt. You do not need to spit out the melted chocolate chips, which would be disgusting. Instead, you move the morsels to the side of your mouth and then make a ברכה. These chocolate chips are one example of a דבר שנמאס.

What if one doesn't remember to make a ברכה immediately after the apple or chocolate chips? What if one finished the entire סעודה before remembering the ברכה? As we saw in the גמרא, it is too late. One may no longer make the ברכה retroactively (ש"ע אר"ח קסז ס"ח). There is, however, a preferred way to get out of the problem. According to the משנה ברורה (שם ס"ק מח), one may make the ברכה and then eat just a bit more, even if he did not intend to do so originally.

Although it is obviously not recommended to place any type of food or drink into your mouth without making a ברכה ראשונה, it is important to fully understand what to do in the inevitably case that you forgot.





# Orthodoxy in a Post-Modern Era: An Examination of Rav Soloveitchik's Philosophy

Sheri Adler

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Overwhelmingly optimistic, modern thought is focused on the pursuit of a meta-narrative, a harmony underlying all events. Classic Jewish thought, with its promising emphasis on the divine creation that leads up to the messianic era, seems congruent with the modernist notions of meta-narratives and historical optimism. It stresses the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future, and incorporates all events into a single holistic picture. Experiences, whether on a national or personal level, are all part of the greater whole of Jewish history. Conversely, post-modernism is characterized by struggle, pain, and insecurity. The world is an explosion of fragmented human experiences. Multiple truth perspectives exist. In place of a meta-narrative lie endless dichotomies and conflicts.

Have we, as observant Jews, reached an exploding clash with the post-modern generation, which snidely shuns the hopeful Jewish (and modern) vision? Rav Joseph Soloveitchik's philosophical writings seem to view man's tragic role in some strikingly post-modern terms. Concentrating on the individual, he passionately describes the intense loneliness and struggle, in which man's existential battle within himself helps him to emerge as an authentic individual. Anguish, difficulty, and duality characterize this eternal quest. Meaning and sanctity are not found in the arrival at the destination of finality and comfort. Rather, meaning involves man's search for meaning. It is not larger than that; it is that.

Struggling with the issue of theodicy in "קול דודי דופק," the Rav stresses the individual's responsibility to cope with evil by admitting that it exists, and growing as a result of it. Specifically, life confronts man with an onslaught of chaotic, cataclysmic events. To explain away the tragedy and live with the illusion that evil is imaginary is a lie and a failure. In "קול דודי דופק," the inferior and inadequate "man of fate" "tracks the intellectual foundations of suffering and evil, and seeks to find the harmony and balance between the affirmation and the negation

and to blunt the sharp edge of the thesis- the good- and the antithesis- the bad- in existence... to the point of self- deception- the denial of the existence of evil in the world" ("קול דודי דופק", p. 53).<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the Rav speaks in overtly Hegelian terms in this critique of the "man of fate". For the "man of fate", as for Hegel, there is a thesis and antithesis which then leads to a synthesis. Hegel, more than any other philosopher, represents the peak of modernist thinking, with his historical meta-narrative and cosmic optimism. Rav Soloveitchik wants to undermine the optimistic modernist approach to theodicy in history. Instead, according to the Rav, anguish, suffering, and evil are inevitable aspects of the human experience. They become meaningful only when man utilizes them to perfect himself. It is man's ethical reaction to the reality of suffering, man's lifting himself out of the depths of depravity, that portrays the true strength of character.

In addition to the Rav's emphasis on the reality of suffering in defining the individual, he stresses the post-modern themes of fragmentation, loneliness, and existential homelessness throughout his writings. Man, as a lonely individual, encounters reality, and his lonely plight requires him to search for his unique and individual role in the world. In some passages, the Rav requires man to view himself as removed from history. "We need to examine our own reflection with spiritual heroism and total objectivity. This reflection breaks through both past and present together in order to confront us directly" ("קול דודי דופק", p. 64). Man's task is to focus on the present, to create and achieve in עולם הזה. In עולם הבא, man is "powerless to change anything at all" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 32).<sup>2</sup> Thus, "halakhic man prefers the real world to a transcendent existence" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 32). Furthermore, the man, who faces the present as a lonely individual, struggles with his internally contradictory nature. On the one hand, man is distinguished from other creatures in that he possesses the potential to innovate and receive Divine providence. Yet, at the same time, man is nothing but a passive, worthless speck in God's vast world, "overcome by despair, filled with loathing and self-contempt" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 69). This duality characterizes man's torn and contradictory existential experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek: It is the Voice of My Beloved That Knocketh," trans. Lawrence Kaplan, *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust*, Ed. B.H. Rosenberg and F. Heiman, New York, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan, Philadelphia, 1983.

As he grapples toward cathartic redemption from this existential contradiction, man finds himself lost within a sea of ontological loneliness. In *The Lonely Man of Faith*, the Rav depicts the tragic individual who must overcome the depths of agony in order to achieve only a partial redemption. Conflicted man is simultaneously bound to both his individual loneliness as well as to community. He is able to find partial redemption in relationship to another who shares the same religious mission as him. "One lonely soul finds another soul tormented by loneliness and solitude yet unqualifiedly committed" (*The Lonely Man of Faith*, p. 42).<sup>3</sup> Yet, this moral mission of relating to man and God is itself a dichotomous and contradictory experience. Although God is everywhere, He is transcendent and remote. Each man's struggle to seek out God and to fulfill His will, allows him the comfort of relationship to another person. But, man will never be wholly redeemed from this loneliness. A member of society at large, man eternally oscillates between the practical aspects of the world and the quest for Godliness.

This predicament exists even on the national level. In *Family Redeemed*, the Rav explains that אברהם and שרה are prototypes of man's tragic role. אברהם's name – אברהם העברי – illustrates his solitude. His convictions caused him to be on one side – עבר אחד – while the rest of the world stood mockingly on the other side – עבר אחר. Furthermore, שרה, the archetypal mother, represents woman's perpetual struggle. She was naturally a quiet, reserved, צנוע personality. Yet, when she assessed the danger to her son יצחק and the nation destined to emanate from him, she emerged from her privacy and, with great strength, she sent ישמעאל away, much to the dismay of her husband. Yet, the instant that her goal was accomplished and the survival of the future ישראל was ensured, שרה recoiled to her quiet, modest role. Public acknowledgment of her actions was minimal despite the colossal achievement. Motherhood inherently embodies sacrifice and pain. Yet, woman yearns physically and emotionally for children to carry on the מסורה. In this context, "The tragedy of the woman becomes the more pronounced the less she can avoid it" (*Family Redeemed*, p.110).<sup>4</sup> The peak of woman's experiences is characterized by tragedy and loneliness.

Even in his discussion of ימות המשיח, Rav Soloveitchik does not stress the promising end to history. Rather, he emphasizes that ימות המשיח represents the ultimate resolution of the individual's dialectic and

<sup>3</sup> Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, New York, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed*, ed. David Shatz and Joel B. Wolowelsky, New York, 2000.

contradictory role. When the Rav depicts the eschatological era, he is less concerned with the meta-narrative of history than with the realization of the individual. The verse in זכריה יד:ט, which says "וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה ה' אֶחָד וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד" can not refer to God, for He is already perfect. It must therefore be referring to the ultimate redemption of man's torn being. "On that distant day the dialectical process will come to a close and man of faith as well as majestic man will achieve full redemption in a united world" (*Lonely Man of Faith*, p. 87).

Overall, the Rav's works are characterized by the post-modern focus on the individual's existential dilemma. Based on this analysis of Rav Soloveitchik's writings, contemporary post-modern trends do not require us to sever our intellectual ties with society at large. Jews, as much as the larger world, must struggle with how to live religiously whole and meaningful lives, despite the fragmented nature of contemporary social and intellectual life. Rav Soloveitchik's post-modern analysis of man's unique tragedy may demonstrate some consonance between Jewish thought and that of society at large.

# Vegetarianism in הלכה

Chani Ozarowski and Dalia Ebert

הנה – “In permitted אדם to eat fruits and vegetables – ה' בראשית א:כט. points out that this implicitly prohibits the consumption of meat. שם ד"ה (שם ד"ה לכם) רש"י. "נתתי לכם את כל עשב זרע זרע... ואת כל העץ אשר בו פרי" (שם ד"ה) רמב"ן. reasons that this was because animals have “קצת מעלה בנפשם”, causing them to flee from predators and fear death. סנהדרין נו טו תוספות. parallels this idea. (ד"ה אכל תאכל) ע"ב. was allowed to eat meat of an animal that had died naturally, for in that case man did not cause the animal fear or pain.

However, when נח left the ark after the flood, ה' explicitly permitted the eating of meat: “כל חית הארץ... יהיה לאכלה” (ט:ב-ג). This permission was immediately qualified by the prohibition of eating אבר מן החי, indicating that there are limitations on this היתר to eat meat. R. Alfred S. Cohen suggests that man's nature was weakened after the flood, in order to prevent further rebellions against God. This weaker man needed stronger food, and meat became permitted.<sup>1</sup> Another contemporary writer, R. Akiva Tatz, quotes R. Simcha Wasserman, explaining that the היתר to eat meat provided a safe outlet for man's violent nature, which before the flood had been focused against other human beings.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps we could also say that man was given permission to eat meat as a reward for having fed and cared for the animals for over a year.

This state, in which mankind was permitted to eat meat but not obligated to do so, continued until בני ישראל began offering קרבנות. It then became obligatory for Jews to eat parts of certain קרבנות. Even ר' מאיר - who considers the possibility that one should refrain from eating meat because there might have been a מום in the exact place of שחיטה, thus rendering the meat טריפה – insists that when the בית המקדש stood one would have had to eat from the קרבן פסח and certain קדשים (חולין יא). After the destruction of the בית המקדש and the termination of קרבנות, is one still obligated to eat meat? The גמרא בבא בתרא ס ע"ב suggests that we refrain from eating meat or drinking wine in commemoration of the חורבן, however, ר' יהושע maintains that this would be taking the mourning

<sup>1</sup> Alfred S. Cohen, “Vegetarianism from a Jewish Perspective,” *The Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, 1:2, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Akiva Tatz, *Worldmask*, Southfield, MI, 1995, Chap. 12.

too far, and the גמרא concludes that חז"ל could not make this גזירה that most of the ציבור could not live up to. At the very least, eating meat today is permitted.

Perhaps, however, there is an obligation to eat meat on יום טוב. In true בית מקדש, the גמרא states that during the time of the פסחים קט ע"א in involved eating the meat of the שלמים, as the פסוק explains, "דברים כז:ז" "זבח שלמים ואכלת שם ושמחת". The גמרא continues that nowadays after the חורבן ביין, "אין שמחה אלא ביין". We could conclude that without the קרבן, there is an obligation to drink wine, but no obligation to eat meat. רמב"ם, however, holds that יום טוב for men consists of both eating meat and drinking wine (הלכות יום טוב ויזיח). Furthermore, מונע ברגל ומבטל שמחת יום states that one who vows not to eat meat is "יום טוב ויזיח" (הלכות שבועות ויזיח). Apparently, according to רמב"ם, at least men should eat meat on שבת and יום טוב.

יוסף highlights the seeming contradiction between רמב"ם's insistence on eating meat and the גמרא's claim that this is only obligatory when the meat in question is the קרבן (אר"ח תקכ"ב). (שם) דרישה suggests a possible resolution to the contradiction. Eating a קרבן is an inherently happy event, whatever the קרבן consists of. This קרבן שלמים "happened" to be meat. When there is no בית המקדש, there is no way to fulfill this element of יום טוב שמחה. According to רמב"ם, when there is no קרבן there is still an element of שמחה in eating rich, high-quality food, like meat, even if it is not a קרבן. (שם) ב"ח adds that wine is also included in the list of rich foods that create שמחה, basing himself on קדו:טו תהלים, "ויין", which concludes based on this that eating the קרבן was a חובה, whereas since חורבן הבית eating meat on יום טוב is a מצוה, rather than a חובה. However, R. Cohen concludes that according to many contemporary פוסקים a person who does not enjoy eating meat, or is even disgusted by the prospect, should find other foods to fulfill the מצוה of יום טוב שמחה.

What will happen when the בית המקדש is rebuilt and קרבנות are reinstated? While it seems logical to conclude that eating meat will become a חובה once again, רב קוק holds that there will be no animal sacrifices in the third המקדש; all of the sacrifices will be קרבנות (עולות ראיה, חלק א, עמ' 292) מנחה. He explains that in normal times, animals could become most קדוש by sacrificing their blood and fat, the essence of the souls, to God. People, in contrast, use their intellect to become close to ה'. However, a special דעת will penetrate even the animals. לעתיד לבוא, which, after describing the destructive characteristics of animals בזה, explains that at the time of

the "לא ירעו ולא ישחיתו בכל הר קדשי כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה'". Animals will not need to be offered as קרבנות to become close to ה'.

In light of this, we can see that the תורה's attitude toward vegetarianism depends on the period in history. Eating meat was forbidden until the מבול, when it became permitted. During the times of בית המקדש it was a חיוב טוב, whereas post חורבן it seems that it is מותר, and perhaps a lower level obligation on טוב. Vegetarians today are within scope of הלכה, though they may be missing out on aspects of שמחת יום טוב of מצוה. As for the future...? Only time will tell.





# The תורה's Guide to Answering the Question: What Do You Want to be When you Grow Up?

Sarah Weinerman

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In ancient days, Jews were forced to choose from a limited number of professions. Our forefathers were shepherds and farmers because those were the only occupations feasible for them. In the Middle Ages, Jews were prohibited from owning land and slaves, and therefore turned to money lending and banking. Nowadays, however, we have almost endless options for careers. With the freedom to choose any job comes the desire to choose the right job. We want to make the right decisions, based on what the תורה wants from us. What does the תורה say about the profession we should choose? One common opinion claims that those who are most dedicating to observing תורה become Judaic studies teachers, while those who are less dedicated turn to other professions. Is this in fact what the תורה teaches?

The first place to look for answers to these questions is obviously the תורה itself. בראשית ב:טו emphasizes the need to be involved in constructive endeavors: "ויקח ה' אלקים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה." Similarly, the תורה commands, "ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל מלאכתך" (שמות כ:ט), emphasizing the human need to work for material needs. The משנה in אהוב את, when it states, "מגן אבות א:י" also highlights the importance of work, when it states, "המלאכה ושנא את הרבנות שבת) מרדכי (א:י) and (א:י) רשב"ץ. In addition, (א:י) hold that there is a מצוה to work and be involved in constructive activities. Clearly, תורה values productive labor. But the question still remains: what jobs does the תורה prefer?

הבל, early in בראשית, became a shepherd (ב:ד), a pattern which continued through the אבות. יוסף instructed his brothers to tell פרעה that they, along with their forefathers, were always shepherds (בראשית מו:לב). However, יוסף provided an added insight. He told his brothers to say this because Egyptians, who deified sheep, despised shepherds. Hence, continuing to work as shepherds would prevent the Egyptians and בני ישראל from intermingling (רש"י בראשית מו:לד). Apparently, when choosing a

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in R. Yehudah Levi, *Torah Study: A Survey of Classic Sources on Timely Issues*, Jerusalem and New York, 2002, p. 7, n. 50.

job, one must take into account how the job will affect the maintenance of the Jewish people and its commitment to מצוות.

The תורה itself mentions מצוות that pertain to many occupations. For example, the תורה prohibits charging interest to Jews, and requires fair weights and measures. However, the career which the תורה regulates most extensively is agriculture, reflecting the fact that Jewish society was agriculturally-based for many generations. There were elders who studied תורה and judged disputes, but most of the population worked in the fields.

At the time of the גמרא, rabbis spent much of their time studying and discussing תורה, but they generally held jobs through which they earned a פרנסה. For example, הלל הזקן was a wood chopper (יומא לה ע"ב). Later on in history, רמב"ם wrote his major works of תורה scholarship while practicing as a doctor, רש"י, רמב"ן, and many other ראשונים did not earn their incomes from תורה.

In fact, according to many sources, one is not permitted to get paid to learn or teach תורה. The גמרא in ע"א states "רבי אליעזר בר' ר' צדוק" "Do not make words of תורה a crown for self-glorification nor a shovel with which to dig." The הלל, who says, "ודישתמש בתגא חלף הא למדת כל הנהנה מדברי תורה נוטל חייו מן העולם," – "He who exploits the crown [of תורה for personal benefit] shall fade away. From this you derive that whoever seeks personal benefit from the words of תורה removes his life from the world." The גמרא in ע"א cites the textual basis for this law. In דברים ד:ה it states, "ראה למדתי אתכם חוקים," "מה אני בחנם אף אתם נמי בחנם." The גמרא explains, "ומשפטים כאשר צוני ה'." Just as משה taught us תורה without receiving payment, so too we must teach תורה for free. הלכה למעשה, one may not be paid to study תורה. These sources do not advocate using תורה as a profession; one should make תורה learning the primary focus, while having a career to earn a living.

Yet, other תורה sources point in another direction. בראשית רבה צ"ט:ט says, "היה זבלון עוסק במסחר ויששכר עוסק בתורה, וזבלון בא ומאכילו." The two brothers had a special relationship in which זבלון did business and supported יששכר, who spent his time learning תורה. However, this arrangement was not common practice among the rest of בני ישראל.

The גמרא in ע"א says, "ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה." Seemingly, his opinion is that one should forgo teaching one's son a trade, and teach him only תורה. However, as the ר' מאיר explains, ר' נהוראי is in fact the same person as ר' מאיר (their names both mean light), who had just stated that a person is

obligated to teach his son a trade. Perhaps, the first statement of ר' מאיר refers to the general public, who should learn a trade. His second statement, might refer specifically to his son, who showed special potential to be a great גדול בתורה.

רמב"ם expresses a similar idea. We have already seen רמב"ם's conviction that one may not gain personal financial benefit from teaching תורה. Yet in הלכות שמיטה ויובל יג:ג he writes, "כל איש ואיש... אשר נדבה" רוחו אותו והבינה מדעו להבדל לעמוד לפני ה' לשרתו ולעבדו... ופרק מעל צוארו עול". It is praiseworthy for a person to put complete faith in ה' and devotes all of his time to learning תורה. It seems likely that these apparently contradictory statements differentiate between the general public and the unique individual.

This notion is supported by נפש החיים's interpretation of the גמרא in דרך ארץ with תורה states that one needs רבי שמעון בן יוחי (a profession), while רבי שמעון בן יוחי states, תורה אבי. "הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל ועלתה בידן, כר' שמעון בן יוחי ולא עלתה בידן," (א:ח) נפש החיים explains the importance of the word "הרבה". Many failed when following רבי שמעון בן יוחי, but certain individuals succeeded. Although the masses are not fit to learn exclusively and neglect a career, a יחיד who is capable of dedicating himself exclusively to תורה study may do so.

The debate over this topic continues in ברכות כח ע"א. רבי יהושע went to רבי יהושע's house. He told רבי יהושע that he saw from the blackness of the walls of his house that he is a blacksmith. רבי יהושע responded in anger, "אוי לו לדור שאתה פרנסו שאי יודע בצערן של תלמידי חכמים במה הם חנונים מתפרנסים ובמה הם נוזנים." רבי יהושע expresses the plight of the working תורה while working for a פרנסה. However, רבי יהושע's concern goes far beyond the individual's dilemma. When he says, "אוי לו לדור שאתה פרנסו," he conveys his fear for the welfare of a community when the leadership does not understand the importance and difficulty of work. A leader who does not understand the complex situation of the working תלמיד חכם cannot be an effective leader.

Until now, we have been under the assumption that one is not permitted to earn an income from studying or teaching תורה. Nowadays, however, the הלכה is somewhat different. הלכות תלמוד תורה גי' חס כסף משה applies the general principle of "עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך". At times, one must violate the תורה in order to save it. In contemporary society, if תורה teachers were not paid they would not have the time to teach. Consequently, the תורה would disappear over time, חס ושלים ערך. שולחן ערוך explains that we pay תורה teachers not for teaching, but for their time, which could have been spent on earning a living. One cannot

pay someone for the teaching he does in his free time, but one can pay him if his teaching prevents him from taking another job. This is the היתר which תורה teachers rely on nowadays.

Given that today it is permitted to take a salary for the time spent teaching תורה, is it better to teach תורה than to be a doctor or other profession? Which occupations does the תורה value? The סנהדרין חזקוני גמרא says that a dice player (gambler) is disqualified from giving testimony in court. One reason given is "אינו עוסק בשיעור של עולם", he is not involved in constructive activity. הלכות גזילה וניא חזקוני רמב"ם follows this explanation. We learn from this גמרא that one's career should contribute positively to the world.

Yet, this is too broad to provide specific guidance to any given individual. The גמרא חזקוני שבת explains that if one is born under the astrological sign of Mars he will have a natural tendency toward blood. ר' מוהר explains that this will lead him to be a doctor, thief, butcher, or אשי. Each person must account for his or her unique personality traits, talents, and abilities, and select a career that will make the best use of them (though obviously butcher is preferable to thief). The תורה teaches that each person is a vital piece of the world at large. Each person, as a unique individual, must contribute to the world in the best way that he or she can. The specific profession a person should choose will depend on his personality and talents.

Yet, based on the opinions of ר' נהוראי and רמב"ם, it seems that someone who has unique potential to be successful in the area of תורה should place particular focus on learning and teaching תורה. Perhaps we can compare priority in career choice to priority in giving צדקה. The הלכה dictates that one must first give aid to the Jewish community before offering one's money to the non-Jewish society (שולחן ערוך יו"ד רנא:ג.) Perhaps one should also give priority to a career that contributes to the Jewish community. Although one can contribute to Jewish society in many different ways, one can have a great impact on the future of the Jewish people by being a successful תורה teacher. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein has been quoted as saying that nowadays, when students need positive role models and good teachers of תורה, whoever has the inclination and talents should become a Judaic studies teacher. At a time when the תורה world needs help, we should place our focus there.

One never knows how much he can contribute to the Jewish people. At a סיום celebrating the completion of ר' ניצני's first book, העמק שאלה, he taught an important lesson. When he was a child, he overheard his father crying while discussing with his mother that their son was not succeeding in his learning. Their hopes for him to become a תלמיד חכם

were over, and they would have to teach him to a trade. נצי"ב immediately ran into the room and begged them for another chance to be serious. Over time, he became a deeply influential תלמיד חכם, author, and ראש ישיבה. נצי"ב explained that had he not focused seriously on his learning, he would have grown up to be a shoemaker, tailor, or carpenter. When he would go to שמים, he would expect ה' to congratulate him for being an honest businessman, keeping the מצוות, and learning תורה on the side. However, ה' would ask him, "Where is the העמק that you were supposed to write?"<sup>1</sup> נצי"ב could have lived a simple, honest life as a shoemaker, but he chose to use all of his potential to teach תורה, both to his own generation and, through his writings, to future generations as well.

Taking all of these points into consideration, how should one choose a career? The תורה does not prefer specific productive professions over other productive ones. Ideally, one is not supposed to gain income from תורה. One's profession should enhance, not detract from, Jewish commitment to מצוות. Each person should put his individual abilities to the best use, and work in a profession that contributes positively to ישובו של עולם. In general one should put a primary focus on how one can help the Jewish people, either of today or future generations. This task is easier in Israel in many ways, because any constructive job contributes to Jewish society and benefits עם ישראל. Still, we learn from יששכר and זבולן that no matter what career one has, one should support the learning of תורה. Jewish mothers can still proudly boast, "My son the doctor"... but only if that is where the child's abilities can best be put to use.

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<sup>1</sup> Paysach J. Krohn, *The Maggid Speaks*, Brooklyn, 1989, p. 117-119.



# Morality in Maimonidean Philosophy

Shira Horowitz

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For ages, philosophers have been grappling with the place of morality in society and religion. Are there objective moral standards? Does man have the capacity to judge them? Is morality mandated by God, or is its place outside of religion? Although Maimonides generally addresses questions that are raised by the classical philosophers, in his major philosophical work, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, he deals with the question of morality only very briefly. In his discussion of עקידת יצחק in the *Guide*, the event in Jewish thought most commonly associated with a conflict between a divine command and human morality, רמב"ם does not deal with it as a moral dilemma. Rather, there is a conflict between the word of God and אברהם's love for his son. The עקידה was an act "contrary to human feelings," (*Guide* 3:24) not to human intellect or morals, as we might expect.

The question of whether man has the ability to distinguish between the morally acceptable and reprehensible is rooted in the very nature of moral philosophy. Socrates once questioned Eurythphro on the nature of morality: "Do the gods love piety because it is pious, or is it pious because they love it?"<sup>1</sup> Is morality an objective standard—some type of natural law, presiding over even the divine command - or is it simply a product of God's will?

For רמב"ם, this question is related to the issue of creation. After creating the universe, God looked at the world and pronounced it all good: "בראשית א:לא) "וירא אלקים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאד". Maimonides learns from this that God created only good. Evil is simply a lack of good, an absence of God's creation (3:10). This suggests that anything God creates is necessarily good, and there is no objective standard for morals. Had he created evil, we would have termed it good.

רמב"ם is seemingly inconsistent in his approach to the purpose of creation. Whereas in *Guide* 3:13 he says that the purpose of creation was "in accordance with the *will* of God," only eleven chapters later, in 3:24, he claims that "the existence of all things depends on His *wisdom*". Note

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by R. Aaron Lichtenstein, *By His Light*, Hoboken, NJ, p. 106

that Maimonides uses the word “will” as opposed to “wisdom”. The former connotes an arbitrariness and lack of rational necessity in what God created. The latter implies that there is rationale and design that conceptually preceded the cosmos. God turned to an existing objective standard of “good” in the process of creation.

רמב"ם's discussion of the מצוות supports the position that he believes God's acts are not random, and that morality is therefore not arbitrary (wisdom, not will). רמב"ם attempts to explain every commandment (*Guide* 3:26), and prove that God commanded us not simply because obedience is a virtue in itself, but because these particular commandments “directly tend to remove injustice or teach good conduct that furthers the well being of society or imparts a truth which ought to be believed either on its own merit or as being indispensable for facilitating the removal of injustice or the teaching of good morals” (*Guide* 3:28). According to this statement there is good reason for every command, one of them being “the teaching of good morals.” Again, רמב"ם seems to imply that there is morality independent of God's command.

Maimonides claims that the reason to teach good morals is to produce a “good social state”, to provide the ideal social context for people to pursue their own perfection and worship of God (*Guide* 3:27). Yet, this seems to contradict a statement of רמב"ם in *Guide* 3:31, where he distinguishes between “morals and social conduct.” Are morals identical to good social habits, or is morality something beyond social convention? A similar contradiction appears in רמב"ם's discussion of human perfection. On the one hand, he explains that “moral principles do not constitute the ultimate aim of man...they are preparations leading to it” (*Guide* 3:54). In the same chapter, he explains that true perfection involves knowing and imitating God, including imitating His morals. Maimonides has identified morals both as a means and as an end and has, in certain instances, implied that they are mutually exclusive. Maimonides must either be talking about two types of morals and be using one of the famed homonyms he speaks of in the beginning of the *Guide* (Introduction), or he must mean that morals serve a dual purpose. They have a practical value as a means to helping people reach human perfection, but they are also the end, for knowing God means knowing His morals.

If this is correct, then morals seem to be an objective set of principles established through the joint forces of God's wisdom and will, which function as both a means to and an end of human perfection. The question now becomes how man recognizes these principles. Can he



perceive them on his own, or must he gather them only from the divine command? Should we try to reconcile those instances where a divine command appears to contradict human morals, or should we choose one over the other?

On this last question, there is no inconsistency within Maimonidean philosophy. As a rationalist, רמב"ם makes it clear that there are no real contradictions between the divine command and human morality. For example, רמב"ם claims that there is no moral dilemma in the command to annihilate the future generations of עמלק for a crime committed by their ancestors. This punishment "is not excessive or inadequate, but as distinctly stated, 'according to the fault,'" and is therefore appropriate (*Guide* 3:41).

In his comprehensive codification of Jewish law, the משנה תורה, Maimonides includes laws on every aspect of life, indicating that the תורה provides answers for moral issues, in addition to ritual ones. In the *Guide*, רמב"ם explains that the purpose of הלכות דעות is to "improve the moral condition of man" (*Guide* 3:35). This, however, does not rule out the possibility that man has the ability to discern what is morally correct using his own intellect.

רמב"ם states that charity is "kindness prompted by a certain moral conscience in man" which seems to indicate that man has an inborn ability to decide what is morally correct (*Guide* 3:53). In another place he refers to the "acquisition of moral principles" (*Guide* 3:54). Both of these passages agree that man can distinguish between good and evil. However, the former connotes an inborn ability to do so, while the latter speaks of an acquired one. It is not clear if moral knowledge is innate or learned.

Again, we must turn to רמב"ם's view of creation to understand his position on man and morality. Maimonides maintains that when first created, man had intellect which allowed him to understand necessary truths (i.e. to distinguish between truth and falsehood), but he had no concept of morality (i.e. to distinguish between good and evil), which are merely apparent truths. After he sinned, man was punished by losing a part of his intellectual faculty. This diminished his ability to determine necessary truths. Yet, at the same time, man acquired a new faculty allowing him to perceive the apparent truths of morality (*Guide* 1:2). Had man remained in his ideal state and not sinned, this moral faculty would not have been required. רמב"ם infers from this that morality is a lower level than speculative truth; it was a punishment for man to receive knowledge of morals in place of the more ideal knowledge of theoretical truth.

Maimonides emphasizes truth over morality in a several other instances. He claims that it is “knowledge of truth,” as opposed to knowledge of good, which “removes hatred, quarrels and injury.” He also says that man has the capacity to distinguish between good and evil only if he has “knowledge of truth” (*Guide* 3:11).

In *Guide* 3:17, where Maimonides explains how seemingly evil actions can come from a God who performs only good acts. God is acting in a just way which corresponds to truth. Because our vision is blurred by our moral conscience, certain acts that are in accordance with truth and justice appear to us to be morally wrong. This explains why אדם received “knowledge of apparent truths” as a punishment. Sin diminished his ability to see necessary truths, because his knowledge had been blurred by an awareness of morality. Since אדם’s fall, the human race no longer merits to see things from a purely intellectual standpoint because human desire conquers reason. Moral law is required to suppress man’s instinct to do as his desire dictates. Man essentially punished himself by refusing to adhere to his intellect. Distinguishing between good and evil is not an action of the pure intellect, but in order to behave properly a person needs to be able to distinguish absolute truth from falsehood.

In his great philosophical work, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides is rather ambiguous and brief on the subject of morals. It seems that he believes that morals are an essential part of the Jewish religion, both as a means and an end to perfection. These morals never contradict the תורה. Still, man requires the ability to distinguish on his own between good and evil. Ideally, man should know absolute truth, which would alleviate the need for moral knowledge.

# ראש חודש The Significance of

Rav Azaria Berzon

ראש חודש is one of the most perplexing days on the Jewish calendar. It appears to be a יום טוב because of the קרבן מוסף<sup>1</sup> (במדבר כ"ח:יא). Additionally, there is the prohibition of eulogizing and fasting (stemming from the obligation of שמחה<sup>2</sup>), and the recitation of חצי הלל (see תענית כ"ח). It is however missing the defining characteristic of a יום טוב, i.e. the איסור מלאכה<sup>3</sup>. Prima facie, ראש חודש seems similar to חול המועד, yet it is not connected to a specific חג. Simply put, the essence of ראש חודש and its sanctity are difficult to define.

Although we recite הלל on ראש חודש, we say it only בדילוג, omitting certain sections (תענית כח ע"ב). ראש חודש on הלל is primarily an obligation that devolves upon the ציבור. The Talmud (עריכין י ע"ב) discusses what conditions are needed for the reading of הלל to be obligatory on a specific day. Despite the fact that ראש חודש has a distinctive קרבן and is termed a מועד, גמרא concludes that ראש חודש is not among the eighteen days which necessitate a complete recitation of הלל because it has no איסור מלאכה.

Since the גמרא in עריכין comes to the conclusion that there is no requirement to recite הלל on ראש חודש, why is הלל found in the ראש חודש section of every סידור? What is the source for הלל on ראש חודש? The גמרא explains that upon arrival to Israel, רב discovered that there is a מנהג to recite חצי הלל on ראש חודש. Both תוספות (ד"ה י"ח ימים) and (עריכין י ע"ב, ד"ה י"ח ימים) תוספות agree that despite the fact that there is no obligation to recite הלל, the Jewish people accepted it upon themselves as a מנהג, and it has since then developed into an obligation on the ציבור.

A מנהג is reflective of some level of חיוב. In this case, the ציבור accepted this מנהג in order to sanctify the day of ראש חודש outside of the בית המקדש, and fulfill the שירה קיום mandated by the verse, "ביום שמחתכם"

<sup>1</sup> Today replaced by תפילת מוסף.

<sup>2</sup> (במדבר י:י) "וביום שמחתכם ובמועדיכם ובראשי חדשיכם ותקעתם בחצצרת" This implies a שירה קיום generated by שמחה.

<sup>3</sup> Although it is traditional for women to refrain from מלאכה on ראש חודש (תענית כ"ח:).

ציבור (במדבר י:). "ומועדיכם ובראשי חודשיכם ותקעתם בחצוצרות" (במדבר י:). Only the ציבור can create such a strong קדושה outside of the בית המקדש.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to הלל, the Jewish people sanctified ראש חודש by adding a number of other customs to the day. Jewish women have instituted an informal מלאכה (see מגילה כ"ב ורש"י שם); the community blesses the new month on the שבת preceding ראש חודש; it has become traditional to dress in a more formal manner on ראש חודש. All of this has promoted ראש חודש from a regular day with an extra offering into a partial holiday, and has expanded the קדושה from the בית המקדש into the public domain.

ראש חודש is not simply a quasi-holiday, it also serves a very practical function: it sets the calendar for each month and establishes the days upon which the מועדים (holidays) will fall.<sup>5</sup> They are called מועדים because they are dependant on the time בני ישראל establishes for them. We are not merely celebrating the establishment of the Judaic calendar, but the manner in which it is done. The day of ראש חודש is not a firmly established date, it is chosen by the בית דין according to specific guidelines. It is the people who give this day, and indirectly every other קדושה of that month, their קדושה. The halachic expressions of ראש חודש (מנהגי איסור מלאכה לנשים, והלל) בית המקדש outside of the בית המקדש have been added and established by the people over the years.

The nature of ראש חודש perfectly symbolizes the ability of human beings to elevate and consecrate mundane things lacking inherent holiness. ראש חודש itself has little implicit holiness. כלל ישראל generate the קדושה. There is no divine command requiring women to abstain from מלאכה, but they chose to do so in order to sanctify the day. The Jewish people took it upon themselves to recite הלל on ראש חודש and declare it a unique day. The essence of ראש חודש lies in the minimal external signs of קדושה it has. This epitomizes Jewish values, which lie in an individual's inner devotion, and not his outward ceremonial display.

When the Greeks attempted to Hellenize the Jews, they banned ראש חודש because they realized that the Jewish people were empowered to determine this day and thereby impact the order of the heavens. On one occasion the בית דין even set the date of ראש השנה mistakenly, declaring the wrong day ראש חודש, because the עדים (witnesses) failed to testify on the correct day. With the help of ה', our people were able to prevail and

<sup>4</sup> However if a יחיד starts to recite הלל he should finish, because the ציבור has generated קדושה for him (תענית כ"ח ע"ב).

<sup>5</sup> The closing phrase of קידוש לשלש רגלים, מקדש ישראל שמקדשים את הזמנים, has been interpreted to mean מקדש ישראל שמקדשים את הזמנים, that the Jewish people sanctify the מועדים through determining their days by establishing ראש חודש.

continue to serve as the עם קדוש לנצח נצחים. The Greeks felt that if they could prevent the Jews from being actively involved in their own religion, and specifically from creating קדושה, their connection with their religion would weaken. The Greeks could not tolerate the Jewish idea that man is capable of creating קדושת הזמנים, and by extension, be מקדש themselves.



## עולם חסד יבנה

Rabbi Avishai David

*(Prepared by Jennifer Levine, based on her notes.)*

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Beginning with ספר בראשית, the תורה tell us Who created the world, but not why He did so. רש"י hypothesizes that the first word in the תורה - בראשית - hints at the answer: בשביל ראשית, for בני ישראל who are called ראשית (בראשית א:א. רש"י ד"ה "בראשית ברא"). Others say that the world was created because ה' wanted to practice חסד. סדם and עמרה were destroyed because of human cruelty, after which לוט's daughters wanted to rebuild the world, again through the מידה of חסד. Everything that ה' does is חסד. טבע הטוב להטיב, the nature of the good One is to do good. We are commanded, "והלכת בדרכי" (מלכים א יא:לח) and therefore we must also do חסד.

ה' sealed the decree to destroy the world in the מבול because of the sin of גול (according to רש"י בראשית ו:יג). Technically speaking, גול is a relatively minor sin, a לאו which can be corrected by an עשה. The robber can return what he stole and be forgiven. There is no capital punishment for this sin. Why did גול bring about the destruction of the world? It seems that ה' acts towards us in the way that we act with each other. When we treat each other kindly, ה' can govern the world with מדת הרחמים. גול is the antithesis of חסד. חסד involves giving others what they do not deserve, while גול means taking what you do not deserve. ה' could not govern the world with מדת החסד during a generation of thieves, and He therefore had to destroy everyone. נח performed a תיקון for the sin of גול. ה' placed נח in an ark for a year, where his sole occupation was חסד, feeding and caring for the animals. The world could only be rebuilt on a foundation of חסד - "עולם חסד יבנה" (תהילים פט:ג).

After the flood, the תורה lists ten generations from נח to אברהם and אברהם was a veritable עמוד החסד - the pillar of חסד. His חסד was much greater than that of נח. ספר הבהיר says that the מידה of חסד told ה', "As long as אברהם was in the world, I had no job to do because אברהם and I did my job" (ספר הבהיר, אות קצא). While נח was מוסר נפש and did חסד to keep animals alive, אברהם was מוסר נפש to do חסד and "make" new creations, to bring people closer to God - "ואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן" (בראשית). (יב:ה, ורש"י שם). אברהם and שרה had, in some sense, made the people whom they had brought close to אברהם. אברהם planted an אשל (בראשית כא:לג).

which is a reference to אברהם. (רש"י ד"ה "אשל") אכילה, שתיה, ולויה, and company to any passerby. When people came to thank him, he would tell them that he was not the one whom they should thank. Rather, they should thank ה', the One who created all.

עבר say that אברהם is called אברהם because he was on one side (side) and everyone else was on the second (בראשית רבה מב:ח). This can be interpreted in two ways. First, while the entire world practiced idolatry, אברהם followed ה'. Second, אברהם's greatness could "balance out" the faults of the rest of the world. Even though עבר and שם taught תורה to their students, they did not spread תורה in the same way that אברהם did. אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ה', "אלקים ארץ ושמים" means 'when they were created,' but it has the same letters as אברהם (בראשית רבה יב:ט). אברהם's חסד sustained the creation of the heaven and earth. He did not just give food to people. He also gave direction in life, based on אמונה in the עולם. He taught that the will of ה' is to do חסד.

There are many examples of אברהם's extraordinary חסד. אברהם was willing to sacrifice his life to save לוט. Indeed, the תורה refers to him as "אברהם העברי" specifically during that incident. Why is he called by that name specifically during that incident? אברהם was forced to go to war and kill, in direct opposition to his nature as a person of חסד. However, he went to war in order to make a קידוש ה' and to save לוט. This act of going against his nature to do רצון ה' was so extraordinary that he earned the title "עברי". Additionally, even when אברהם was forced to act against his kindly nature, and expel ישמעאל from his home, he gave him bread and a container of water, despite the fact that ישמעאל had been trying to kill יצחק!

I heard from my Rebbe, Rav Tzvi Dov Kanatopsky זצ"ל, an explanation of how אברהם came to a recognition of ה', based on רמב"ם, הלכות עבודת כוכבים, א:ב:ג.

אבל צור העולמים לא היה שום אדם שהיה מכירו ולא יודעו אלא יחידים בעולם כגון נוח ומתושלח נח שם ועבר, ועל דרך זה היה העולם הולך ומתגלגל עד שנולד עמודו של עולם והוא אברהם אבינו. כיון שנגמל איתן זה התחיל לשוטט בדעתו והוא קטן והתחיל לחשוב ביום ובלילה והיה תמיה היאך אפשר שיהיה הגלגל הזה נוהג תמיד ולא יהיה לו מנהיג ומי יסבב אותו, כי אי אפשר שישבב את עצמו, ולא היה לו מלמד ולא מודיע דבר אלא מושקע באור כשדים בין עובדי כוכבים הטפשים ואביו ואמו וכל העם עובדי כוכבים והוא עובד עמהם ולבו משוטט ומבין עד שהשיג דרך האמת והבין קו הצדק מתבוננתו הנכונה, וידע שיש שם אלוה אחד והוא מנהיג הגלגל והוא ברא הכל ואין בכל הנמצא אלוה חוץ ממנו, וידע שכל העולם טועים ודבר שגרם להם



לטעות זה שעובדים את הכוכבים ואת הצורות עד שאבד האמת מדעתם, וכן ארבעים שנה הכיר אברהם את בוראו.<sup>1</sup>

According to Rav Kanatopsky זצ"ל, proceeds to delineate three stages of אברהם's development:

1. כיון שהכיר וידע התחיל להשיב תשובות על בני אור כשדים ולערוך דין עמהם. ולומר שאין זו דרך האמת שאתם הולכים בה ושיבר הצלמים והתחיל להודיע לעם שאין ראוי לעבוד אלא לאלוה העולם ולו ראוי להשתחוות ולהקריב ולנסך כדי שיכירוהו כל הברואים הבאים, וראוי לאבד ולשבר כל הצורות כדי שלא יטעו בהן כל העם כמו אלו שהם מדמים שאין שם אלוה אלא אלו. כיון שגבר עליהם בראייתו בקש המלך להורגו ונעשה לו נס ויצא "לחרן".

After אברהם became convinced of 'ה's existence, אברהם was stimulated to share this knowledge with his contemporaries, who were foolish idolaters. He became the first iconoclast in history, rebuking his contemporaries for following the wrong path. אברהם was so intellectually overpowering that נמרד tried to kill him. 'ה miraculously rescued him and he escaped to חרן.

2. והתחיל לעמוד ולקרוא בקול גדול לכל העולם ולהודיעם שיש שם אלוה אחד לכל. "The word 'העולם ולו ראוי לעבוד, והיה מהלך וקורא ומקבץ העם מעיר לעיר ומממלכה לממלכה at the beginning of this stage clearly indicates that he began anew, adopting a new methodology. No longer an iconoclast, אברהם became a preacher, a wandering lecturer.

3. עד שהגיע לארץ כנען והוא קורא שנאמר ויקרא שם בשם 'ה אל עולם, וכיון שהיו העם מתקבצין אליו ושואלין לו על דבריו היה מודיע לכל אחד ואחד כפי דעתו עד שיחזירוהו לדרך האמת עד שנתקבצו אליו אלפים ורבות והם אנשי בית אברהם ושתל בלבם העיקר "הגדול הזה". Finally, אברהם came to the Land of Israel. It was there that he called out to 'ה, and he planted his אשל. It was there that he taught

<sup>1</sup> I heard R. Soleveitchik explain that there is no contradiction between רמב"ם's statement that אברהם recognized his Creator when he was 40 and the ראב"ד who says that he recognized 'ה when he was three years old. Recognition of the Almighty is a long process, one that began when אברהם was three years old and culminated when he was 40. We should not think that we can understand 'ה overnight, for what is gained overnight is lost just as quickly (בן לילה היה וכן לילה) ("יונה ד": אבד).

In the פסוקים אברהם's first recorded conversation with 'ה was the command, "לך לך" (בראשית יב:א). Even when 'ה did tell אברהם to go, He did not tell him where to go. How did אברהם know when he arrived at the right place? The (רבה לט:ח בראשית) מדרש אברהם tells us that during the course of his travels, אברהם saw people eating, drinking, and wasting time. He said to himself, "I hope that I do not have a portion in this land." When he got to Israel, and he saw that the people there had self-discipline (i.e. they planted and hoed in the proper seasons), he said to himself, I hope that I have a חלק in this land. 'ה immediately "confirmed" אברהם's choice, saying "הארץ הזאת" (יב:ז) "לזרע אתן את הארץ הזאת".

others the truth of 'ה. He was sensitive to the needs of each person and treated them as individuals. These acts of רחם caused tens of thousands of people to congregate around him.

Why was אברהם most successful in the third period in his life? The מדרש relates a story of שמעון בן סחט, who once purchased a donkey from a non-Jew and found a pearl in its fur. He returned the pearl to the original owner. He explained to his students that he had bought only the donkey, and had no intention of buying the pearl. The non-Jew said, "Blessed is ה', the God of שמעון בן סחט." אברהם became such an example of kindness in ארץ ישראל that his behavior and manners taught more than any of his speeches could have. Lessons are most strongly transmitted by example.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the תורה records almost nothing about the early stages of אברהם's life, before he came to Israel, indicates that this was his most successful period. All that we know about his life before age 75 is learned from מדרשים. I heard the Rav quote the רמב"ן, who teaches us that this is because the תורה only records things that are very important to בני ישראל, and אברהם's life was most significant once he came to ארץ ישראל.

גמרא ( גומלי חסדים and the children of חסדים are called גומלי חסדים בני ישראל (כתובות ט"ב). We received the spiritual genes of חסד from אברהם, but it did not become his essence. דוד says of himself, "ואני תפלה" (תהלים קט"ד), because דוד's essence was to dedicate all of his strength and energy to תפילה. Similar discipline and focus are needed to become a person of חסד. אברהם was that man of חסד. Though לוי learned חסד from אברהם, he did not devote himself wholeheartedly to that goal. Therefore, he became only a weak reflection of אברהם's loving kindness.

The חסד חפץ חיים teaches us some practical ways of incorporating חסד into our daily lives. Acts of חסד will help us establish relationships with people. This is particularly true in the area of speech. We must speak gently, respectfully, and honorably with all people. Rav Neventzahl שליט"א runs to say hello to everyone. Smiling at an acquaintance or wishing someone a "good morning" can make a person's day. Sometimes, when people are faced with particularly troubling problems listening can also be a great חסד. Similarly, a marriage includes the מצוה of יונה. This מצוה includes more than sexual relations, as the word יונה literally means "a period of time." There is a מצוה to spend time, talk,

<sup>2</sup> The fact that אברהם's greatest success took place in ארץ ישראל can also be attributed to the Talmudic dictum, "אורא דארץ ישראל מחכים" (בבא בתרא קנח ע"ב).

and listen to your spouse.<sup>3</sup> גדולי ישראל throughout the generations took time out of their busy learning schedules to spend time with their wives and families. (פרק י"ג) אבות דרבי נתן adds that the greatest חסד one can do is to greet all people יפות פנים. אם ירצה ה', we should all, as the children of אברהם, be זוכה to follow in his footsteps and become superb practitioners of חסד.

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<sup>3</sup> I heard this interpretation both from the Rav as well as from Rav Moshe Shizgal, the son-in-law of Rav Moshe Feinstein, זצ"ל.



# נחשים

## הרב אליעזר לרנר

לאחר מות אהרן הכהן, עזבו בני ישראל את הר ההר. קצרה נפש העם בדרך והם החלו לבוא בתלונות כנגד הקב"ה וכנגד משה: "אין לחם ואין מים ונפשנו קצה בלחם הקלקל". בתגובה שלח ה' את "הנחשים השרפים" (במדבר כא:ח) שהמיתו עם רב מיראל. משה רבנו התפלל בעד העם, וכפי שצווה אותו ה', עשה נחש נחושת ושם אותו על נס. מי שנשכו נחש היה מביט אל נחש הנחושת ומתרפא.

המשנה במסכת ראש השנה (ג:ח) שואלת: "וכי נחש ממית או נחש מחיה? אלא בזמן שיראל מסתכלין כלפי מעלה ומשעבדין את לבם לאביהן שבשמים היו מתרפאים, ואם לאו היו נימוקים". נחש הנחושת היה רק אמצעי שנועד לכוון את מחשבותיהם של בני ישראל לקב"ה.

ונשאלת השאלה: מדוע בחר ה' דווקא בצורת נחש שתהיה על הנס? איך הסתכלות בנחש תגרום לאדם לחשוב על השי"ת ולשעבד את לבו? אמנם במקרה דומה המובא במשנה: "וכי ידיו של משה עושות מלחמה או שוברות מלחמה" (בענין המלחמה נגד עמלק בסוף פרשת בשלח) - מובן שכשבני ישראל יראו את ידי משה מורמות בתפלה, יתחילו גם הם להתפלל ולבוא בבקשות לה'. אבל, לכאורה, כשמדובר בצורת נחש אין הדבר כך.

נחשוב רגע. כיצד הגיבו בני ישראל כשהנחשים החלו לבוא בקרב מחנה ישראל ולהמית עם רב? מן הסתם היו תגובות שונות בתוך המחנה. היו כאלה שאמרו שיש לצאת ולצוד את הנחשים. אחרים טענו שחייבים להרגם. היתה קבוצה שהציעה לבנות גדר מסביב למחנה כדי למנוע את כניסת הנחשים, ואילו אחרים טענו שיש לעזוב את המקום לטובת מקומות אחרים מתוך תקווה שהנחשים לא יבואו בעקבותיהם ויפסיקו להזיק להם. ומן הסתם היו גם אלו שנכנעו ואמרו שלא ניתן לעצור את הנחשים, אבל לפחות ניתן למצוא תרופה למניעת מוות.

ולמעשה שום דבר לא הועיל. מדוע? כי בני ישראל טעו כאן טעות בסיסית. הצרות לא נבעו מהנחשים. לו באמת היו הנחשים את יסוד הבעיה אזי יש תקווה שניתן לנצח אותם. אפשר לגבור על נחשים. אולם מקור הצרות אינו בנחשים. מקור הצרות הוא הפגם ביחסם של בני ישראל כלפי הקב"ה. ולכן, כל הניסיונות והמאמצים להתמודד עם הנחשים לא יפתרו את הבעיה. כנגד נחשים יש תקווה לניצחון, אך כנגד הקב"ה אין עצה ואין תבונה.

איך אפשר להוכיח לעם שהנחשים אינם מקור צרותיהם? בכך שמראים להם שצורת הנחש היא חלק מהפתרון לבעיה. ואם הנחש הוא הפתרון - הוא בודאי איננו הגורם לצרות. כשמסתכלים כלפי מעלה ומבינים שהישועה תבוא על ידי ראיית הנחש, אזי ברור שהצרות אינן נובעות מהנחשים אלא ממקור אחר - מיחסיהם עם הקב"ה. ואם כן, יש צורך לשעבד את הלבבות לאביהם שבשמים.

גם אנו סובלים בתקופה זו מנחשים שרפים הבאים להמית עם רב מישראל. וגם אצלנו ישנם כאלה הטוענים שחייבים לצאת ולהרוג את כולם, וכאלה הדורשים לבנות גדר כדי להפריד בין העם ובין הנחשים, וכאלה הטוענים שחייבים לעזוב את המקום שהנחשים נמצאים בו, בתקווה שמכאן ואילך הם כבר לא יפריעו לנו. אולם צריך להיות ברור שבדרכים אלה, כמו בזמן דור המדבר, הבעיה לא תיפתר. גם בזמננו התקפת נחשים היא תוצאה של יחסנו הלקוי עם ריבונו של עולם. וכמובן, שנחשים אפשר לנצח, אבל עם הקב"ה אין "חכמות".

ומה עלינו לעשות? חזקיהו המלך אמנם השמיד את נחש הנחושת. אבל אפילו בלעדיו אפשר להסתכל כלפי מעלה ולשעבד את לבנו לאבינו שבשמים, ואז אפשר לצפות לרפואה ולגאולה.