

Kol מִבְּשֵׂרֵת קוֹל Mevaseret

A Compilation of Insights
and Analyses of Torah topics

by the students of
Michelet Mevaseret Yerushalayim

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INTRODUCTION

In פרשת יתרו, משה told בני ישראל to become His סגולה. "ויבא משה ויקרא לזקני העם וישם לפניהם את כל, כל" the Torah states, and משה obeyed. "זקנים" (שמות יט:ז) הדברים האלה אשר צוהו ה' "ויענו כל העם יחדו ויאמרו כל אשר: בני ישראל response of חומש. The פסוק seems puzzling and redundant. Once we are told "ויענו", why is it necessary to add "ויאמרו"? If "כל" answered, why add the word "יחדו"?

Initially, when משה approached only the זקני העם, the people felt excluded. They took this to mean that the תורה was only for those who have special spiritual and intellectual characteristics. It was not for the common people. Their desire to be included encouraged them to speak up. They thought that their enthusiasm and unity would help them get a portion in תורה as well. The word "ויענו" shows that the Jews discussed among themselves whether or not to accept the תורה. After they unanimously determined they would do things together, the פסוק says, "ויאמרו". They decided to do ה' will as a united group. The word "יחדו" demonstrates that the decision to accept תורה was made by עם ישראל as a whole.

This year at MMY, we have, in a sense, chosen to reaccept the תורה upon ourselves. Like בני ישראל, we have uttered "נעשה ונשמע": we will do whatever is necessary in order to serve ה' in the best way possible. Every student came to learn of her own volition, bringing excitement and enthusiasm to all of her learning. As the year progressed we watched the love of תורה exhibited by our זקנים, our teachers, and we struggled to imitate them. Over the course of the year, we conversed among ourselves and turned to our teachers, asking them that they transmit תורה to us, both as individuals and as a group. Each article in this journal represents an individual's קנין on a specific topic. However, together, the articles signify a unanimous decision made by our entire מדרשה to join in the Jewish creative historical process of understanding and contributing to the מסורה of thousands of years. (תהילים קיט:צז) "מה אהבתי תורתך כל היום היא שיחתי".

Racheli Davies, Editor-in-Chief

Yonina Schnall, Editor

תשס"ד, MMY

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תנ"ך

רבקה and אביגיל

Talya Frei

Looking at תנ"ך, one might conclude that Judaism is a religion full of dominant male figures. It is the men who are the kings, priests, heroes, etc. The women, on the other hand, seem to take a secondary role. Playing the part of someone's sister, daughter, or mother, they are kept behind closed doors, humbly following the paths of their male leaders.

However, this is a superficial view of תנ"ך. As one looks deeper into its pages, one discovers just how active the women were. The women of תנ"ך led their husbands, sometimes subtly sometimes less so, pushing them in the directions that would lead them to their destinies. For example, רבקה and אביגיל prove that the men in תנ"ך were often under the influence of women, even when those women were not independent and the men still dominated. Women stopped men from making fatal mistakes and they helped them gain security along their many journeys.

רבקה appears several times in the תורה, her first appearance being when she drew water for her family at a well (בראשית כד:טו). Her actions made her seem the perfect wife for יצחק. The most dramatic event in which she took part was when she told יעקב to pose as עשו so he would receive the ברכה that was rightfully his. This is the last time רבקה appears in תנ"ך. אביגיל, while appearing in a few places in the תנ"ך, only plays a part in one scene. In פרק כה א, שמואל א, we learn that אביגיל stopped דוד from taking revenge against her husband, נבל, who refused to pay דוד and his men for guarding him. דוד was so astounded by her actions that he, at the end of the פרק, took her as a wife.

רבקה and אביגיל both appear in the context of their families. Both were living in a negative environment, which, by contrast, made their goodness stand out. רבקה was a descendant of אברהם's family. However, as אברהם's family was being strengthened spiritually, his brother's family was sinking lower in every way. While אברהם's family grew increasingly great and powerful, the side of נחור, preoccupied with pettiness, sank into moral decay. רבקה, the daughter of בתואל and the sister of לבן, is understood by חז"ל as "the daughter of a scoundrel and the sister of a scoundrel" (ויקרא רבה כג). She grew up in a home that knew the meaning of cheating and hypocrisy. Instead of succumbing to this corrupt society, רבקה reacted to her environment and became the person that changed

the history of עם ישראל. רבקה can be viewed as the “white sheep” in her family, standing alone for what she believed in. She continued this role later in her life. As the story of the ברכות indicates, there was a large communication gap between her and יצחק. Tricking יצחק and עשו was a sacrifice רבקה had to make in order to fulfill her role as a mother of Israel.

אביגיל is introduced to us as the wife of נבל. While she is described as “טובת שכל ויפת תאר”, he is described as “קשה ורע” (כה:ג). אביגיל was able to retain her שכל and stay in the correct path, even while under the influence of נבל’s home. Still, why was she married to him if he was so evil? One possible answer is that she was forced to marry him. Like רבקה, she had to remain as an isolated figure in her surroundings.

רבקה appears at different stages of her life, and she remained consistent throughout. She spoke and was active, rather than acted upon. אביגיל, who appears less regularly, also acted independently. Both women played vital roles in the lives of the men around them, ultimately saving them from fatal mistakes.

When רבקה was pregnant, she received נבואה that predicted יעבד “ורב יעבד” (בראשית כה:כג). Therefore, she took matters into her own hands, stopping יצחק from giving the ברכה to עשו, too. אביגיל, too, saw something that the men did not. She understood that דוד would put his reign in jeopardy by reacting emotionally and spilling innocent blood (כה:כח). She related a prophecy that ה’ would kill his enemies for him (כט).

Both women acted boldly based upon their נבואה. רבקה risked the שלום and אמת that her house stood on when she told יעקב to trick his father. As soon as אביגיל heard that דוד was coming, she immediately went out to meet him. The word “ותמהר” is repeated several times in this passage (מב, כג, יח). Both women are characterized by their courage and confidence. רבקה risked her home life and the loss of respect from her husband and children. אביגיל did not hesitate to run out and meet an army of angry men. Despite their humility, they were able to see the big picture at times when the men were unable to do so. This seems parallel to other women in תנ”ך, who took action based on a wide perspective.

Neither woman was overpowering or domineering. רבקה’s humility is reflected in the fact that she covered herself with a veil the first time she saw יצחק (כד:סה). She saw that he was special, and respected that uniqueness. She only reverted to tricking him when she saw that there was no other way to stop his mistake. אביגיל, too, did not overpower. We are told twice that she fell before דוד in humbleness: “ותפל על רגלי” (כד) and “ותפל לאפי דוד על פניה” (כג). This repetition emphasizes the way she willingly lowered herself for דוד’s sake. This could be seen as

a parallel to רבקה's (כד:סד) "ותפל מעל הגמל" (בראשית כד:סד). She too physically lowered herself out of respect for the man before her. Thus, אביגיל appeased דוד, lowering herself to beg for his forgiveness. Instead of trying to force him, she earned his admiration and he therefore chose to listen.

While רבקה bowed due to awe for יצחק, אביגיל did the same thing in order to appease דוד. She spoke to him, and begged for his forgiveness. She humbled herself, saying "בי אני אדני העון" (כד), and referred to herself constantly as his maidservant. This calmed דוד and caused him to listen to her. She told him not to bother with נבל as he is a revolting person, unworthy to be part of דוד's thoughts. Here, אביגיל was being cleverer than it seems. At this point, she was both appeasing דוד and rebuking him at the same time. Why was he occupying himself with such a insignificant and disgusting person? Further, her statement in פסוק כד, "בי אני אדני העון" might also be read as a rhetorical question – "does the sin lie with me?" Is it my fault? Do I and my innocent family deserve to die? In addition, by calling him "אדני" she was reminding him that he was not yet מלך, and therefore did not yet have the authority to wage war for the sake of revenge.

Despite these similarities, there are many differences in the paths they took to achieve their goals. רבקה had to revert to tricking her husband, much as אביגיל had to hide her actions from her husband (שמואל א. כה:יח-יט). Yet, אביגיל also adopted a more direct and straightforward approach. She spoke to דוד directly, and she made sure to send him peace offerings beforehand.

When she realized that she had his attention, she revealed that she was sending a message from ה'. In פסוק כו. In פסוק כו, she mentioned ה' twice, and did so regularly throughout the rest of her argument. She described a religious reason not to attack נבל. She told him to only fight battles that are entirely for the sake of ה', but not for revenge or for personal reasons. אביגיל hinted that דוד was going to be king, and an ideal king would not fight wars like this one. This argument ultimately stopped דוד from making the mistake of attacking נבל. נבל מדרש תהלים נג explains that אביגיל was better for דוד than a קרבן. A קרבן can bring atonement for sin, but אביגיל stopped him from performing the sin to begin with. If דוד had spilled innocent blood, he would not have been able to build a "בית נאמן" (כח) for ה', which was his ultimate goal. In addition, as king how could he give advice and sit in judgment after performing such a rash and unjust action?

אביגיל ended her speech by blessing דוד that ה' should kill his enemies so that he will be able to become a leader over Israel without

shedding innocent blood (ל-לא). This blessing came true in פסוק לט 'ויגף ה' את נבל וימת'. He died because of his wife's actions (לז). When דוד found out about the death, he blessed ה' and realized the truth of אביגיל's words, which prompted him to offer marriage to her (לט). Just like רבקה, אביגיל remained consistently humble. She bowed before דוד again and proclaimed herself unworthy (מא). Despite the major roles these women played, they constantly remembered that it is all from ה' and He is the One to thank for helping their plans succeed.

Another contrast between the two women is the way they used their physical gifts. רבקה from the very beginning modestly hid behind her veil. Throughout her attempt to arrange that יעקב receive the ברכה, she remained behind the scenes, pushing and prodding those around her. She did not let her part in the plan be obvious. She let יעקב appear to be working alone, so that עשו would not take revenge against her. אביגיל, however, played a somewhat different role. We are told that the four most beautiful women in תנ"ך were שרה, רחב, אסתר, and אביגיל (מגילה טו ע"א). Instead of hiding herself, אביגיל used her beauty in a positive way. She arranged to meet דוד face to face, hoping, perhaps, that her beauty would help convince him to stop the battle.

With all the similarities and differences between רבקה and אביגיל, they both succeeded in leading the men in their lives to higher achievements. יעקב was the right son to receive the ברכה, and דוד's future dynasty was saved through אביגיל's actions. רבקה not only saved יעקב from receiving the wrong ברכה, she perhaps saved the entire nation of בני ישראל from going on the wrong path under the influence of עשו. Similarly, אביגיל saved her family, דוד's lineage, and indirectly the history of בני ישראל. With their dual roles as mothers of their families and protectors of בני ישראל, they acted not only for reasons personally important to them, but were constantly looking after and protecting the path of all of בני ישראל.

מגילת אסתר

A Reading of

Dali Balaban

The רמב"ן once stated "שבעים פנים לתורה" in order to explain how so many differing explanations of the תנ"ך coexist (פירוש על בראשית ח:ד). Although there could have been only one reality, it is presented in a way that is open to interpretation, so that many lessons could be extrapolated and learned from each event. Since the תנ"ך came into existence, its stories have been studied and analyzed by experts and novices alike. מגילת אסתר is a classic work telling the story of the salvation of the Jewish nation. A superficial reading of the מגילה would point to coincidence as the cause of the events. However, we are better off (with much help from מלבים) exploring the different themes and characters using psychological and political considerations, which will reveal the story in a new light. The story is perfect – each personality had his or her specific role based on traits and tendencies – and through them God was able to execute His will while keeping Himself hidden.

אחשורוש is the first character to appear in the מגילה. His essence is portrayed in the way he is described when he is first introduced. This introduction discusses אחשורוש's reign, and then proceeded to illustrate his ostentation by describing the lavish parties he threw in the third year of his reign. Through the introduction it becomes apparent that אחשורוש is characterized by his major weakness: his paranoia. Throughout the מגילה, this was the driving force behind his actions. Perhaps the basis for this paranoia was "דלא הוה חזי למלכותא" (מגילה יא ע"א). He simply was not fit to be a king, especially not of such a vast empire, which he had conquered by his sword ("כי בחרבו ובקשתו כבשם"). In order to ensure that everyone would recognize his power, אחשורוש threw two magnificent parties. The purpose of the first, which lasted 180 days, was to display his riches to all the officers and servants of his immense kingdom, in order to impress upon them the image that all the wealth in the world belonged to him. The second event lasted only seven days, and all the citizens of שושן, the capital, were invited. Only then were the noblemen invited, for in the eyes of אחשורוש every citizen was equal, that is a servant to the king. As מלבים says, "עוד התחכם כי באחרית, המשתה שעשה אל השרים עשה משתה כללית לכל עם שושן, להורות כי קטן וגדול שווים אצלו (מלבים א:ה) כי כולם עבדי".

Being insecure, אחשורוש exercised his power in order to minimize that of others. This is why he put limitations on the grandeur of ושתי's party, which took place during his seven day party. He wanted to show his subjects that she was only queen by his grace. According to מלבים, he limited her party שהיא אין לה בית מלכות בפי עצמה, רק לו לבדו יאתה "באופן שמורה שהיא אין לה בית מלכות בפי עצמה, רק לו לבדו יאתה" (מלבים א:ט) המלוכה".

At the party אחשורוש attempted to display his supremacy as he commanded ושתי to appear before all of his guests מלכות. He wanted to show off her beauty in order to prove that he married her for her magnificence, not for her power (as she was the daughter of בלשצאר). As מלבים explains, he told her not to wear the crown until she appeared before him, thus proving that she only wore the crown due to him, and not due to her lineage (מלכים א:יא, ד"ה לפני המלך). Aware that the foundation of the commandment was completely false, ושתי refused to appear. Instead, she publicly refuted his claim and replied, "You stable boy of my father! My father could drink as much as a thousand men could guzzle and not get intoxicated, whereas you get drunk after just a little wine!" (מגילה יב ע"ב). Enraged, אחשורוש called in his advisors to decide the fate of his rebellious wife. ושתי needed to be dealt with, for through her refusal to appear and her reaction to his summons, she became a serious threat to his power. Not only did she endanger אחשורוש's position by publicizing that he was not the heir to the throne, but she also defied her important husband over trivial matters, an act which would surely lead women throughout the kingdom to defy their less important husbands over much more significant matters. For that reason a royal edict declared, "אשר לא תבוא ושתי לפני המלך אחשורוש ומלכותה יתן המלך, (אסתר א:יט) לרעותה הטובה ממנה".

Following the rebellious episode אחשורוש was faced with a new problem: he needed a new wife who would not threaten his reign as ושתי had. As he had tried to prove with ושתי at the feast, he would need to marry someone purely for her attributes, and not for any external factors that could seem beneficial to him in the eyes of others. "גם אל יביטו על מלבים ב:ב) היחוס רק שיהיו נערות טובות מראה, כי מלך גדול כזה למה ישגיח על היחוס" (ד"ה יבקשו). More importantly, she would need to be completely submissive to his laws and rules. Thus, אסתר was chosen as the perfect queen. From when she was first introduced until after she became queen, she was completely passive. The פסוקים describe primarily what was done to her. Never did she do anything on her own. The first information written about her is that she was raised by מרדכי, her cousin. Then she was brought to אחשורוש's palace, where she took only what was given to her. Finally, she was chosen as queen. This trait of passivity

made her a perfect candidate for the throne. In addition to her submissiveness she was the one of the world's four most beautiful women (מגילה טו ע"א), a quality that could serve as sure proof that אחשוורוש married her for her beauty alone. For these reasons she immediately found favor in אחשוורוש's eyes and was made his queen.

Not long after אסתר was crowned, the worst of אחשוורוש's fears was confirmed – conspiracies were being plotted against him and revolt was imminent. בגתן and תרש were revealed as traitors plotting against their king, and were immediately put to death. This event only increased אחשוורוש's already overblown paranoia. He now had proof that his crown was not sitting securely on his head. It was more like a trophy waiting to be won by someone else. In response to this episode, security was stepped up within the palace gates. אחשוורוש promoted המן, and used him to implement loyalty tests in order to prevent any further danger to himself. As Rav Soloveitchik explains, no sane monarch would tolerate a brute like המן. Only a sick, terrified king desperately needs such imaginary protection.¹

המן had his own plans. The first time he is explicitly written about is at his promotion. First, the פסוקים establish his lineage. He was a descendent of אגג מלך עמלק whom שאול had wrongly left alive after being commanded to destroy the entire nation (שמואל א טו:ט). Next comes a description of how he established his own power. All the servants of the king within the king's court were expected to bow to him as commanded by the king. Everything was going well until one lone man, מרדכי, refused to comply, for his religion did not permit him to do so. Instead of reporting the one rebel to the king, המן decided to use his newfound power to put a final end to his historical vendetta with the Jews. "וירא המן כי אין מרדכי כרע ומשתחוה לו וימלא המן חמה. ויבז בעיניו לשלח יד במרדכי לבדו בי הגידו לו את עם מרדכי ויבקש המן להשמיד את כל היהודים אשר בכל מלכות המן, אחשוורוש עם מרדכי" (אסתר ג:ה). As long as he was able to control אחשוורוש he could become a most powerful man, and finally rid himself and his nation of their greatest enemy. His reaction perfectly defines his egocentricity. Because he thought so highly of himself, מרדכי's refusal angered him so much that he was driven to extend punishment to מרדכי's entire nation.

המן understood אחשוורוש's weakness, his fear for his throne, and used it to his benefit. המן needed אחשוורוש to reinforce his plans, and the only way to succeed was through deceit. He presented his allegation to

¹Rav Soloveitchik, "In the Days of Mordecai and Esther." *Rabbinical Council of America, Second Series*, 4 (5734).

”ישנו עם אחד מפזר ומפרד בין העמים בכל מדינות מלכותך. ודתייהם שנות מכם (אסתר ג:ח). They were a unique people, dispersed among the nations, and their ways were different from the rest in the kingdom. There was nothing inherently worrying about any of the king’s accusations. Persia was a gigantic empire made up of all different peoples, but the king expertly presented things in a way that would increase the king’s fear, while hiding two details that would have prevented the king from approving of his request. The king explained that if these unusual people would choose to rebel they would do so with unity, and because they were dispersed, they could spread their rebellion throughout the empire and utterly destroy the king’s sovereignty.² According to מלבים, he did not mention that these people were the Jews, well known for being wise and intelligent. He also did not mention that he planned to murder all of them, for that would have jeopardized the possibility of his success. “המבואר שהמן גנב את לב אחשורוש. בשני דברים, אחד שלא הודיע לו מי הוא העם הזה שמלשין עליהם, שאם היה אחשורוש יודע שהם היהודים שהיו מפורסמים לעם חכם ונבון לא היה שומע לעצתו...דבר השני שגנב לבו שהמן (מלבים ג:ח-ט ד”ה ויאמר המן) שלא אמר לו שרוצה להשמידם רק לאבדם” strategy was so clever that the king gave his consent immediately, without giving the situation any thought or asking any questions (אסתר ג:י).

the king quickly put his plan into action. He sent letters to all states of the kingdom to inform the ministers that the Jews were to be destroyed on the 13th of אדר. מרדכי, being in the king’s court, quickly heard what happened and started mourning. According to the מדרש, מרדכי understood that saving the Jews was the king’s mission. “מרדכי מתהלך לפני חצר בית הנשים אמר אפשר לצדקת זאת שתנשא לערל אלא שעתיד דבר גדול שיארע על ישראל” בית הנשים אמר אפשר לצדקת זאת שתנשא לערל אלא שעתיד דבר גדול שיארע על ישראל” מרדכי quickly went to notify her of the sad news. Through the king’s servant, מרדכי, מרדכי told the king all about the decree to annihilate the Jews, and explained that the nation could only survive if she went to the king to beg him on their behalf. The king’s response marked the first time she acted pro-actively rather than passively: (אסתר ד:י) “ותצוהו אל מרדכי” active role as heroine of the story. She informed מרדכי that she could not go before the king because it would probably cost her life. This was not an acceptable reply. מרדכי knew that the king would ultimately be the savior of the Jews, so it was imperative that she act soon. “כי אם החרש תחרישי בעת הזאת רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר ואת ובית אביך תאבדו ומי יודע אם לעת כזאת” (אסתר ד:יד). She agreed to go, but not without a plan of

²Ibid.

action. She requested that the nation gather, fast, and pray for her success, and their survival.

On the third day, she finally approached אחשוורוש. She found favor in his eyes, and he allowed her to come before him. This action made אחשוורוש suspicious because it was out of character for אסתר to approach him. She was usually so passive, acting only in response to others. אסתר's action was part of her strategy. Just like המן, she knew אחשוורוש and his personality. She understood that she could not simply plead for her nation, as מרדכי had suggested. The only way to end המן's decree would be to control אחשוורוש more effectively than המן, by feeding אחשוורוש's paranoia. Thus, in response to אחשוורוש's questioning (אסתר ה:גד), she made a modest request for the king and המן to join her for a banquet. אחשוורוש agreed, but did not understand why she wanted to meet with him and המן. He started to question המן. Was something occurring between המן and אסתר that he didn't know about? Did אסתר have a confession to make?

Once at the banquet, more anxious than before, אחשוורוש again demanded to know what was on אסתר's mind. Yet again, אסתר requested that אחשוורוש and המן attend another banquet the following day. This was a brilliant move on her part, for the two would have the entire night to think and agonize about the nature of her request. Her plan worked like a charm. אסתר had been clever as she stayed true to her passive character. She allowed each man to come to his own conclusions instead of outwardly accusing המן, a move that ultimately led her to success.

אסתר's request affected המן's mind. Not only had he succeeded in gaining influence over אחשוורוש, but he was also being summoned by the queen for a second time. What greater honor was there than to be grouped with the king and queen? אסתר obviously held him in very high esteem, and was about to bestow greatness upon him. Nothing could make him happier; his life was going as planned. Due to his haughtiness, however, he let down his guard. He allowed his imagination to get the best of him. He could already taste his success, and could not imagine anything that could possibly foil his plans. המן's overconfidence caused his downfall.

His self-confidence pushed him to react wrongly to the sight of מרדכי disobeying him. Had he been in a rational frame of mind, this sight would not have bothered him. Instead, it sparked intense anger within him. "ויצא המן ביום ההוא שמח וטוב לב וכראות המן את מרדכי בשער המלך ולא קם ולא" (אסתר ה:ט). He ran home to tell his family about his great fortunes. He was so irrational that he decided, "כל זה איננו" (אסתר ה:יג). שוה לי בכל עת אשר אני ראה את מרדכי היהודי יושב בשער המלך"

needed to kill מרדכי at once, instead of waiting until the fateful day, the 13th of אדר. He would hang him the following day on a giant gallows, just in time to make it to אסתר's banquet. המן realized that he would never be able to maintain אחשוורוש's trust and retain his power if he hanged מרדכי without permission. Thus, in the middle of the night, he ran to the palace to speak to the king.

אחשוורוש was unable to sleep (אסתר ו:א), because he was feeling apprehensive about המן even since אסתר came to speak to him. After the first banquet with המן and אסתר, and the request for another banquet the next day, the king was convinced that something bad was going on. "כל הלילה היה אחשוורוש רואה המן על גביו עומד וחרבו שלופה בידו ומעביר פורפרין מעליו" (קהלת רבה ה:א) וכתרו מעל ראשו. Perhaps המן had been deceiving him all along, and was only pretending to be loyal. Was המן trying to usurp the throne?! Trying to allay his fears, אחשוורוש asked for his history books to be brought to him, hoping that the truth would be contained in their depths. Inside he found the story of how מרדכי had saved him from בגתן and תרש. He asked (אסתר ו:ג) "מה נעשה יקר וגדולה למרדכי על זה ח"י". How was מרדכי rewarded? Surely it was המן's job to reward those who were loyal to the king, unless, of course, המן was actually a traitor himself.³ אחשוורוש's servants replied (אסתר ו:ג) "לא נעשה עמו דבר". אחשוורוש quickly lost his confidence in המן, for it seemed he was not so loyal after all.

אחשוורוש, desperate for advice, asked (אסתר ו:ד) "מי בחצר". Ironically, none other than המן was there, coming to ask אחשוורוש if he could hang מרדכי. אחשוורוש's suspicions kept growing. Why was המן lingering in the courtyard in the dead of night? Still hoping he was wrong, אחשוורוש had brought in and asked him (אסתר ו:ו) "מה לעשות באיש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו". When המן heard this he was delighted. Not only did אחשוורוש agree to see him at night, but he sought him out in order to reward him! Getting carried away he answered that the man should be dressed as the king and paraded through the city on the king's horse. Upon hearing this reply אחשוורוש hurried to get המן out of his palace, for he no longer trusted him enough to keep him around. המן hadn't rewarded מרדכי for saving him from his conspirators, which may mean that he, too, was part of the conspiracy. In addition to that, המן's suggestion indicated that המן had his sights set on the crown.

This set the stage for אסתר to accuse המן of high treason. She had planted ideas in the heads of המן and אחשוורוש and they managed to play everything out themselves. All she had to do was put herself in the picture and the battle would surely be won. The second banquet arrived

³Ibid.

and both אחשורוש and המן were present, in much lower spirits than they had been the previous day. המן had been degraded by having to honor his enemy, and אחשורוש was preoccupied with worry over his throne. When אחשורוש again asked אסתר what she wanted, it was finally time for her to confess everything she had been hiding. Just as המן had done, she told her story to אחשורוש in a way that would cause him to take her side. "כי נמכרנו אני ועמי להשמיד להרוג ולאבד ואלו לעבדים ולשפחות נמכרנו החרשתי כי אין" (אסתר ז:ד) הצר שוה בנוק המלך" already suspicious, became increasingly worried, for his life was not the only one at stake, his queen was also in danger. So it was that when אסתר finally accused המן, the king was furious, for she finally confirmed that he was being controlled by a traitor. Roles immediately reversed, so אחשורוש stormed out to contemplate the situation.

So it came to be that ונהפוך הוא: the controlled gained control, without actually having exercised any power. המן came to אסתר and begged her for help, pleading with her to save his life. אחשורוש returned to find אסתר's bed and accused המן of trying to seduce the queen (אסתר ז:ח). אחשורוש now had proof of המן's intent, for he was acting just as אבשלום had acted when rebelling against דוד. אבשלום demonstrated his rebellion by sleeping with דוד's concubine (שמואל ב ט:כב). Thoroughly convinced that המן had been tricking him the entire time, אחשורוש had him hung on the gallows that was prepared for מרדכי. Esther succeeded in saving the Jews from their imminent destruction, and as a reward for opening אחשורוש's eyes, he now put all his trust in her and מרדכי (אסתר ח:ב). Order was restored to the kingdom, and the Jews were once again spared from their enemies.

God was really in control of these events. The setting and characters of the מגילה were vital to the accomplishment of ה' רצון. The personalities of the characters fit together perfectly so that one was able to pick up where the others left off, leading to the climax of the מגילה, the triumph of the Jews. Without proper investigation, this story would seem like a completely natural event. The true intent could only be revealed through exegesis and devotion. The story took place at the beginning of the long period of הסתר פנים. It would be easy to lose sight of Who was really in charge, because the story makes so much sense on the surface. Only through deep analysis of the personalities of the characters and the setting in which they lived can the truth be uncovered.

עקידת יצחק וחטא אדם וחווה

Aviva Pearlman

'ה's Command

The פרשיות of חווה and חטא אדם reflect the dilemmas of people faced with trial and temptation. An analysis of the human responses to 'ה will portray the different paths that אברהם and אדם and חווה chose to follow.

In גן עדן, אדם was permitted to eat any of the trees in the garden. God gave אדם an unlimited opportunity to sustain himself physically, and commanded him to eat of all the fruits. There was one restriction: the מצות לא תעשה (בראשית ב:יז) "ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו" of מצות לא תעשה אברהם was also given a מצות עשה (בראשית כב:ב) "קח נא את בנך": מצות עשה a מצות לא תעשה, and later a מצות לא תעשה, to hold back and not kill יצחק.

The Internal Struggle

These commandments demanded of both to go against the יצר, the force from within. In the story of גן עדן, the נחש represents the יצר הרע. It enticed חווה to eat from the tree, causing her to violate 'ה ציווי. אברהם, on the other hand, had a two-fold יצר from within. First he was commanded to give up his only hope for his future, "כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע" (כא:יב). In addition, אברהם had successfully preached monotheism and the principles of morality, including the particularly serious prohibition against killing. אברהם was commanded to violate the most basic law of morality.

אברהם fulfilled the first command in the most righteous manner, for not only did he go to fulfill 'ה ציווי but "וישכם אברהם בבקר ויחבש את חמר" (כב:ג). He got up early and single-handedly prepared to take his son to the sacrifice. But then, in a seeming "change of heart" by God, אברהם was commanded not to kill his son or even wound him in any way. This is precisely where אברהם was faced with his opposing יצר. The seeming contradiction between God's commands forced אברהם to make a decision. Once again אברהם passed the test and successfully fulfilled the second 'ה ציווי.

The Call

There is a fundamental difference between the response of אברהם and that of אדם to God's second statement to each of them. When the

יצחק bound (כב:ד) "וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא את המקום מרחק" (כב:ג) "וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא והנה איל אחר נאחו בסבך" חווה to eat from the הדעת עץ claiming that she could become more like God. חווה used her eyes to sin. The consequence was that her eyes could no longer see the קדושה within the חול. אדם and חווה now realized they were naked, for their eyes could no longer see the potential sanctity in the profane.

In contrast, אברהם used his eyes to perform the מצוה which ה' had commanded. Not only did אברהם see המקום, the place where he was commanded to fulfill his task, but אברהם also saw המקום, God Himself, and the importance of carrying out the commandment. Instead of seeing his son as קרבן לה', he now had the merit of seeing the איל which he would sacrifice instead of his son. Through this vision, אברהם made the חול into something קדוש.

The nature of ידיעת ה' is also presented differently in both stories. The snake explained that "כי ידע אלהים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם" (ג:ה) כאלקים ידעי טוב ורע" (ג:ה) כאלקים ידעי טוב ורע" According to the snake, the reason for the prohibition of eating from the tree is that God knows that when she eats from it she will gain knowledge like His. This preposterous statement implies that man has the possibility of acquiring the same knowledge as God! The snake's delineation of ידיעת ה' is clearly a false misconception!

In contrast, the מלאך who came to אברהם told him that he must not sacrifice his son because "עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלהים אתה" (כב:יב) אברהם had successfully passed the test and the angel's delineation of ידיעת ה' is clearly a proof that God approved of אברהם's actions.

ברכה or קללה?

Finally, the most significant comparison is between the curse given to חווה and the blessing given to אברהם. Both times the פסוקים use the expression, "הרבה ארבה", חווה was cursed that her pain and suffering in childbirth will be great. (ג:טז) "אל האשה אמר הרבה ארבה עצבונך והרנך". אברהם was blessed that he will have an infinite number of descendents. "הרבה" (כב:יז) "אל האשה אמר הרבה ארבה עצבונך והרנך". Indeed, part of these promises were fulfilled almost immediately. חווה gave birth to קין, who shortly thereafter killed his own brother. Immediately following יצחק we are told of the birth of רבקה, who would soon be the wife of יצחק and fulfill the blessing given to אברהם!

Summary

When God tests us, we are in a position to choose our path. Although man is faced with internal conflicts and external temptations it

is his responsibility to choose God's way. If he does, he will be able to use his senses for the right things, focus his actions towards the proper goals, and ultimately reap the benefits for doing ה' רצון. אדם and חווה clearly did not withstand temptation, did not keep the commandment of God, and were therefore doomed to be cursed and to be exiled from Paradise. The parallels between the two stories emphasize the contrast between the path chosen by אברהם, a path that one can and should take, and that of אדם and חווה. Perhaps the תורה is suggesting that אברהם was מתקן the sin of אדם and חווה. If we chose to ignore God's command we must realize that "כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות" (ב:יז). Choosing this path will result in blocking our access to ה', the ultimate good. "ויגרש את האדם וישכן" (ג:כד) מקדם לגן עדן את הכרבים ואת להט החרב המתהפכת לשמר את דרך עץ החיים" Following God's path, no matter how difficult, will allow us to rise to the level of a "גוי גדול ועצום" in both a literal and spiritual sense. "כי ידעתיו למען" על אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחרינו ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט למען הביא ה' (יח:יט) אברהם את אשר דבר עלי" The choice is in our hands!

complaint. They did not mention the water until the end. **"ולא היה מים לעדה ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן. וירב העם עם משה ויאמרו לאמר ולו גוענו בגוע אחינו לפני ה'. ולמה הבאתם את קהל ה' אל המדבר הזה למות שם אנחנו ובעירנו. ולמה העליתנו ממצרים להביא אתנו אל המקום הרע הזה לא מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן ורמון ומים אין לשתות"** (פסוקים ב-ה).

Another point of note is the two different ways that אונקלוס translates the words "בא" and "הביא", as either "אתא" or "על".

על	אתא
(ד) ולמה הבאתם את קהל ידוד אל המדבר הזה (ד) ולמא אעלתון ית קהלא דיי למדברא הדין (לפי הגירסה במקראות גדולות)	(א) ו יבאו בני ישראל כל העדה מדבר צן (א) ואתו בני ישראל כל כנשתא למדברא דצין
(ו) ויבא משה ואהרן מפני קהל אל פתח אהל מועד (ו) ועל משה ואהרן מן קדם קהלא לתרע משכן זמנא	(ד) ולמה הבאתם את קהל ה' אל המדבר הזה (ד) ולמא איתיתון ית קהלא דיי למדברא הדין (לפי הגירסה של פרויקט השר"ת של בר-אילן)
(יב) ויאמר ה' ... לכן לא תביאו את קהל הזה אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם (יב) ואמר יי... בכין לא תעלו ן ית קהלא הדין לארעא דיהבית להון	(ה) ולמה העליתנו ממצרים להביא אתנו אל המקום הרע הזה (ה) ולמא אסיקתונא ממצרים לאיתאה יתנא לאתרא בישא הדין

In the weekly publication of פרשת נשא for שבת בשבתו הרב ד"ר, תשס"ד explains the distinction between the two different translations. אונקלוס מבחין בין 'בא' במשמע 'הגיע', המתורגם בפועל 'אתא', לבין 'בא' "אונקלוס מבחין בין 'בא' במשמע 'הגיע', המתורגם בפועל 'אתא', לבין 'בא'". That is, אתא refers to arrival, while על refers to entrance from the outside.

This translation explains פסוק א, where בני ישראל arrived in the desert. Similarly, פסוק ו, is understandable. משה and אהרן entered the אוהל. However, two questions arise: 1) Can the definitions of הרב פון for "בא" be applied to the causative "הביא" as well? 2) What can we learn from the discrepancy between the גירסא of פסוק ד in the Bar-Ilan Responsa Project versus that of the מקראות גדולות?

According to the גירסה of בר אילן, which translates הביא of פסוק ד-ה with אתא of שורש, it seems that בני ישראל felt that they had arrived in the מדבר, that this was their final destination. They were satisfied where they were. However, in פסוק יב, ה' reminded בני ישראל that they had not yet arrived at their final destination. Therefore, the word "על" in

reference to ארץ ישראל in the response is a reminder that they have not yet entered their promised land.

According to the גרסא in the מקראות גדולות, we should read פסוק ד differently. The people's question is, "Why have we been taken to *enter* this desert in the first place?" This could be repeating a regular theme in בני ישראל's complaints, i.e. the ever-present resentment about having been taken out of מצרים, and a stated desire to return.

Finally, a translation that could be easily overlooked is that of "יען" in פסוק יב, in which משה and אהרן told their punishment. "בי לא האמנתם. בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל לכן לא תביאו את הקהל הזה אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם". In this פסוק, "יען" is translated as "חלף", an "exchange." This implies that משה and אהרן not being allowed to lead בני ישראל into ארץ ישראל is not only a punishment, but an exchange for their sin, following the pattern of מידה כנגד מידה.

Another example will support this explanation of אונקלוס's translation of "יען". In במדבר יא:כ, the אספסוף complained about the מן, and they were punished. "עד חדש ימים עד אשר יצא מאפכם והיה לכם לזרא יען כי אונקלוס "מאסתם את ה' אשר בקרבכם ותבכו לפניו לאמר למה זה יצאנו ממצרים" provides a fascinating translation. "עד ירח יומין עד דתקוצון ביה ויהי לכון לחקלא. חלף דקצתון במימרא דיי 'דשכינתיה שריא ביניכון ובכיתון קדמוהי למימר למא דגן נפקנא ממצרים". Once again, we see a direct correlation between their sin of "מאסתם" and their punishment of "יצא מאפכם", which are both translated using the same שורש "קוץ", which means "to feel aversion, loath". Their punishment, that they will have so much שלו that they will come to loath it, is a מידה כנגד מידה for their dissatisfaction with the מן that ה' provided for them.

Based on this explanation of משה and אהרן's punishment, what can we learn about how their punishment fit their crime? ה' identified their sin as "לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל". Because of this sin, משה and אהרן were forbidden from taking בני ישראל into ארץ ישראל. ארץ ישראל is the location in which בני ישראל are capable of becoming an אור לגויים. Perhaps this is why ה' did not see fit for משה and אהרן to be leaders there. If they failed to sanctify God's name in the presence of only בני ישראל, they might not be able to take on the responsibility of sanctifying His name in ארץ ישראל before the גויים of the world?

One should read תרגום אונקלוס translation carefully. He is not merely providing help for native readers of Aramaic. He is a brilliant commentator, and we need to be מדיק in each and every word he uses. In this example, his commentary helps us explain where events took place, how משה and אהרן related to בני ישראל, and how an עונש cut short the leadership of משה and אהרן.

משה: The Metamorphosis

Shira Elana Schwartz

The section of the תורה describing הטא העגל has been talked about by all the פרשנים. It was such a drastic event that its impact is still felt today. Usually we analyze this tragic failing in reference to its effect on our people. However, I would like to look at the הטא from a different perspective, analyzing its effects on משה רבינו.

Immediately following the description of the sin, ה' commanded "לך רד כי שחת עמך אשר העלית מארץ מצרים... ויאמר ה' אל משה... ועתה הניחה לי, משה (שמות לב: ז-י) ויחר אפי בהם ואכלם ואעשה אותך לגוי גדול"

ר' אלעזר comments on the phrase "מאי לך רד? אמר רבי אלעזר, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: משה, רד מגדולתך! כלום נתתי לך גדולה אלא בשביל ישראל, ועכשיו ישראל ר' אלעזר "What is meant by the phrase, 'Go, descend'?" said: The Holy One Blessed Is He said to Moshe, 'Moshe, descend from your position of greatness. I only granted your leadership for the sake of Yisrael. And now [that] Yisrael sinned, what need have I for you?'¹ (ברכות לב ע"ב). According to this גמרא, ה' sentenced משה to a demotion. בני ישראל had sinned and thus משה's leadership was no longer necessary. Until now, משה had been functioning as a messenger for ה'. Now, with הטא העגל, the mission had been aborted.

Yet, there are other places where ה' employs the terminology of "רד" (שמות יט: כא), for example). What makes this "רד" different than the other ones, and propels ר' אלעזר to see beyond the literal meaning of the text? What makes this descent more than just a physical one?

Textually, I think the answer lies in what appears after the command to descend. In the other places, the command is followed by a command to משה to do something. For example, in the case of שמות יט: כא משה was commanded to prevent the people from going up to סיני. Here, however, the motive for משה's descent is merely "כי שחת עמך". No plan of action or command follows. This descent seems more final, the result of the plan to obliterate the Jewish People. ר' אלעזר sensed this, and he therefore offered his more deep explanation.

¹ Translation, as well as much of the substance of this essay, are taken from R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Go Descend: The Test of Moses' Leadership," in *Derashot HaRav*, Ed. Arnold Lustiger, Ohr Publishing, 2003

מיד" continues in the גמרא picking up on yet another phrase. "תשש כחו של משה ולא היה לו כח לדבר. וכיון שאמר, 'הרף ממני ואשמידם,' (דברים ט:יד) אמר משה: דבר זה תלוי בי. מיד עמד ונתחזק בתפלה ובקש רחמים." "Immediately Moshe's strength ebbed and he lacked the strength to speak. However, as soon as [G-d] said, 'Leave Me be and I will destroy them,' משה said [to himself]: This matter depends on me! He immediately arose, strengthened himself in prayer, and pleaded for mercy."

The words "הרף ממני" that the גמרא quotes are comparable to the words "הניחה לי" that ה' uses in our פסוקים. "הרף ממני" appears in מיד"ט:יד, in משה's repetition of these events. What is it about "הניחה לי" that invigorated משה, causing him to feel his responsibility and role in the survival of בני ישראל? Rav Yosef Dov Soloveichik זצ"ל addresses this issue in his article, "Go Descend: The Test of Moses' Leadership," found in *Derashot HaRav*.

The Rav identifies a linguistic switch in ה' words to משה. The speech begins with "וידבר", a term that generally connotes a harsh tone (רש"י שמות יט:ג). God's words continue with "ויאמר", a softer more delicate tone used in reference to the words "הניחה לי".

ה' was angry at בני ישראל. Although ה' expressed to משה His desire to wipe out His people, there was mercy hidden behind the anger. By changing tones, ה' hinted to משה that he should see beyond the surface of ה' anger. ה' hinted that if משה would act perhaps the Jewish People could still be saved.

This idea answers another of Rav Soloveitchik's questions. What did ה' want from משה? If ה' wanted to save the Jewish People, He could have said so. If, however, ה' wanted them destroyed, where did משה find the brazenness to confront God?

It seems that there was more to rectifying הטא העגל than just the people's response. The leader needed to react, as well. If ה' goal was to save בני ישראל, the most effective way would have been to tell משה to assemble the people, lead them in repentance, divvy out the punishments, etc. By merely hinting, ה' meant not only to save the people, but to help to bring the leader to a higher level. The Rav points out that ה' demoted משה before hinting that he should take control of the situation. משה was being tested to see whether or not he would take the lead. Would he sense his obligation, his awaiting role? Would משה take on the task not only of a God-appointed leader, but a self-appointed leader as well? Until now משה had been the one whom ה' had sought out. From the beginning, משה did not want the leadership role (שמות ג-ד). משה is even referred to as "עבד ה'" (דברים לד:ה), one whose essence was to accept God's commands. By first demoting משה, God gave משה a chance

to seek, to take initiative, to acquire something for himself, to actively take himself to the next level. This does not, of course, mean that משה should generally have acted without ה' authority. Rather, ה' hint gave משה an extra push to take his own initiative.

The Rav continues, explaining that all growth requires sacrifice. משה, in this case, sacrificed the possibility that ה' would make a nation out of him alone. משה lost this chance, but he committed himself even further to בני ישראל. Perhaps ה' hinted at this need to sacrifice his own advancement for the sake of the people, when He referred to בני ישראל as "עמך אשר העלת מארץ מצרים". The Rav points out that we refer to the תורה as "תורת משה", because משה acquired the תורה when he fashioned the second set of לוחות. Perhaps, the term "עמך", similarly, hints that משה had acquired the nation through the sacrifice that he had made. משה achieved a new level of greatness in his relationship to בני ישראל. The פסוקים explain that upon hearing God's command to descend, "ויפן וירד". Not only did he descend, but he descended transformed.

The word "ויפן" may refer to another way in which משה was transformed. As משה descended the mountain, with the Divine לוחות in his hands, משה became as close as possible to following the Ways of God. Reacting just as ה' did, "ויחר אף משה" (compare שמות לב:יט to שמות לבי:יט). משה followed the precept of imitating ה'.

It might seem that by demolishing the first לוחות, משה was also smashing the intimate and direct connection that the people had been waiting to experience with the Almighty. Yet for the sake of the higher goal, משה did what was required. Although it seemed that the connection had been severed, it was through the second לוחות that משה and the people achieved a higher status. משה came as close to The Author Himself as possible.² Indeed, משה was commended by ה' for breaking the לוחות (שבת פז ע"ב מובא ברש"י דברים לז:יב) "ישר כחך ששברת". לוחות ה'.

While משה was on the mountain with the second לוחות, the תורה specifically mentions that משה did not eat or drink. This only accentuates the almost incorporeal state that משה achieved after the incident of the עגל. משה was on such a high level that he did not even recognize his own state. "ומשה לא ידע כי קרן עור פניו". (שמות לז:כט). The glow that משה acquired after these experiences mimics that of God's infinitely intense light which is masked in this world.

The ultimate level that משה achieved is that of mystique, of mystery. The need to hide is the essence of קדושה והנורא. "הקל הגדול הגבור והנורא".

² Also see the (דרשה יח) בית הלוי, which argues that בני ישראל achieved a higher status through the second לוחות.

also remains hidden, more hidden than anything else. Through the thick, dense night, He conceals Himself, creating a mystique and a gap that lures us ever closer, tempting us to meet Him there, in the mystery, in His privacy. It is the "קול דממה דקה" that can be heard ever so slightly, and that we must sensitize ourselves to notice. It is constantly everywhere, all around us, in every atom of creation, and inside our very selves, whispering His secrets to us. When משה glowed, illuminated by Divine light, this required him to retreat into privacy with God. משה became as Godly as possible, for it is then that he became like Him. "ודבר ה' אל משה" (שמות לג:יא) פנים אל פנים כאשר ידבר איש אל רעהו.

קרבן פסח וימי המילואים

פרידה לאופר זהבה שינסקי

מהפסוקים המתארים את פרשת קרבן הפסח ואת פרשת שבועת ימי המילואים עולה ששני אירועים אלה הם מיוחדים ובעלי קווי דמיון משותפים. שניהם נועדו להביא לכפרה ולהתקדשות. נעמוד, בקצרה, על ההבדלים ועל המשותף שביניהם.

באמצעות תהליך קרבן הפסח, בני ישראל מתקדשים ונעשים לעם ישראל, עם ה'. הם יוצרים ברית עם ה', כעם, באמצעות קרבן זה. הדם, שיש לו כוח מטהר, מטהר את העם. יש הלכות המיוחדות לפסח, כגון, שכל אחד מבני ישראל חייב להשתתף בקרבן והוא נאכל בצורתו. זאת העולה שמאחדת את העם ומקדשת אותו. זו הברית שבני ישראל, כעם, כורתים עם ה'.

גם שבועת ימי המילואים נועדו להתקדשות, אך פה, ההתקדשות היא של אהרן ובניו לכהונה, "ומלאת יד אהרן ויד בניו". במשך שבועה ימים אהרן ובניו עוברים תהליך של כפרה, נמשחים לכהונה ומתקדשים. להכנת לחם המצות, חלות המצות והרקיקים, משתמשים בחטים, שהם הדגן המשובח ביותר. יש להכין גם את הבגדים כדי להלביש בהם את אהרן ובניו, "כדי שימצא בזה את פועל השלמות בכל אופניו" (רלב"ג על שמות כט:ד). עצם לבישת הבגדים היא חלק מתהליך משיחת הכהנים "מילוי ידיהם". אהרן ובניו סומכים את ידיהם על הפר והאילים. בכך, בעל הקרבן מתאחד עם הקרבן ומהעביר אליו משהו מעצמו. זה כאלו הוא מקריב חלק מכוחו ועצמיותו לשמים. אהרן ובניו שמים את הדם על שלוש הנקודות הכי קיצוניות שבצדו הימני של גוף האדם: למעלה באוזן, באמצע בבוהן היד ולמטה בבוהן הרגל (כט:כ). על ידי שריפת החלקים הנותרים על המזבח, מתכפרים חטאיהם של הכהנים והם מיטהרים מטומאה. אסור לאכול את מה שנותר מהקרבן וגם אסור לזר לאכול ממנו, כי הוא קדוש.

אחרי הקרבת הפר לחטאת והאיל הראשון לעולה, מקריבים את האיל השני, איל-המילואים. קרבן זה מסיים את כל סדר "מילוי הידיים" – הקדשת הכהנים לכהונתם. קרבן זה דומה בהכנתו לקרבן שלמים. משמעותה הסמנטית של המלה "מילואים" קרובה לזו של המלה "שלמים". רש"י פירש "כי איל מילואים הוא – שלמים, לשון שלמות, שהושלם בכל" (שמות כט:כב). בסוף התהליך, אהרן ובניו עומדים ביחד ומשה מזה עליהם דם. ההזאה היא הפעולה המסיימת את תהליך ההקדשה. אהרן ובניו אוכלים מאיל המילואים ומהלחם. "ואכלו אתם אשר כפר בהם למלא את ידם לקדש אותם" (פס' לג). התהליך נמשך שבועה ימים, ומיועד כולו להיות כפרה לכהנים. היבטים מסוימים ממנו, כמו במה שקשור לתרומת החזה והשוק ובגדי הכהונה, יהיו לדורות.

במשך שבועת ימי המילואים, אנו רואים שאהרן ובניו מתקדשים ומטהרים; ע"י קרבן הפסח, בני ישראל מתקדשים והופכים להיות עם ה', ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש. בקרב בני ישראל, ישנם הכהנים, שהם קדושים יותר ותפקידם יהיה לשמור על קדושת העם ולכפר על חטאותיהם.

ההקבלות בין פרשת קרבן הפסח ופרשת ימי המלואים מוכיחות ששני התהליכים דומים, משום שמטרתם דומה, והיא "למלא את ידם לקדש אותם". ההבדלים בין שני התהליכים קשורים למה מקריבים, פר ואילים (בימי המלואים) לעומת שה (בקרבת הפסח) ולמקריב, אהרן ובניו לעומת כל עם ישראל. בשני האירועים יש התייחסות מסויימת להכנת הבגדים, הכהנים צריכים ללבוש כתנות, אפודים וכו', ולקראת הקרבת קרבן הפסח, המתניים צריכות להיות חגורות, הנעליים והמקלות מוכנים. לאחר שחיסת הקרבן ושריפתו (בימי המלואים) או צלייתו (בקרבת הפסח) באש, יש גם התייחסות לאשר יש לעשות עם הדם. בימי המלואים יש לשפוך את שארית הדם אל יסוד המזבח, בפסח יש לשים אותו על שתי המזוזות ועל משקופי הבתים. דמיון נוסף יש גם בעובדה שיש לאכול סוג של לחם עם הקרבת הקרבן (ככר, חלה ורקיק בימי המלואים ומצות בפסח). הביטוי "חקת) עולם" מופיע בשני ההקשרים, כדי לציין את נצחיותו של האירוע. על ימי המלואים נאמר "והיה לאהרן ולבניו לחק עולם מאת בני ישראל", על קרבן הפסח נאמר, בין שאר הדוגמאות, "וחגתם אתו לה' לדרתכם חקת עולם תחגהו". כמו כן, שני התהליכים נמשכים שבעה ימים ("שבעת ימים תמלא ידם" לעומת "שבעת ימים מצות תאכלו"). בשני המקרים אסור לזר לאכול מהקרבן ויש לשרוף את מה שנותר.

המאחד, אם כן, את שתי הפרשיות הוא מטרתם. בשניהם יש תהליכים המובילים למצב של התעלות. פעם זה מתבטא בהתקדשות הכהנים וכפרתם ופעם בהיות לעם, ביצירת הברית עם ה'. אי לכך, הפרטים לא זהים. דמיון רב ישנו.

תפקידיהם השונים של אליהו ואלישע: המקובל והרבי החסידי

נעמי פרעסבי

ספר מלכים הוא ספר על מלכי ישראל ויהודה. הספר מתחיל במות דוד ומשיחת שלמה, וממשיך ברשימת כל מנהיגי ישראל עד לחורבן בית ראשון. באמצע הספר (ממלכים א פרק יז ועד מלכים ב פרק יג) מוצגים שני דפוסים שונים של מנהיגים, הנביאים אליהו ואלישע, ומנהיגותם מתוארת בעומק רב (שלא כשאר הנביאים בספר מלכים המופיעים רק כדי לומר את נבואתם ואז נעלמים). כשקוראים את קורות חייהם של אליהו ואלישע, מגלים קווים מקבילים רבים.

כך, למשל, אנו מוצאים ששניהם עברו באותם מקומות, כגון באבל מחולה, גלגל, בית אל וכו'. כמו כן, לכלכלתם, שניהם היו תלויים בנשים (אליהו, במ"א יז:ט; אלישע במ"ב ד:ח). יותר מכך, בהתפתחות העלילה, שניהם מחיים את בניהן של שתי נשים אלה, בהתאמה, לאחר שהם לכאורה מתו מחוליים (אליהו, במ"א יז:כא-כב; אלישע, במ"ב ד:לד). פחות דרמטי הוא הדמיון בנבואותיהם. שניהם ניבאו על שפע (על מטר, אצל אליהו, במ"א יח:א; על מזון שניתן להשיגו בזול, אצל אלישע, במ"ב ז:א) וניבאו בתקופות רעב (אליהו, מ"א יח:ב; אלישע מ"ב ד:לח). ועוד, שניהם גם ניבאו את מותם של מלכים (אצל אליהו, מ"א א:ד; אלישע, מ"ב ח:י) ועל שניהם הוטל דין מוות (אליהו, מ"א יט:ב; אלישע, מ"ב ו:לא). אפשר להזכיר גם את הכלי המתמלא בשמן (אליהו, מ"א יז:ד; אלישע, מ"ב ד:ו), ואת העובדה ששניהם, באותו מעמד פרידה משמעותי, חצו את נהר הירדן (אליהו, מ"ב ב:ח; אלישע, מ"ב ב:יד). שני הנביאים גם כוננו באותו שם, "איש אלקים": האשה האלמנה אומרת לאליהו: "עתה זה ידעתי כי איש אלקים אתה ודבר ה' בפיך אמת", (מ"א יז:כד) ואלישע נקרא כך על ידי הכתוב: "ואיש בא מבעל שלשה ויבא לאיש האלקים לחם בכורים". (מ"ב ד:יד) גם הביטויים "רכב", "אש" ו"סוסים" מופיעים אצל שניהם, אם כי בצירופים מעט שונים: "רכב אש וסוסי אש", אצל אליהו (מ"ב ב:יא) "סוסים ורכב אש", אצל אלישע (מ"ב ו:יז). עוד ביטוי, נוגע ללב, נאמר על שניהם, והוא "אבי אבי רכב ישראל ופרשיו". את זאת צועק אלישע עם עלייתו של אליהו השמימה, ואת זאת אומר יואש מלך ישראל על אלישע לפני מותו של הנביא. במבט ראשון נדמה שחיהם של שני נביאים אלה דומים. אבל במבט קרוב יותר באישיות של כל אחד מהם, ואיך היא מתבטאת במעשיהם, ניכרים הבדלים רבים המצביעים על תפקידיהם המיוחדים.

בניתוח חייו של אליהו, עולה דבר אחד בבירור - אליהו חי חיים בודדים. הוא היה קנאי לה' והיה לו קשה מאד לצאת מהמצב הרוחני שהיה נתון בו כדי להתייחס לאחרים. בחלק גדול מחייו של אליהו אנו מוצאים דיכאון. אנו רואים את זה בכל הסיפורים על חיי אליהו במקרא. אנו לא מוצאים באף אחד ממסעותיו של אליהו, שיש עמו משהו. יש לו נער, ורק הוא, ואנו אפילו לא יודעים את שמו! אליהו עבר ממקום למקום על פי רוח ה'. דוגמא לכך אנו רואים כשעבדוהו, אשר על בית אחאב, מוצא את אליהו בדרך, רוצה שהוא יחזור לבית אחאב עמו ומבקש ממנו, "והיה אני אלך מאתך ורוח ה' ישאך על אשר לא אדע ובאתי להגיד לאחאב ולא

ימצאן והרגני ועבדך ירא את ה' מנערי" (מ"א יח:ב). אליהו נוסע לבד על פי רוח ה' - רק ה' לבדו מלווה אותו במסעותיו.

מצד שני, אלישע חי עם אנשים. הוא אדם מאד טבעי ומקושר למציאות. כמו אליהו, אלישע נוסע למקומות רבים בחייו. אבל לעומת אליהו, הוא תמיד נמצא בחברת בני נביאי ה' שרוצים ללכת בעקבותיו, כאמור - "ויאמרו בני הנביאים אל אלישע הנה נא המקום אשר אנחנו יושבים שם לפניך צר ממנו. נלכה נא עד הירדן" (מ"ב ו:א-ב). אלישע תמיד מדבר עם אנשים ומתייחס אליהם. לכל מקום שאליו אלישע מגיע, הוא נשאר זמן מה (הוא לא עוזב באופן פתאומי על ידי רוח ה') ומלמד תורה לתלמידיו (בני הנביאים), לגברים, ולנשים שעולים לביתו בראש חדש ובשבת (מ"ב ד:כג).

הדיכאון של אליהו החמיר עד כדי כך שהוא ביקש להתאבד. הרצון להתאבד נוצר והמשיך להתפתח כשאזבל רצתה להרוג אותו מפני מעשה הבעל בהר כרמל - "ויגד אחאב לאזבל את כל אשר עשה אליהו ואת כל אשר הרג את כל הנביאים בחרב. ותשלח אזבל מלאך אל אליהו לאמר כה יעשון אלהים וכה יוספון כי כעת מחר אשים את נפשך כנפש אחד מהם" (מ"א יט:א-ב). תגובת אליהו היתה שלילית מאד (מ"א יט:ד) "וישאל את נפשו למות ויאמר רב עתה ה' קח נפשי" העינוי שעבר אליהו לא בא לו רק על ידי מלך ומלכה רשעים, אלא גם מכל בני ישראל. מיד אחרי שביקש למות, אליהו ברח אל מערה והכריז (מ"ב יט:יד) "קנא קנאתי ה' אלקי צבאות כי עזבו בריתך בני ישראל את מזבחתיך הרסו ואת נביאך הרגו" בחרב ואותר אני לבדי ויבקשו את נפשי לקחתה. הוא מרגיש בודד בעולם מפני קנאותו לה'. זה ההסבר לשם שניתן לו - 'עכר ישראל' (מ"א יח:ז).

גם אלישע נרדף על ידי מלך. כשיהורם מלך ישראל שמע עד כמה חמור המצב הכלכלי, הוא הצהיר, "ויאמר כה יעשה לי אלהים וכה יוסף אם יעמד ראש אלישע בן שפט עליו היום" (מ"ב ו:לא). אבל תגובת אלישע היתה הפוכה מזו של אליהו, ולומדים מכך הרבה על מבני האישיות המנוגדים של שניהם. כשאלישע שמע את השמועה, הוא היה "ישב בביתו והזקנים יושבים אתו" (מ"ב ו:לב) (וזו דוגמא נוספת לכך שהוא תמיד היה בקרבת אנשים). תגובת אלישע היתה הגנה עצמית והוא ניסה להציל את חייו - "ואלישע ישב בביתו והזקנים יושבים אתו וישלח איש מלפניו בטרם יבא המלאך אליו והוא אמר אל הזקנים הראיתם כי שלח בן המרצח הזה להסיר את ראשי ראו כבא המלאך סגרו הדלת ולחצתם אתו בדלת הלוא קול רגלי אדניו אחריו" (מ"ב ו:לב). יש לאלישע שמחת חיים ורצון לחיות. המלך אמנם רצה להרגו, אבל הוא לא הרגיש לבד בעולם או שהעם נגדו.

סוף חייהם מדגיש את השוני בין אליהו ואלישע. אנו לא לומדים על מיתת אליהו. הכתוב רק אומר "ויעל אליהו בסערה השמים" (מ"ב ב:יא). הוא עוזב את העולם באופן רוחני שקשה לנו להבין. לעומת זאת, אלישע מת כדרך אדם רגיל - "וימת אלישע ויקברהו" (מ"ב יג:כ) אליהו היה "איש אלקים" - מעבר לעולם הפיסי. אלישע גם כן נקרא "איש אלקים" אבל הוא הביא מידה זו לעולם הזה.

אחרי לימוד יסודי של חייהם של אלישע ואליהו ומבט על איך שהם מתוארים במקרא, קשה מאד להבין איזו תמונה התנ"ך מצייר לנו. יש הבדלים רבים בין סיפוריהם של שני נביאים אלה. אבל יש דמיון רב, שאי אפשר להתעלם ממנו. לאליהו ולאלישע יש חסרונות ומגבלות שנבעו מאישיותם. אליהו לא היה יכול ליצור קשרים עם אחרים, אבל אלישע לימד תורה והיה מעורב בחיי אחרים. אליהו הצליח לתקשר רק עם ה', אבל אלישע עסק בעולם הזה. לאליהו היתה מטרה בתפקידו כנביא אלקים - "היום יודע כי אתה אלקים בישראל" (מ"א יח:לו). הוא רצה להפיץ את ידיעת ה'. אבל הוא לא יכל לעשות את זה לבד, בגלל

מגבלותיו. הוא היה זקוק לאלישע, איש חברתי, שימלא את התפקיד שלו. ואנו רואים שאלישע אכן עשה זאת. אחרי שנרפא מצרעתו, אמר נעמן שר צבא ארם "הנה נא ידעתי כי אין אלקים בכל הארץ כי אם בישראל" (מ"ב ה:טו). אלישע לא רק הודיע את שם ה' ליתר העם (כפי שאליהו התחיל לעשות), אלא שהוא גם הגיע לאומות העולם ולימד אותם דעת ה'! ישנה דוגמא נוספת לכך שאלישע השיג יותר מאליהו, וכתוצאה מכך שמו התפרסם יותר לפני מותו. לפני שאליהו עזב את העולם, אלישע תלמידו צעק אליו, "אבי אבי רכב ישראל ופרשיו" (מ"ב ב:יב). לפני מותו של אלישע, גם כן נאמר עליו פסוק זה, אבל על ידי יואש מלך ישראל. אלישע ידע להתייחס לא רק לקרובים שתמיד אצלו, אלא גם לשרים ומלכים. הכתוב עצמו מראה לנו שאלישע השלים את תפקידי אליהו. כשאליהו ברח למערה, ה' ציווה אותו שלשה דברים. אבל אליהו רק מילא את האחרון מציוויי ה', ועל אלישע היה מוטל להשלים את הציוויים האחרים!

ציווי:	המעשה:	הסבר מי עשה המעשה:
1. מ"א יט:טו- ומשחת את חזאל למלך על ארם	מ"ב ח:יג- ויאמר אלישע הראני ה' אתך מלך על ארם	אלישע סיפר לחזאל שהוא יהיה מלך על ארם
2. מ"א יט:טז- ואת יהוא בן נמשי תמשח למלך על ישראל	מ"ב ט:ו- ויקם ויבא הביתה ויצק השמן אל ראשו ויאמר לו כה אמר ה' אלקי ישראל משחתיך למלך אל עם ה' אל ישראל	אלישע משח יהוא למלך
3. מ"א יט:טז- ואת אלישע בן שפט מאבל מחולה תמשח לנביא תחתך	מ"א יט:יט- וילך משם וימצא את אלישע בן שפט והוא חרש שנים עשר צמדים לפניו והוא בשנים העשר ויעבר אליהו אליו וישלך אדרתו אליו	רק את זה אליהו עשה והוא עשה את זה מיד

יש לאלישע שיחה עם רבו לפני עזיבתו את העולם. אליהו שאל את אלישע מה הוא יכול לעשות למענו. אלישע ענה לו "ויהי נא פי שנים ברוחך אלי" (מ"ב ב:ט). רלב"ג פירש את זה כך: בכור מקבל פי שניים בירושה, סמל לכך שהוא הממשיך של משפחתו. כל הנביאים קבלו מרוחו של אליהו, ואלישע רצה כפול מהם כדי להבטיח שהוא יהיה ממשיכו של אליהו. הוא רצה להמשיך את תפקידו של אליהו כנביא אלקים בעולם. כשאליהו ואלישע הלכו למקום עלייתו לשמים של אליהו, הם עברו מבית אל ליריחו, יעדו האחרון של אליהו - הירדן. מיד אחרי עליית אליהו בסערה לשמים, אלישע הלך מהירדן ליריחו, משם לבית אל, ומשם להר הכרמל (מקום הנס המפורסם של אליהו). אלישע התחיל את תפקידו כנביא אלקים והלך ממש בעקבות רבו, כתיקון וכהמשך לכל מעשי אליהו! רש"י במ"ב ג:א פירש שה"פי שניים" שקיבל אלישע מאליהו התבטא בנסים. אליהו חולל שמונה נסים ואלישע ששה עשר. הרבה מהנסים שעשה אליהו, עשה גם אלישע. דוגמאות לכך הן, כאמור, כד השמן שהתמלא, החייאת ילד שמת, וחציית הירדן. אבל אלישע היה איש ידוע שתמיד חולל נסים לאחרים. "והמלך מדבר אל גחזי נער איש האלהים לאמר

ספרה נא לי את כל הגדלות אשר עשה אלישע" (מ"ב ח:ד). אלישע, בעל הנסים, היה יכול לחבר בין הקודש לחול- בין ה' לעם ישראל, דבר שהיה מאד קשה לאליהו לעשותו. ניתן להמשיך את השוני בין אליהו לאלישע לשוני שבין שני סוגים של מנהיגים דתיים- מקובל ורבי חסידי. אליהו היה כמו מקובל- הוא חי את חייו כאדם בודד ורוחני, והוא פילס את את הדרך לעם ישראל בדין. אלישע היה כמו רבי חסידי - תמיד מוקף בחסידים, והוא סלל את הדרך ברחמים. כל אחד באישיותו החזקה והשלמה מילא את חלקו במשימה המשותפת של הבאת דעת ה' לעולם, בשלמות.

מחשבה ומעשה

Doctors: God's Creation or Man's Creation?

Adina Lifschitz

In today's world everyone has at least one doctor with whom he consults. Trips to the doctor are expected, and no one is frowned upon for receiving medical treatment. In fact, medical examinations are often required when filling out various applications for schools, camps, and jobs. However, within הלכה the legitimacy of a human doctor requires further investigation and analysis. Should patients be encouraged to go to doctors? Should physicians be encouraged to treat patients? Or is the notion of a human doctor some kind of בדיעבד?

The גמרא addresses these questions, citing פסוקים in משפטים: "וכי יריבן אנשים והכה איש את רעהו באבן או באגרף ולא ימות ונפל למשכב, אם יקום (שמות כא:יח-יט) והתהלך בחוץ על משענתו ונקה המכה רק שבתו יתן ורפא ירפא" (בבא קמא פה ע"א) "מכאן שניתן רשות לרופא לרפאות", רש"י elaborates and explains that one does not say "ה' strikes and ה' heals." In other words, one does not rely on ה' to cure.

It is evident from the גמרא that one might think that the תורה would prohibit healing, and the ברייתא therefore needs to state that that is not the case. It is unclear from the גמרא whether medicine and healing are ideal, or whether man simply has "permission" to heal. In גמרא ברכות the גמרא ברכות is of the opinion that human doctors are not the ideal. Since this is accepted practice, however, it is permitted. "לפי שאין דרכן של בני אדם לרפאות אלא שנהגו" רש"י explains that according to רב אחא man should not be involved in healing. Rather he should seek mercy from ה'. רב אחא responds, quoting the above cited ברייתא which allows man to heal.

What is אב"י's opinion, and what is the nature of the dispute between the two אמוראים? Does אב"י mean that human medicine is part of טבע, and therefore a לכתחילה, in which case there is a fundamental dispute between רב אחא and אב"י? Or, perhaps אב"י is not disagreeing with רב אחא, but expanding on his point. רב אחא states that man is only involved in medicine because such is the accepted practice, and אב"י makes explicit that the תורה gives man permission to follow the accepted practice.

טור (יורה דעה שלו:א) seems to follow the latter interpretation of the גמרא. He cites two reasons why practicing medicine is permitted. The first reason is that the doctor may be concerned that he will make a mistake and cause the death of the patient. The second reason, which seems to correspond to the second reading of the גמרא above, is that the doctor might say that he does not want to heal an illness caused by ה'. The תורה, therefore, has to give permission to the doctor to perform his task.

The תורה's general reliance on doctors comes out in a משנה in יומא (ח:ה). A sick person is fed if an expert doctor says so. If no experts are available, then we rely on the patient to determine if food is necessary. This implies that doctors are reliable and רפואה is indeed legitimate.

דברי הימים ב טז:יב, however, אסא is condemned for seeking out doctors instead of ה'. "וגם בחליו לא דרש את ה' כי ברפאים": ה'. Similarly, שמות טו:כו, says that רפואה is in the hands of ה': "כי אני ה' רפאך". If ה' is the healer, and if it is bad for man to seek out doctors, then why does the תורה give permission for doctors to heal?

רמב"ן, himself a physician, has a different approach to the matter. In his commentary on ויקרא כו:יא, he writes that when בני ישראל are שולמים, God treats them directly. When בני ישראל are on this high level ה' Himself removes sickness and there is no need for doctors to watch one's health. He quotes the above cited פסוק in שמות as proof that ה' heals directly only when בני ישראל act in accordance with ה's will. "ויאמר אם שמוע תשמע". לקול ה' אלקיך והישר בעיניו תעשה והאזנת למצותיו ושמרת כל חקיו כל המחלה אשר שמתו (שמות טו:כו). Thus, according to רמב"ן, during the time of the נביאים, if בני ישראל sinned and got sick they would go to the נביאים and seek ה', rather than go to doctors and receive conventional medicine. For example, when חזקיהו המלך became sick he did not go see a doctor. Rather, ישעיהו told him ה's word, and חזקיהו cried out to ה' (מלכים ב פרק כ). For the same reason, אסא was condemned for going to doctors. Thus, according to רמב"ן's interpretation, רב אחא means that ideally sickness comes as punishment for sin, and ה' heals directly. Once, unfortunately, man has become accustomed to consulting doctors, ה' leaves the healing process to nature. The דינים in the תורה do not rely on ניסים, and consequently, the תורה gives permission for a doctor to heal.

Similarly, ט"ז (יורה דעה שלו:א) explains that the ideal רפואה occurs due to בקשת רחמים, since ה' is the real source of רפואה. Man, however, is not זוכה to true healing. Therefore he must rely on the רפואה which nature, as mediated by doctors, provides. ה' gives permission for humans to heal

case, when consulting doctors, we have to remind ourselves that there is a bigger picture that lies beyond our personal health and well-being.

רמב"ם on the Status of Gentile Religions

Deborah Anstandig

As a member of such a small nation, the Jew can hardly lose the sense that other religious groups are simply enormous. Acutely aware of both the internal and external conflicts created by dueling religious peoples, the Jew also learns of the historical significance of these other religions. רמב"ם, who lived in the 12th century, seeks a way to understand the roles of the two most significant peoples relative to Judaism, and their respective contributions to the historical task of revealing of God's name to the world. רמב"ם seems to take Christianity and Islam most seriously, as they prove closer to the ways of truth than other world religions. רמב"ם draws fascinating distinctions between the two peoples, explaining how their existence paves the way for the ultimate purpose of the world.

The שבע מצוות בני נח include the requirement to set up a legal system, as well as the prohibitions of cursing the Lord, worshiping false gods, murder, having illicit sexual relationships, theft, and eating from a live animal. Together, these commandments form the foundation of any sort of moral culture and legal system *for all of humanity*, from the time that אדם arrived in the Garden of Eden through the revelation of God's will at הר סיני (א:ט). (הלכות מלכים ט:א).

רמב"ם not only affirms the authority of these commandments in משנה תורה, but adds other details as well. For one thing, ignorance is no exemption from penalty under the law. Consequently, if a man knows that a woman is married but is unaware of the prohibition of having relations with a married woman, he is guilty and deserves death if he sleeps with her (שם י:א). If a non-Jew follows all of these commandments, he becomes a candidate for the status of גר תושב (שם ח:י). Most astoundingly, רמב"ם requires that the non-Jew's motivation be pure. One must follow שבע מצוות בני נח not because they are just and moral, but because God commanded the children of נח, as it says in the תורה that was revealed to משה. If one who keeps these commandments out of הכרע הדעת, some kind of human moral reasoning, he is considered neither a גר תושב nor one of the חסידי אומות העולם (שם ח:יא). This striking claim places quite a tough obligation upon the non-Jew. It is not enough to merely

behave in a certain manner. The gentile must behave this way based on the understanding that these commandments come from the God of the Jewish people!

This indicates that God who is the authority over the Jewish people is also authority over the peoples of the world. Ultimately, the peoples of the world must recognize their obligation to serve Him. In a lecture entitled "Maimonides on Judaism and Other Religions" Prof. David Novak expressed the relevance of these commandments in their historical context.

Before the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the Jews themselves were Noachides, and as such were bound by Noachide law... Thus, the Noachide law was not exchanged for or overcome by the Mosaic Torah; it was a necessary preparation for it... As regards to the relation of Noachide law to the Mosaic Torah, Maimonides sees Noachide law as the first installment, as it were, of the full Torah...and it indicates that every true Noachide is a potential Jew.¹

Novak indicates that, according to רמב"ם, these commandments are not only universal, but they are also the foundations of God's system to help man relate to Him truthfully. Furthermore, if Novak is right that "every Noachide is a potential Jew," it seems that רמב"ם might look favorably upon any religion with Jewish foundations.

What then, is that status of the Christian and the Muslim in the Jewish eye? One can immediately elevate Christianity and Islam above any of the plethora of religions because of their foundations in Judaism. Yet neither, of course, reaches the level of Judaism. Both Christianity and Islam have positive and negative characteristics. Christianity is founded on the basis of the trinity, a multi-faceted divinity that leans dangerously toward the side of עבודה זרה. Islam remains monotheistic. Christianity accepts the idea that Jews were once the chosen people, even if it claims that God breached His covenant with the Jewish people. Islam claims that Jews were never the chosen people.

Halachically, these distinctions between the religions are enough to change the way that the Jew relates to each of them. Prof. Daniel Lasker quotes the prohibition of an idolater to learn תורה (other than the שבט מצוות), explaining that this would apply to Christians because they are

¹ The lecture, from February 23, 1997, is available on-line at <http://www.icjs.org/what/njsp/maimonides.html>.

idol worshippers (הלכות מלכים יט).² As רמב"ם explains, "This Christian nation, which advocates the messianic claim in all their various sects, all of them are idolaters...and all the restrictions pertaining to idolaters pertain to them" (פירוש המשניות, עבודה זרה א:ג). On the other hand, Novak quotes a תשובה of the רמב"ם which says the opposite: "It is *muttar* to teach the commandments to *notzrim* and draw them to our law. But it is not permitted to teach *anything* from it to Muslims because it is known to you about their belief that this Torah (of ours) is not from God . . . and if one can convince the Christians of the correct interpretation [of Scripture], it is possible that they might return to what is good." (תשובות) (הרמב"ם קמא). It does not seem immediately possible to justify these various statements with one another. In any case, these texts indicate the tensions between the desire to remain distant from other religions and the desire to draw them to truth.

Given this background, we are left with unanswered questions. Do Christians and Muslims fit into the framework of following the שבע מצוות based on the acceptance of Jewish principles? If the שבע מצוות were a pre-Sinai preparation, how do Christians and Muslims relate to them today? Further, according to the 9th מצוה in רמב"ם's list of Positive Commandments, a Jew is obligated to "proclaim the true faith to the world." So, should a Jew attempt to teach the rest of the non-Jewish world his faith and turn Judaism into a proselytizing religion?

Remarkably, according to the newly released uncensored Frankel edition of the רמב"ם, in הלכות מלכים יא:ד, רמב"ם presents yet another new view, that "All of the words of Jesus the Christian and that Islamic man who came after him are only to lead the way to the מלך המשיח and to do תיקון עולם in order to worship ה' together." So when all is actually said and done, רמב"ם sees the value in both Christianity and Islam.

It is difficult to understand just what רמב"ם holds regarding the value of the non-Jewish religions. רמב"ם does not seem to be consistent in addressing the issue. As the modern world attempts to rediscover the רמב"ם through his unedited writings, it is quite possible that it will discover quite a different story than the Christian censors intended to have presented. The question of whether the Christian and the Muslim is equivalent to the average Noachide becomes impossible to determine. Yet through the confusion, רמב"ם will continue to remain an authority on all matters of Jewish thought, regardless of whether one can discover a consistent theory.

² Prof. Daniel Lasker, "Tradition and Novelty in Rambam's Approach to Other Religions", a Hebrewn lecture divided in Jerusalem, May 17, 2004.

A Fork in the Road

Sally Abraham

As I am walking along a trail in the Golan Heights while on an MMY טיול, I find myself surrounded by a maze of trees. The bus is still a long way off, and I realize that the only way to insure survival is to stay en route and be sure not to wander along the wrong path at a fork in the road. The best way to do that is to fill in the footprints that the person in front of me had engraved in the ground. Too many times I had gotten momentarily lost on a טיול by straying on the wrong path, simply because the person in front of me was too far ahead, and I had no one to follow.

This reminds me of our מסורה. You need to stick to our מסורה and make sure you are not wandering in the wrong direction, because that דרך will take you much further from your destination. However, today, when there are so many paths being opened up for us, how do we know which is the correct one? How do we know which one is the רצון ה' between פוסקים and השקפות have divided us, and we find ourselves in a position where we identify with one group of people more than another. Is there still a way to be one עם ישראל despite all of these subdivisions?

”שמעון הצדיק היה אומר... על שלושה דברים העולם עומד על: פרקי אבות” מהר”ל (א:ב). תורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים” explains that these are the three aspects of our religious development. Regarding תורה, he explains that “על ידי התורה אין אדם בעצמו בריאה של תורה הוא אבל היא בריאה חשובה” Learning תורה gives us perspective. It influences our understanding of the world, affects our attitude to life, and dictates what we perceive to be right and wrong. As a person grows, the wisdom he receives matures. The wisdom of the תורה enlightens him with its clarity and introduces him to his Creator. In short, it transforms man from an insignificant part of nature to a creature who gains importance from standing in the presence of God.

Whereas תורה involves learning your path in life, עבודה involves actively doing it. We do the מצוות in order to emulate our Creator and build a relationship with Him. מהר”ל says, “על ידי עבודה הוא שומר היחס שיש ה' לאדם אל בוראו” Your עבודה sustains an awareness and connection with ה'. As humans we have the capacity for relationships, and by giving us

deeds, ה' gives us an opportunity to draw close to Him. For example, we pray three times a day in order to enter into conversation with the Almighty on a regular basis.

Finally, we must develop a relationship with others through גמילות חסדים. We should befriend others and build mutual feelings of belonging, whether to family, community, or friends. As מהר"ל says, "ועל ידי גמילות חסדים האדם יש לו חבור אל שאר בני אדם כי לא נברא האדם בפני עצמו רק עם שאר בני אדם." We were created with others around us. We were not put on this world solely for self-gratification. Rather, we have מצוות בין אדם לחבירו which perfect us and ensure an ordered and just society. The three pillars on which the world stand can be divided into three parts, שכל, נפש, and גוף. Each one is parallel to a pillar.

מהר"ל draws a parallel between these three pillars and the three sins which are עבודה זרה, גלוי עריות, ושפחת דמים: יהרג ואל יעבר. If the mind does not have תורה it is chaotic. Without תורה we are lacking direction and self-awareness. עבודה זרה is an inner confusion about what the world is and how it came to be. Lack of תורה leads to lack of understanding, which is part and parcel of עבודה זרה.

גלוי עריות is a misrepresentation of our connection to ה' and the world. These acts make the body טמא instead of doing עבודה to sanctify the body. תפילה and the other מצוות make you holy. גלוי עריות is when the capacity for relationship with God is destroyed, and replaced with self-serving lust. The aspect of the person that yearns for closeness with ה' is misdirected and is used for illicit relationships. There is no service of God, only service of the self.

שפיכת דמים is giving to others and giving of yourself. גמילות חסדים is the opposite. A person takes control of another's life. He gains his importance and security through murder. Instead of building himself through giving, the murderer destroys himself and his victim through jealousy and violence.

In essence, the three sins destroy the three pillars on which the world stands. Our ultimate purpose is to perfect all three aspects of our relationship with man and with God. Various schools of thought and political movements in עם ישראל try to develop one aspect more than the others. In truth the three should be found in balance. As individuals, we may need to find a community of similar people, but as long as we are not neglecting גמילות חסדים, עבודה, and תורה we can be sure that we will make progress in our goal of becoming שלם and completing the purpose for which God created us. We see that the subdivisions in עם ישראל are not as bad as they might appear. There are different communities focused on one aspect of our relationship with ה' more than another. Together

they compliment one another. By walking in the footsteps of our מסורה that are engraved in the ground before us, will we be able to arrive at our destination.

Working for a Living

Yonina Schnall

At the heart of every Jew is the dream to live a life devoted to full-time תורה study. Throughout Jewish history special provisions were made for those whose “trade” was תורה, and they often received public support so they could continue to learn without worrying about mundane concerns. The גמרא (מגילה ה ע”ב) even defines a large city as one with at least ten בטלנים, people who study תורה all day.

Today, however, this issue has become a source of contention in the Orthodox Jewish community. Some of those who work are shocked at the increasing number of men who are capable of work, but choose instead to devote their time to study at ישיבות and כוללים. They are exempted from many community obligations and are supported by צדקה. The question that arises is whether or not תורה *should* be a full time “trade” or whether there is room for a balance between work and תורה study.

The source of both sides of the debate can be found in תנ”ך. “ונתתי (דברים יא:יד) מטר ארצכם בעתו יורה ומלקוש ואספת דגן ותירשך ויצהרך” פסוק identifies gathering grain as something positive. This seems to contrast with the פסוק in יהושע, which reads, “לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפך והגית בו יומם, (יהושע א:ח) ולילה” “day and night?”

The רבי ישמעאל (לה ע”ב) גמרא ברכות relates a מחלקת between רבי and רבי ישמעאל. According to רבי ישמעאל, work must be combined with study. Otherwise, one will become dependent on צדקה and neglect תורה study. רבי disagrees. He says that if people busy themselves with their work, they will not have time for תורה? Instead, when בני ישראל do what ה’ wants their work will be performed by others. When they do not follow ה’ they will have to do their own work and even the work of others.

רבי’s attitude seems consistent. רבי (לג ע”ב) גמרא שבת relates that after learning in a cave for twelve years, רבי emerged and saw workmen and farmers sowing, plowing, and harvesting. Shocked at the way they were abandoning תורה, a flame broke out wherever he looked. A בת קול demanded that he return to the cave before he destroyed God’s creation. After twelve months, he emerged once again only to witness the same situation as before. However, this time he realized that not everyone can be an undistracted scholar. He saw an old farmer collecting

his harvest for שבת and he realized that people must be allowed to be עובד ה' in their own way.

דרך רבן גמליאל (פרקי אבות ב:ב) רבן גמליאל states that תורה must be combined with ארץ, meaning employment. He explains that if תורה is not accompanied by work, the idleness will cause sin. According to רבן גמליאל, work is a necessary element to succeed religiously. When combined with study, each is strengthened.

This opinion is also supported by רבי צדוק (פרקי אבות ד:ה), who says that one should not support oneself through learning. The words of תורה must remain pure, pursued only for their intrinsic value and not as a tool to sustain oneself.

רמב"ם (הלכות תלמוד תורה ג:יא) משנה תורה in the רמב"ם, and in his commentary on this משנה, follows the position of רבי צדוק. He says that anyone who only learns and is supported by צדקה, "defames ה' name, cheapens the תורה, extinguishes the light of faith, causes himself ill, and removes himself from עולם הבא." People should work, though they should remember that תורה is the foundation. רמב"ם concludes on an extreme note, saying that anyone who brings proof to the contrary is "insane and confused."

רבי שמעון בן צמח responded to רמב"ם's position was not universally accepted. רבי שמעון בן צמח (תשב"ץ א:קמו) by saying that רמב"ם was a prominent doctor in his generation, and therefore did not need to live on his תורה. What about those rabbis and חכמים who are not in that position? "Are they supposed to die of hunger, demean their honor, and remove the yoke of תורה from their backs?" He concludes that this is not the intent of תורה.

רש"י works to provide a precise definition of a scholar. He says (ש"ת הרא"ש טו:י) that a scholar is someone who sets regular times to study and never cancels except "for his maintenance." It is impossible for him to learn without maintaining himself. After all, "אם אין קמה אין תורה," (אבות ג:ז) But he must not work with the intention of becoming wealthy, and as soon as he is done working he must return to his studies immediately.

אחרון הירב, הרב מרדכי הלוי, goes so far as to say that earning a living to support תורה is itself מצוה. He explains that those who "did not suspend the words of תורה except to fulfill a מצוה, i.e. to seek after their food and their sustenance and the sustenance of their household and their food" were exempted from taxes (ח"מ נה-נו).

The ט"ז, in contrast, feels that תורה can only be sustained by undistracted studying. The demands of livelihood are too disruptive. He even says that a תלמיד חכם who has the money to support himself is still permitted to take צדקה, since the financial needs of raising sons to be

scholars and daughters to marry scholars, are great. Rav Moshe Feinstein seems to agree with this general approach. He states *הלך י"ד, חלק משה, י"ד*, that a scholar should not distract himself with other things or take part in business, except for the minimum he needs for survival. If there is no other choice, he should support himself through *צדקה*.

The *אר"ח קנו:א-ב* (ערוך השולחן) says that many *תלמידי חכמים* were workingmen. Still, they always saw their *תורה* as primary and their work as secondary. However, this is only for a scholar whose life was mainly *תורה*. For an average householder this does not apply. He is only obligated to be *קובע עתים*, to dedicate specific times for *תורה* study. The *בעל הבית* between a scholar and a *שולחן ערוך* distinguishes sharply.

The *אורח חיים קנו:א* (באור הלכה) also feels that in every generation there are a few individuals who should only study *תורה*. Moreover, he says those who devote themselves to *תורה* only should not merely depend on *צדקה* collected by the community. Rather, they should find sponsors who agree to support them, similar to the famous relationship between *יששכר* and *זבולון*.

Rabbi David Schnall expands on this example in his book *By the Sweat of Your Brow*.¹ He says that the *מפרשים* are troubled by two stories in *תנ"ך* regarding *יששכר* and *זבולון*. In *יעקב*'s final *ברכה* to his children, and in *משה*'s final "farewell speech" in the end of *דברים*, the elder *יששכר*, is listed after the younger *זבולון*. The *מפרשים* say that this stems from their special relationship. *זבולון* and his descendants dealt in business while *יששכר* and his descendants studied *תורה* and were supported by *זבולון*. *זבולון* received part of the spiritual reward for the *תורה* study he supported. The *תורה* ignores their birth order, and gives priority to the business man over the scholar.

This issue has been debated for centuries, and the question is as important today as ever. As we have seen, there are many Talmudic and Rabbinic sources in support of those who favor a balance between work and study, and in support of those who think there should be a life exclusive to *תורה* learning, at least for the select few. Whether one learns and earns or just learns, each Jew's life should revolve around *תורה*, and his goal should be to worship *ה'*.

¹ Rabbi David Schnall, *By the Sweat of Your Brow*, New York, 2001, p. 89.

In his commentary on שמות כ"ב, Rav Hirsch suggests a connection between our parents and God. Judaism was founded, he claims, on historical events: יציאת מצרים and מתן תורה. It was not created based on human research and discovery, which could lead to false gods and עבודה זרה. These events, witnessed by millions of people, prove that ה' is our God who created the world. But how do we know these events are true? How can we trust enough to base our entire faith on them?

We trust because we have מסורה telling us that these things are true. Where do we get the מסורה from? We get it from the previous generation, from our parents. "Tradition depends solely on the faithful transmission by parents to children and on the willing acceptance by children from the hands of their parents." Judaism depends on each generation listening to the previous generation. God created parents as His messengers, to bring His תורה to His children. Parents are not merely humans who physically create their children. As God's messengers, they create their children spiritually as well. Even more than parents deserve honor for providing their children's physical needs, parents deserve honor for bringing their children closer to God. He commanded בני ישראל to honor their parents because He transmits His תורה through them.

In an ideal situation, all parents would follow תורה ומצוות and their children would learn by example. But contradictions arise when, unfortunately, God's messengers transmit His תורה either incorrectly or not at all. On the one hand, we are commanded to listen to our parents. On the other hand, the other מצוות are dedicated to ה' עבודת ה'. What happens when the two conflict?

Rav Hirsch answers this question in his commentary on ויקרא י"ג: "איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת שבתתי תשמרו אני ה' אלקיכם". Why is שבת mentioned in the second half of the פסוק? Rav Hirsch cites תורת כהנים on this פסוק: "אם אמר לו אביו ואמו לעבור על אחת מכל המצוות האמורות בתורה ושמע להם. ת"ל ואת שבתתי תשמרו כולכם חייבין בכבודי". What happens in the ultimate contradiction between כבוד אב ואם and עבודת ה', when one's parents tell him directly to violate הלכה? You might think that out of כבוד you should listen to them. Hence, the second half of the פסוק teaches that God says that He is the ultimate ruler over both the child and the parent. Just like a child must obey his parents, the parents must obey God. Though God granted parents a lofty status as His messengers, He still rules over them. When they abuse the power He gives them, the children are obligated to answer directly to God.

We should honor our parents as messengers of God. We should grant them כבוד more for the spiritual gifts they have given us than the material ones. We honor them, stand for them, put their will before our

own, respect them as our teachers, and as the ones who bring us closer to God. But there is a limit: when parents tell their children to violate הלכה, they must not listen.

Life often does not present us with clear-cut situations. What does one do if parents do not observe the מצוות, even if those parents do not ask directly to violate הלכה? Conflicts are likely to arise, and they must be treated carefully. In those situations, a child must still honor his parents. One must remember the physical gifts from his parents – his life, his food, his clothing, etc. For that alone, parents deserve our complete respect. These children must also acknowledge the spiritual gifts. Even if one's parents are not שומר תורה ומצוות, God created them as parents. They are a link in the chain of מסורה even though they may not have dedicated their lives to teaching תורה to their child. They brought him to where he is, enabling him to learn תורה, even if they did not teach him directly. Though it may be hard, they deserve his כבוד.

Rav Hirsch adds that מורא toward parents is a prerequisite to achieving קדושה. As evidence he cites the fact that ויקרא in פסוק appears in פרשת קדושים among other מצוות focused on achieving קדושה. By learning to put one's parents' needs first, one submits to them, just like one should ultimately submit to God.

לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו

Sara Kadin

The prohibition of "לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו" is mentioned three times in the תורה (שמות כג:יט, שמות לד:כו, דברים יד:כא). There is both legal and ideological significance to this איסור. I will attempt to discuss the philosophical underpinnings of this איסור.

טעמי המצוה

The ראשונים adopt two basic approaches in trying to explain the reason for this prohibition. ספורנו and רמב"ם are of the opinion that it was an ancient pagan practice to cook a kid in its mother's milk during fertility festivals. ספורנו explains that "כמעשה הכנענים שהיו חושבים להרבות בזה" (דברים יד). Similarly, רמב"ם explains in the מורה נבוכים that "אין הדבר רחוק לדעתי מורה נבוכים" (3:48). It was the belief of these idolaters that this ritual would assure a fruitful harvest. The function of the איסור is to counter this idolatrous practice.

רמב"ם and עזרא have a completely different approach. "שלא נהיה עם" (רמב"ם דברים יד:כא) Similarly, (אבן עזרא שמות כג:יט) "אולי היה כי אכזרי שנחלב את האם ונוציא ממנה חלב שנבשל בו הבן". They hold that the איסור exists to weaken our impulse of cruelty. It is morally repulsive to cook a kid in the very thing that provided its sustenance, its mother's milk. But the animal itself (mother or kid) does not suffer. We are not primarily concerned with the feelings of the animal. Rather we behave in this way for our own sake, in order to ingrain רחמנות in our personalities. For if we become accustomed to treating animals in a cruel way it will easily spill over into how we treat our fellow man. The central focus of the איסור is to cultivate a certain behavior in man.

סמיכות פרשיות

Interesting, this prohibition appears twice in an identical פסוק (שמות כג:יט, לד:כו) "ראשית בכורי אדמתך תביא בית ה' אלקיך, לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו". What is the connection between the איסור בשר בחלב and the בכורים brought on שבועות?

In the time of harvest, people become extremely insecure regarding the success of their crops. They have put a lot of effort into plowing, planting, etc. But ultimately things like rain, which are beyond

human control, can ruin the crop. This can be scary and frustrating. This insecurity causes people to turn to things other than God, like superstitions or idolatry, in order to feel some sense of control. Further, when the harvest is gathered, it is easy to take too much credit for the success. A person might not acknowledge the role of ה' in his success. The בְּכוֹרִים that are brought to the מִקְדָּשׁ remind the person that his focus should be on God, upon whom he depends for his security. He must know that it is God who controls the laws of nature and therefore allowed for the success of his crops. Indeed, כג discusses the שלש רגלים in addition to the איסור of לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו, and specifically emphasizes the agricultural significance of these holidays. פסח is called "חודש האביב"; שבועות is referred to as "חג הקציר"; and סוכות is described as "חג האסיף" (שמות כג:טו-טז).

The connection is now clear. Both מצוות teach that we can achieve success only by recognizing our dependence on the עולם של עולם. This is particularly true of the opinion of רמב"ם and ספורנו, who hold that the איסור of לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו is meant to deny a common idolatrous practice. Further, we do not eat whatever we want in whatever manner we want, because agricultural growth depends on God, and He tells us what to do with the produce. ארץ ישראל has specific potential to teach man about his dependence on God. During each רגל (which by no coincidence falls out at agriculturally significant times in the year), בני ישראל are commanded to visit the מִקְדָּשׁ and bring these gifts. They must recognize their dependence on God. Hence, it is not surprising that the same פרק which deals with שלש רגלים and לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו also discusses שמיטה, perhaps the most clear statement of all that we trust in God, not in our own agricultural talents.

Other ראשונים explain the context of this איסור differently. אבן עזרא holds the איסור is mentioned together with בְּכוֹרִים because at that time of the year the גדיים were raised (שמות כג:יט). רמב"ן holds they are mentioned together since the בכורות were brought to the מִקְדָּשׁ at the same time as the בְּכוֹרִים (שמות לד:כו). חזקוני suggests that during the רגלים a lot of meat was consumed (שמות כג:יט).

רמב"ן makes another association. The פסוק there explains, (דברים יד:כא) "לא תאכלו כל נבלה... כי עם קדוש אתה לה' אלקיך לא תבשל גדי בחלב עמו". רמב"ן wants to understand the connection between being a holy nation and not eating בחלב גדי בחלב אמו. He explains that this prohibited food is not something disgusting in the culinary arena. It does not inherently repulse us. And yet we are prohibited from eating it to make us "קדושים" קדושה מאכלות אסורות רמב"ן teaches that prohibitions of מאכלות אסורות facilitate קדושה by creating restraint and limitation on our bodily desires.

We see that the prohibition of בשר בחלב is more than just a technical prohibition about what to eat or not to eat. It teaches us lessons about how to live well and how to properly relate to God, the land, and ourselves.

The A Priori Ideal: Aspects of Rabbi Soloveitchik's Interpretation of Maimonides' Philosophy

Sarah Willig

Much is known about Rabbi Soloveitchik's use of Maimonides in the sphere of הלכה. Indeed, Rabbi Soloveitchik touchingly describes the formative experience of watching his father, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, defend משנה תורה's רמב"ם from its critics.¹ If one looks beyond Rabbi Soloveitchik's שיעורים to his philosophical writings, one can clearly discern the impact Maimonides had on the Rav in this arena as well. Yet, Rabbi Soloveitchik did not merely quote Maimonides. He reinterpreted רמב"ם to complement his own unique philosophy.

An overarching theme in Rabbi Soloveitchik's works is the primacy of הלכה as the a priori ideal. This means that הלכה reins supreme above other realms, including the moral, ethical, and rational spheres. הלכה is the unique and autonomous source of religious meaning, through which we can categorize and classify what we observe. Maimonides, on the other hand, was an Aristotelian rationalist who believed that reason, rather than הלכה, was the prism through which the world and religion must be viewed. This irreconcilable philosophical difference consistently influenced Rabbi Soloveitchik's interpretation of Maimonides.

Take the example of their respective understandings of the concept of *imitatio dei*, the command to walk in God's ways (דברים כח:ט). Maimonides and Rabbi Soloveitchik agree that man is only granted special השגחה when he elevates himself above the rest of the species through *imitatio dei*. "I believe in this lowly world... divine providence watches only over the individuals belonging to the human species and that in this species all the circumstances of the individuals and the good and evil that befall them are obsequent on their desserts" (מורה נבוכים 3:17). However, "Divine providence does not watch in an equal manner over all individuals of the human species, but providence is graded as their human perfection is graded" (מורה נבוכים 3:18). Maimonides and the

¹הרב יוסף דב סולובייצ'יק, "ובקשתם משם" בתוך איש ההלכה, pp. 230-232.

Rav differ, however, on what constitutes *imitatio dei*: reason or creation. According to Maimonides, *imitatio dei* involves rational cognition. The way in which a person imitates God and becomes deserving of השגחה is by increasing his knowledge of God. According to Rabbi Soloveitchik, however, man fulfills the commandment to walk in God's ways by utilizing his creativity and performing creative acts. "The man who has a particular existence of his own is not merely a passive, receptive creature, but acts and creates".² The ultimate act of creation is creating one's self via הלכה. "When a person creates himself, he ceases to be a mere species man, and becomes a man of God, then he has fulfilled that commandment which is implicit in the principle of providence." Man has now become "a partner of the Almighty in the act of creation, man as a creator of worlds" (*Halakhic Man*, p. 99). The Rav replaces rational cognition with halachic creativity as the factor influencing Divine providence.

The Rav also addresses Maimonides' notion of negative attributes. הרמב"ם argues that since it is impossible for finite beings to know the infinite God, those striving to know God can never say what God is, but only what He is not. Man's knowledge of God is purely negative: I know God is not cruel, God is not corporeal, etc. This is known as the principle of negative attributes. Maimonides holds that knowledge of God is the ultimate goal of man. He also holds, however, that direct and positive knowledge of God is ultimately impossible.

According to Prof. Zev Harvey in "הערות על הרב סולובייצ'יק והפילוסופיה הרמב"מית", the Rav explains that according to Maimonides's position the recognition of God through negative attributes is true cognition because it is all that is possible.³ In order to negate, man needs to have affirmative cognition from which to negate. That is, man learns about the world in order to conclude that God is not like the things in the world. Although it might seem that this cognition of the world will lead to religious negation, in *Halachic Man* Rabbi Soloveitchik adds that this process of negation is only possible for a "halakhic man", and not a "cognitive man." "Halakhic man" learns for the sake of knowing God, while "cognitive man" examines the world in order to further his own knowledge. He will not take the next step of negation. Without הלכה, according to Rabbi Soloveitchik, cognition is religiously ineffective. For

² Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, Trans. Lawrence Kaplan, Philadelphia, 1983, p. 125.

³ "הערות על הרב סולובייצ'יק והפילוסופיה הרמב"מית" בתוך אמונה בזמנים משתנים בעריכת אבי שגיא, ירושלים.

Maimonides, however, cognition of nature is the critical cognition. Rabbi Soloveitchik has not contradicted Maimonides, but modified his philosophy, insisting on the primacy of הלכה above all other spheres.⁴

Another example of Rabbi Soloveitchik reinterpreting Maimonides to conform to his own philosophy is found in the issue of prophecy. According to Maimonides, prophecy is the highest level of achievement possible for man, when he taps into the Divine overflow. This level can only be achieved after achieving the highest possible degree of knowledge. The Rav, however, says that prophecy can be achieved by following the example of prophets in their morality and good deeds, “a binding ethical ideal... an act of self-creation and renewal” (*Halakhic Man*, p. 134). Prophecy is the result of action – the creation of oneself to model the prophets by following הלכה. Again, the Rav places creativity in the center in place of Maimonides rationalistic approach.

Walter Wurzbarger, in “The Centrality of Creativity,” speculates that these differences between Rabbi Soloveitchik and רמב”ם, may in part be due to the Rav’s theory of knowledge, which emphasized the “creativity of the human mind.” While Maimonides followed Aristotle by defining knowledge as “noetic identification with the object known,” Rabbi Soloveitchik followed the neo-Kantian theory of knowledge by viewing cognition as “a construct of the human mind, not a copy of external reality.”⁵ Knowledge means using humanly constructed categories to make sense of what is observed. Knowledge is inherently a creative act. This apposes the more static theory of knowledge posited by the Aristotelian Maimonides.

In his introduction to מורה נבוכים, Maimonides says that the “perplexed” of his title are those who cannot reconcile the Divinely revealed תורה with what they know to be philosophically true. Maimonides explains that the purpose of מורה נבוכים is to rationally and philosophically explain seemingly irrational passages in the תורה. Because of this, and despite his use of many of Maimonides’ tenets, the Rav ultimately dismissed מורה נבוכים in an address to the YU Rabbinic Alumni on March 1, 1956. “The truth is that there is no real synthesis in the world. If there is a contradiction between תורה and secular endeavor, then synthesis is not possible... In synthesis no one succeeds. Even our great teacher Rambam did not succeed in his attempts at synthesis.” Rabbi Soloveitchik did not attempt apologetics. He felt no need to prove

⁴ William Kolbrener, “Towards a Genuine Jewish Philosophy,” in *Exploring the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Ed. Marc D. Angel, Hoboken NJ, 1997.

⁵ Walter Wurzbarger, “The Centrality of Creativity,” in *Exploring*.

the rationality of תורה and its compatibility with philosophy, unlike Maimonides, who felt compelled to reconcile תורה and philosophy in מורה נבוכים.

Indeed, the Rav felt that “Rambam, the halachic scholar, came nearer the core of philosophical truth than Maimonides, the speculative philosopher.”⁶ Rav Soloveitchik explicitly rejects Maimonides’ notion of טעמי המצוות, as presented in the מורה נבוכים. Maimonides adopts a “causal method” in explaining the מצוות, arguing that the commandments are designed to accomplish certain goals. The Rav prefers a different approach, which he sees in the משנה תורה. There, רמב”ם attempts to “reconstruct” the subjective correlative of the commandments, i.e. the internal experience of the person fulfilling the commandment. This is far superior to the “causal method of the philosophical guide” (*Halakhic Mind*, p. 94). According to Rabbi Soloveitchik, the position in the מורה נבוכים makes הלכה subordinate to an external principle. הלכה is made to serve ethics or morality or rationalism- a higher truth beyond הלכה. For the Rav, this is unacceptable.

Thus, there are cases where Rabbi Soloveitchik tries to make positive use of רמב”ם’s philosophy, as in the cases of השגחה, negative attributes, and prophecy. In these cases, the Rav can fit the primacy of הלכה into רמב”ם’s statements. However, on the issue of טעמי המצוות no reconciliation is possible, and Maimonides’s position in the מורה is completely dismissed. Rabbi Soloveitchik’s belief in the הלכה as an a priori ideal takes precedence over all, including the philosophical position of the man he called his “one friend,”⁷ Maimonides.

⁶ Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Halakhic Mind*, New York, 1996, pp. 93-94.

⁷ Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkof, *The Rav*, Hoboken NJ, 1999, p. 247.

Non-Jews' Relationship to תורה

Michal Apfeldorf

Someone who receives a unique and valuable present would keep it closely guarded and be hesitant to share it with others. So too, according to many sources, the תורה is a precious gift that עם ישראל received from ה' which we must guard and secure from others. The תורה symbolizes בני ישראל's uniqueness. It is something sacred and reflects the intimacy between ה' and His chosen nation. Sharing it with others would be violating the exclusiveness of that relationship.

In the following essay I will discuss the sources for the prohibition of non-Jews learning תורה, the extent of this prohibition, and suggest reasons for the prohibition. "תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת דברים לגד. The תורה was given as an inheritance specifically to בני ישראל. The גמרא explains that this פסוק indicates that תורה is an inheritance for Jews, but not for others. Indeed the גמרא compares the bond between בני ישראל and the תורה to a bride and groom. The תורה is betrothed to us, and therefore is forbidden to anyone else (סנהדרין נט ע"א). According to this גמרא, a gentile who engages in תורה study is comparable to a person who takes another's bride and commits the sin of adultery. The גמרא (שם) goes so far as to say that "עובד כוכבים שעוסק בתורה חייב מיתה", and (שולחן ערוך יו"ד, רסז:עא) cites this as the הלכה (also see הלכות י:ט).

The תורה was accepted by בני ישראל before they knew the details involved. Their acceptance was not based on an understanding of the תורה's logic. Thus, keeping the תורה is a statement of בני ישראל's allegiance to הקב"ה and an acceptance of His commandments irrespective of the dictates of reason. At הר סיני, all of בני ישראל accepted עול מלכות שמים by proclaiming – נעשה ונשמע – we will implement before we rationalize. It was a statement that בני ישראל had complete faith in ה' and accepted everything He relayed, regardless of their understanding of it. Perhaps this explains the prohibition of a gentile studying תורה. If motivated merely by intellectual curiosity, the gentile might misunderstand the way in which Jews accept תורה simply as God's word.

Non-Jews are prohibited from learning תורה and therefore, according to some sources, Jews are forbidden to teach them תורה.

תוספות conclude that a Jew who teaches a gentile תורה is liable for the gentile's transgression as well as his own transgression of "לא לפני עור לא" (תוספות חגיגה יג ע"א, ד"ה אין מוסרין) תתן מכש"ל.

Ideally, תורה was meant to be orally transmitted from רב to תלמיד, through מסורה. This system emphasizes the exclusive relationship between בני ישראל and ה', and deters other nations from getting hold of the תורה. The תורה would be solely for בני ישראל because without שבעל תורה nothing would be understood. Yet, adverse historical circumstances forced רבי יהודה הנשיא to write it down. From that point on, verbal מסורה was no longer relied upon exclusively and תורה was preserved through writing. Although תורה became more accessible to Jews after it was written down, it also became available to gentiles as well.

There are debates as to whether תורה שבכתב is also included in this prohibition. Most פוסקים feel that תורה שבכתב is permissible. The נצי"ב explains that since ה' commanded יהושע to write the תורה (Written Law) in seventy languages it must be permissible for everyone (ש"ת משיב דבר) in seventy languages (ב:עז). He makes a דיוק in the גמרא (שם), which describes the prohibitions as "עיוסק". The prohibition forbids a non-Jew from "delving" into the תורה, but since it is only possible to "delve" by learning תורה שבעל פה, the תורה שבכתב would seem to be permissible.

On the other hand, the historical tragedy of תרגום שבעים may contradict this belief. תרגום שבעים is an event in Jewish history in which seventy great תורה scholars were placed in separate, isolated rooms and commanded by the Greeks to translate תורה שבכתב. Miraculously, all the scholars amended the same words so as to not provide the Greeks with the precise translation of the תורה (מגילה ט ע"א). This might indicate that even teaching תורה שבכתב to gentiles could be catastrophic.

The contradicting approaches regarding תורה שבכתב can be reconciled. The *intentions* of the non-Jew studying תורה שבכתב would determine whether he may study. The מאירי, commenting on the גמרא in סנהדרין נט ע"א, says that "a non-Jew may study תורה if he does indeed intend to fulfill the precepts which he studies, but is deserving of punishment if he studies solely in order to acquire knowledge of our Torah and our Talmud."¹ Hence, תורה שבכתב may be studied as long as it is done with the proper motives. In the situation of the תרגום שבעים, the Greeks wanted the תורה to be translated as a means of using it to condemn and destroy the Jews.

¹ Quoted in R. J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems*, New York, Vol. 2.

Following this logic, it might be that gentiles who learn תורה for valid reasons might well become better people and develop a better understanding of what Jews stand for. The מאירי continues, explaining that gentiles might study תורה in order to be able to impersonate Jews and thereby sell foreign beliefs to non-suspecting Jews. Jews might mistake the imposter for a real Jew and be led astray by his erroneous beliefs. This provides an additional understanding of the prohibition of gentiles learning תורה.

There are, however, instances where a gentile may be permitted, or perhaps obligated, to study תורה. All non-Jews are obligated to observe the שבע מצוות בני נח and they are allowed to study these laws from the סנהדרין שם, רמב"ם שם) תורה. Non-Jews must be thoroughly familiar with these laws in order to be able to observe them properly. As the גמרא in סנהדרין explains, in this circumstance it seems almost crucial for a gentile to learn תורה. A non-Jew's תורה learning may make him aware of ה' glorious miracles, and thus cause him to reject his pagan beliefs and accept the שבע מצוות בני נח (ש"ת מלמד להועיל ח"ב י"ד, סימן עז) שבע מצוות בני נח. Thus we see that non-Jews may study the sections of תורה that are relevant to him.

Furthermore, Rav Moshe Feinstein holds that non-Jews may listen to תורה sermons, either by attending שיעורים given by Rabbis or by sitting at a שבת table (אגרת משה חלק י"ד ב, סימן קלב) in which ע"א became an exceptional scholar as a result of his presence during his master's discussions. Rav Moshe clarifies that Jews are forbidden to teach *specifically* to a non-Jew; it is only permitted if non-Jews are present at a lesson intended for Jews.

In order to maintain peace between Jews and gentiles, the issue of non-Jews relation to תורה must be handled with extreme sensitivity. It is crucial to understand that, according to these sources, the תורה was given to בני ישראל to learn and live by. The תורה must be revered and reserved, and we must be cautious before exposing it to anyone to whom it was not given.

Rav S.R. Hirsch's Critique of the רמב"ם

Inbar Gabay

In every בית מדרש in the world a set of גמרות sits on the shelves or lays open on the tables, admired and studied by those who wish to understand the essence of תורה. It is the backbone for every halachik decision. Its contents are the life-force of Jewish existence, surging from the mouth of God, to the minds of the Rabbis, and into the souls of the Jewish people. The transcription of תורה שבעל פה, initiated by רבי יהודה הנשיא, was an attempt to preserve the truth of the laws of משה, which were in danger of being forgotten in the age of exile. Yes, רבי יהודה הנשיא's actions helped to preserve the מסורה, but the מסורה also became tied to a specific text and lost some of its oral quality. It was now concise, arranged mnemonically, and working under the premise of presumed knowledge. The living, breathing תורה became words on a piece of paper. It became less human and more fixed.¹

As the physical and political oppression of the Diaspora intensified, it became difficult for Jews to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to תורה and its study. Although Jews perceived their Judaism as a birthright, an average Jew did not have the opportunity to study and understand the מצוות deeply. During much of Muslim middle-ages, in which oppression was relatively eased, there was time, ability, and desire to delve more systematically into תורה, but not every student found what he was looking for. Minds that found Judaism lacking turned to Arab and Greek philosophy to answer the great questions of how and why. Because Arab/Greek philosophies fundamentally conflict with Jewish concepts of life, these individuals found themselves caught in a rift between two worlds. It was רמב"ם who created the bridge between these distinct worlds while still preserving הלכה. He justified the Arab/Greek philosophies to Judaism, while adhering to the letter of the law. But in doing this, Rav Hirsch purports that the רמב"ם lost the spirit of Judaism. He no longer approached Judaism from within, but rather from without, from the eyes of the Arab/Greek philosopher.

¹ R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Nineteen Letters*, Jerusalem, 1995, Letter 18.

In non-Jewish schools Yisrael's youth trained their minds in independent philosophical inquiry. From Arab sources they drew the concepts of Greek philosophy....Their quickening spirit put them at odds with Judaism, which they considered to be void of any spirit of its own....It is to this great man alone [רמב"ם] that we owe the preservation of practical Judaism....and yet...his trend of thought was Arab-Greek, as was his concept of life. Approaching Judaism from without, he brought to it views he had gained elsewhere, and these he reconciled with Judaism...The practical, concrete deeds became subordinate....None of them were conceived as rooted in the eternal essence of things...One ought to ask himself: Moshe ben Maimon, Moshe ben Mendel [Mendellsohn] – are they in fact Moshe ben Amram?... These theories are not correct, are not founded upon a comprehensive understanding of the mitzvah as a whole but are imposed on it from without (*Nineteen Letters*, pp. 264-271).

The Aristotelian view of life was adopted and then adapted by רמב"ם in his attempt to develop his own philosophy. The introduction to "ואפשר שאביא לפעמים מאמר אחד כולו מספר המפורסם: שמונה פרקים ס' רמב"ם בלשונו, ואין בכל זה רועה, ואיני מתפאר במה שאמרו מי שקדם ממני שאני כבר התודיתי בזה, ואף על פי שלא אזכיר: 'אמר פלוני', שזה אריכות אין תועלת בה, ואפשר שאהיה מביא זכרון שם האיש ההוא לחשוב מי שאין לו חיד: שהדבר ההוא נפסד בתוכו רע לא יבינהו, ומפני זה ראתי שלא לזכור האומר..." explains that he often quotes at length from non-Jewish sources without citing them. He does not find anything wrong with this, because quoting sources is long and cumbersome, and might alienate some traditionalist readers.

Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch maintains that this perspective affected רמב"ם's theory and its practical application. The Aristotelian philosophy of life asserted that to understand a concept is the ultimate accomplishment. Action is only as means toward the end of understanding. This theory is contrary to the traditional Jewish notion that action is central. As it says in פרקי אבות א:ז, "אלא המדרש הוא העקר, אלא, פרקי אבות א:ז" Rav Hirsch maintains, transformed the Aristotelian ideal into Jewish definitions: the מצוה is simply a means to an end, the prime objective being knowledge of God.

Knowledge of God was considered an end in itself, not a means toward the end...Mitzvos, then, were to him only guides...Mishpatim became rules of prudent behavior, as did Mitzvos; Chukim became rules of health...Edos were to

promote philosophical purposes....He [רמב"ם] himself states that, in analyzing the mitzvos as to their underlying ideas, he disregards their details – those very details which, together, give the complete picture of the מצוה... (מורה נבוכים 3:26, 41). (*Nineteen Letters*, pp 265, 271)

Rav Hirsch warns against the danger of attributing these kinds of reasons and explanations to the Divine commandments. It could be the beginning of the loss of the מצוות and the end of the Jewish people.

One may claim that the warnings of Rav Hirsch are unfounded due to the very fact that he lived some 700 years after רמב"ם. Judaism had survived thus far, creating thousands of communities steeped in תורה values throughout the Diaspora. Thus, Rav Hirsch continues his argument. He claims that Moses Mendelssohn espoused רמב"ם's Aristotelian ideals. "[Followers of Mendelsson said,] If that view of life that considers perception of the truth to be man's cardinal mission should be true (and who could venture to doubt it, seeing that Maimonides had declared it to be so)... then, indeed, the many folios of the Talmud contain nothing but nitpicking subtleties" (*Nineteen Letters*, p. 270). Since the time of Mendelssohn, the idea that מצוות are a means to an end, possessing no inherent value, has made headway in the Jewish nation, in grotesque deviation from the intentions of רמב"ם. For instance, if the idea of שבת is that God rested, and if one adopts one's own concept of rest, one may follow one's own whims. The intricate laws of בורר, בישול, and other מלאכות disappear. If society cannot identify with the concept of קורבנות, then one might claim that we should abolish them.

His [Mendelssohn's] followers contented themselves with eagerly furthering the study of Tanach along philosophical and aesthetic lines, studying the *Moreh* but, at the same time, adding and expanding the study of humanities...If, for instance, the sole intent of the prohibition of labor on Shabbos is to enable man to rest and recover from the toil of the week, through cessation of physical activity, in order give some scope to the mind as well (and who could doubt that this is the intent, since both Moseses interpret it thus [Maimonides and Mendelsohn])...is it not strange, indeed, to declare the writing of two letters of the alphabet – surely an intellectual occupation – a capital sin? (*Nineteen Letters*, p. 270)

This approach misuses the basic philosophical tenets of the רמב"ם, thereby threatening the very foundation of ישראל.

Thus, Rav Hirsch's complaint against the philosophy of the רמב"ם revolves around the issue of טעמי המצוות, i.e. attributing logical reasons to the מצוות. Rav Hirsch maintains that ascribing temporal explanations to the commandments of God allows room to eventually dismiss the הלכה, and in so doing, lose the very essence of Judaism. Rav Hirsch joins the camp that questions the value of providing טעמי המצוות. "עקב אשר שמע. טעמי המצוות וישמר משמרת מצותי חקותי ותורת"י" (בראשית כו:ה) אברהם בקלי וישמר משמרת מצותי חקותי ותורת"י", commenting on the word "חקותי", explains that חקים are the commandments that the evil inclination and the nations of the world wrongly force בני ישראל to give reasons for, like not eating pig or refraining from wearing a mixture of wool and linen. In fact, there are no reasons for these commandments. They are "simply decrees of the king, and edicts placed upon his servants." Along these lines, קדושת לוי, commenting on the פרה אדומה (חקת) says that there are no logical explanations or reasons for this מצוה. He quotes the פסוק (במדבר יט:ב), "פסוק אשר לא עלה עליה על" בני ישראל ויקחו אליך פרה אדמה תמימה אשר אין בה מום אשר לא עלה עליה על". He explains that "התורה", the entire תורה, is a חוק. Nechama Leibowitz, in her article, "Mystery of the Red Heifer," on פרשת חקת writes "The heathen required a rational explanation, appealing to his common sense... It is the commandments that purify the human soul. Let us not be among those who seek for rational explanation for those things, to which the laws of reason do not apply."² The תורה תמימה discusses the sin of שלמה "לא ירבה לו נשים ולא יסור לבבו וכסף וזהב לא ירבה לו מאד", against the rule, "דברים יז:יז). He explains that שלמה understood that the reason for the restrictions placed upon the king was to stop him from particular sins. Since he thought that he would not fall prey to them, he considered himself exempt from the prohibition. Nonetheless, the wisest of all men did transgress; no man is above the warnings of the Divine.

We see, then, that Rav Hirsch was deeply critical of רמב"ם's philosophy. He was critical not only of רמב"ם's approach to particular philosophical and theological problems, like טעמי המצוות, but of his method, which tried, according to Rav Hirsch, to explain תורה in the categories of Greek philosophy. Rav Hirsch understood the historical need for such an approach, at a time when Jews were being led astray by the supposedly rational wisdom of the gentiles, but he could not accept it as a proper understanding of God's word. תורה, he said, should be explained from within, not from without.

² Nechama Leibowitz, *Studies in Sefer Bamidbar*, Jerusalem, 1980, p. 235.

Are People Inherently Evil?

Tami Benmayer

When נח offered sacrifices after the מבול, ה' said: "כי יצר לב האדם רע" (בראשית ח:כא) מנעוריו" and רש"י explain "מנעוריו" to mean "from when man is born", implying that humans are born evil. רש"י suggests another explanation. It means "from the people around him", i.e. nurture and not nature.

How can we explain this? Does it mean that I can never be good? Does it mean that inherently I am evil, even if I do good? Or, do our surroundings influence us in bad directions? Where does evil come from to begin with? Didn't God create the world in order to bestow His goodness on His creations? How can He do this if He created us evil? In order to attempt to understand this, we must look at a number of different sources, beginning with the beginning!

When ה' created the world, he made the "עץ הדעת טוב ורע" (בראשית ב:ט). What was this tree? Does this mean that there was no knowledge of good and evil before אדם ate from the tree? רמב"ן (בראשית ב:ט) explains that before the sin there was no real sense of choice. אדם did what he was supposed to do in a natural and unselfconscious way. After אדם ate from the tree, it became difficult for him to make decisions and distinguish right from wrong. Whereas before it had been obvious what was אמת and what was שקר (אדם knew he was picking שקר), as a result of the sin it was no longer obvious. Good things would be disguised as evil, and vice versa.

אדם and חווה also gained a sexual desire. It says "וידעו כי ערום הם" (בראשית ג:ז). Didn't they know this before? The answer is that they knew before that they were naked, but they did not realize the implications of this fact. Now that they had gained this דעת, they understood nudity for what it was. They were therefore embarrassed, which is why they then covered themselves.

This רמב"ן can be understood alongside the רמב"ן in לוי: דברים, where it says, "ומל ה' אלקיך את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך לאהבה את ה'", רמב"ן explains that at the time of משיח, the world will go back to how it was before אדם's sin. The people will not have the desire to do that which isn't fitting for them.

רמח"ל (א:ג) דרך ה' in רמח"ל expresses things somewhat differently and explains that man consists of two opposing elements: his pure spiritual soul and his unenlightened physical body. The two are always in a state of battle. Before the sin, אדם was exactly balanced between good and evil. If he would have followed the path of truth, his soul would have overcome his body and he immediately would have attained perfection. Due to his sin, he caused the amount of evil to increase, and as a result, it became much more difficult for him (and us!) to attain perfection. Thus, when a person is born, he contains more evil than there should have been. Though he is born with good also, the falsehood slightly outweighs the truth.

רמח"ל goes on to say that in order to reach true perfection again, man must first raise himself and his world back to the state before the sin. Only then can he raise himself to this highest level of perfection. Both man and the world must undergo a stage of destruction before they can arrive at perfection. Man must die, before being reborn properly. Hence, תחיית המתים is a necessity.

Perhaps this is what should have happened at the time of the מבול. In בראשית ו:ה-ח, ה' saw that mankind was doing only evil and He regretted ever having made man. "וינחם ה' כי עשה את האדם". How can God blame man? If the level of evil had been increased, obviously mankind will be more inclined to do evil?

רד"ק suggests that the world can only exist if it is mostly or all good. Here, the world was all bad. Just because the level of evil had been increased did not mean that man should fall prey to this state of affairs. There still was a יצר טוב. But יצר הרע דור המבול gave into the יצר הרע, and this is why the world had to be destroyed.

The גמרא (שבת קנו ע"א) records ר' יהושע בן לוי who says that if a person is born on Sunday, he will be completely of one type, and there will be nothing of another type in him. What does this mean? דימי בר and רב אשי were both born on a Sunday. ראש ישיבה and קקוהתא was the leader of a bunch of gangsters. The גמרא says that a person has free choice but sometimes when he exercises his free choice he then becomes either totally virtuous or totally wicked. This is where people at the time of נח went wrong. They exercised their free will for bad. The גמרא also discusses the fact that we are not susceptible to the planetary influences. We can overcome whatever genes we are given. This leads us to the topic of nature vs. nurture.

When שני גוים בבטן, ה' told her, רבקה's womb, עשו and יעקב were in רבקה's womb, רש"י (בראשית כה:כג) cites the מדרש which explains that when רבקה walked

by a place of idol worship, עשו would try and push his way out. When she walked past a yeshiva, יעקב would. This seems to imply that certain tendencies exist even before a baby is born. This seems unfair. גור אריה explains that it doesn't mean יעקב was good and עשו was a רשע. Rather, they had different kinds of יצר הרע. The תורה is emphasizing the fact that עשו had this strong desire for עבודה זרה. If he would channel his personality the wrong way, he would turn into a רשע. It also seems obvious that ה' would create each person's nature differently. He gave each person different genes, and hence a different יצר הרע. This challenges us to reach our individual potential, rather than imitating others.

At the time of their birth, both brothers had the same potential to achieve great things, each in his own unique way, with his own abilities and talents. The problem, according to Rav Hirsch, was that their parents brought them up in exactly the same way. רבקה was told that she carried two nations in her womb who would represent two different kinds of social group. When they were little, they were given exactly the same education. The great law of education, "חנך לנער על פי דרכו" (משלי כב:ו) was forgotten, which led to disaster. If they would have looked at עשו's strength, ability, agility, and courage, had they helped him use these talents in the service of God, he would have become a hero instead of a villain. Their parents should have recognized each one's uniqueness, and treated them differently.

The difference between יצחק's and רבקה's approach to their children also had an affect on the twins. (בראשית כה:כח) "ויאהב יצחק את עשר". Rav Hirsch explains this based on the "attraction of opposites." יצחק naturally preferred to withdraw from the bustle of the world and עשו was the exact opposite: a lusty, active type. His father saw in עשו a force that he himself had lost. But רבקה, says Rav Hirsch, loved יצחק, since she saw in him a picture of an ideal life, to which she was not privy from her own father's house. We learn from here that parents must love their children equally, and not allow their own pasts and hidden desires to influence how much they love their children.

If we examine human history, we discover that human beings can reach the lowest levels imaginable. From Nazis to bloodthirsty terrorists, we see examples of individuals and cultures that emphasize hatred, murder, and pain. Perhaps this is the potential that ה' was describing when He said "כי יצר לב האדם רע מנעריו".

The (עירובין יג ע"ב) "נח לו לאדם שלא נברא משנברא" says עירובין in גמרא. Is man really so evil that it would have been better had there been no one in existence? תוספות say that it is referring to רשעים. It is preferable that

people who do not use their talents for good would never have been created. But the גמרא continues. וַיִּכְאֵב דָּאִמְרֵי, וַיִּכְשִׁיב שְׁנֵי בְּרָא יִפְשֵׁט בְּמַעֲשָׂיו, וַיִּכְאֵב דָּאִמְרֵי. "ועכשיו שנברא יפשט במעשיו, ואיכא דאמרי. ימשמש במעשיו". No one can change the fact that we've been created, so we must "examine" or "feel" our actions. "Examine" refers to looking at our actions and evaluating what we should and perhaps should not be doing, in accordance with ה'ה's will. "Feel" involves studying even our good actions to see if they involve any negative elements as well.

Each person is faced with a יצר הרע. But it is possible to overcome and rule over the יצר הרע. אדם and חוה fell into sin during a moment of diversion, when they lost their focus due to the musings of the snake. How much easier is it for us to get diverted from our goals, in our world of almost infinite material distractions? If we want to achieve perfection, we have to be strong and rise above our יצר הרע. Perhaps then we can reach the level of אדם הראשון, which we could have reached so long ago.

In conclusion, man is not created evil, but we are all created with the potential to become evil. Yet, we are also created with tremendous potential to overcome evil and achieve goodness, if we work hard at it. No one said life would be easy!!!

Are Women Allowed to Study תורה?

Eliana Diamond

In פסוק the פסוק states, "ולמדתם אתם את בניכם". The פסוק is stating that a father has an obligation to teach his sons תורה. Since the פסוק specifically uses the word בניכם and not בנותיכם, ללמד בתו in the פסוק specifically uses the word בניכם and not בנותיכם, ללמד בתו תורה and not his daughters (ספרי דברים מו).

The גמרא in ע"ב כט ע"ב discusses the obligation to learn and teach תורה. The גמרא concludes that in order to be taught תורה, one must be obligated to learn תורה. Since a woman is not obligated to learn תורה, therefore, her father is not obligated to teach her תורה.

The משנה in סוטה (ד:ג) states: יש זכות תולה לה. יש זכות תולה שנה. אחת יש זכות תולה שתי שנים יש זכות תולה שלש שנים, מכאן אומר בן עזאי חייב אדם ללמד את בתו תורה שאם תשתה תדע שהזכות תולה לה. רבי אליעזר אומר כל המלמד בתו תורה כאילו לומדה תפלות. רבי יהושע אומר רוצה אשה בקב ותפלות מתשעה קבין ופרישות.

The משנה discusses a case where a woman is suspected of committing adultery. In order to reveal the truth, she must drink the מי. The משנה explains that even if she is guilty, her punishment can be delayed up to three years if she has זכויות. What זכויות is the משנה referring to? The גמרא (כ ע"א) explains that מצוות are the זכויות that protect her, although they only protect her temporarily. תלמוד תורה, however, is able to protect her for a longer period of time.

The משנה continues: "אומר בן עזאי חייב אדם ללמד את בתו תורה שאם תשתה תדע שהזכות תולה לה". רש"י explains that a father must teach his daughter תורה because if she was taught תורה she would understand that the מי did not kill her right away because of her זכות. The מאירי explains the statement of בן עזאי to be referring to other women. If they had learned תורה, they would know that the words of the תורה are true and that the מי will eventually take effect.

The משנה continues and quotes the following: רבי אליעזר אומר כל המלמד בתו תורה. According to the opinion of הורקנוס בן אליעזר, if a father teaches his daughter תורה, it's as if he taught her "תפלות" - stupidity.

אשה שלמדה תורה follows this statement. in רמב"ם יש לה שכל אבל אינו כשכר האיש, מפני שלא נצטוית, וכל העושה דבר שאינו מצווה עליו לעשותו אין שכרו כשכר המצווה שעשה אלא פחות ממנו, ואע"פ שיש לה שכר צו חכמים שלא ילמד אדם את בתו תורה, מפני שרוב הנשים אין דעתם מכוונת להתלמד אלא הן

מוציאות דברי תורה לדברי הבאי לפי עניות דעתן, אמרו חכמים כל המלמד את בתו תורה כאילו למדה תפלות, במה דברים אמורים בתורה שבעל פה אבל תורה שבכתב לא ילמד אותה רמב"ם. We need to ask several questions in order to understand this.

1) When רמב"ם uses the word "תורה", is he referring to תורה שבעל פה or תורה שבכתב? What is the difference between the two?

2) Do women have an obligation to learn certain parts of the תורה? If yes, how can the רמב"ם state categorically that anyone who teaches his daughter תורה is teaching her תפלות?

3) How do we reconcile the רמב"ם's ruling with the historical examples of Jewish women who acquired vast knowledge of תורה?

תורה שבכתב or תורה שבעל פה - תורה

"הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים. הקהל of מצוה describes דברים לא-י-יב והטף וגרך אשר בשערך למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ויראו את ה' אלקיכם ושמרו לעשות את כל המצוות. The king is commanded to read certain sections of the תורה before all of the nation. Women were also included in this מצווה, implying that it is permissible for women to hear תורה שבכתב from the king.

However, the רמב"ם (יר"ד רמ"ד: ט"ז) wonders if this proves that תורה שבכתב is not considered to be תפלות. If so, why did the רמב"ם explain that תורה שבכתב should not be studied by women? לכתחילה? The רמב"ם explains that there are two methods in learning תורה שבכתב. One method is the simple study of the text, "פשוטי הדברים". This is completely permitted. The other method is the analytical processing of the text, which is prohibited.

Women's obligation in studying מצוות that apply to them

The רמב"ם יורה דעה comments that women have an obligation to learn the מצוות that apply to them (רמ"ו:). Similarly, ספר חסידים comments that a father is obligated to teach his daughter the מצוות and things like פרקי אבות.

סמ"ק concurs that women must learn the מצוות that apply to them. But, unlike boys, they are not required to be involved in the details and the grammar when studying תורה (הקדמה). Thus, according to all three commentators, women do have an obligation to study certain areas of תורה.

ברכת התורה

Given a woman's limited obligation in תורה study, are women obligated to recite ברכות התורה? The שלחן ערוך explains that women must recite ברכות התורה (או"ח מז:יד), and רמב"ם quotes the מהרי"ל, who indicates that women must recite the ברכות התורה because they too study תורה שבכתב (או"ח מז:יד). גר"א, however, cites a source that disagrees. Women

cannot recite the ברכות because they were not commanded, and therefore cannot use the word "וצונו". The גר"א concludes, however, that women do say the ברכה, just as they say a ברכה on others מצוות from which they are פטורות, like מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמא (א"ח מז:יד, יז:ב).

Limits to the Prohibition

The פרשת משפטים א:ו) בית הלוי was unable to accept the opinions that seem to contradict the גמרא which states that women are exempt from the מצוה of studying תורה. He explains that there are two types of תלמוד תורה: a) study of תורה, and b) knowledge of תורה. Women are exempt from studying תורה, but they are still obligated to "know" the מצוות that apply to them. Of course, in order to know the relevant laws she has to study, but once a woman is familiar with the laws that apply to her, she has no more obligations in studying תורה. תורה תלמוד is a הכשר מצוה - an act that is not a מצוה in itself, but is a prerequisite to the fulfillment of a different מצוה. In order for her to fulfill her obligation of knowledge of תורה, she must first study תורה.

The פרישה (יר"ד רמ"ו) explains that רמב"ם's statement concerning women and תורה was directed to most women, who were not to be taught because they would turn the words of the תורה into nonsense. In the event that a woman learned תורה in a serious way on her own, she would be permitted to study תורה and would even get שכר. However, a father cannot predict how his daughter will react. Therefore, לכתחילה he may not teach his daughter תורה because he is not aware of what is in her heart. The תורה תמימה (דברים יז:יא) agrees that רמב"ם refers to the majority of women, but claims that the minority of women who are motivated may study and be taught תורה. It seems from these sources that when רמב"ם implies that a minority is permitted to study תורה, and should perhaps be encouraged to do so.

Contemporary Sources

There is virtual unanimity among contemporary sources that women should be permitted, and even encouraged, to study at least certain areas of תורה. The most famous of these sources is the חפץ חיים.

It would seem to me that this [prohibition] is only at those times of history when everyone lived in the place of his ancestors and the ancestral tradition was very strong for each individual, and this motivated him to act in the manner of his forefathers as it is written, "שאל אביך ויגדך" (דברים לב:ז). Under those circumstances we can say that a woman may not study

תורה; she will learn how to conduct herself by emulating her righteous parents. However, nowadays, when the tradition of our forefathers has become weakened and it is common for people not to live in the same place as their parents, and women learn to read and write a secular language, it is an especially great מצוה to teach them Bible and the traditions and ethics of our sages, like פרקי אבות, מנורת המאור, and the like, so that the truth of our holy heritage and religion will become evident to them. Otherwise, Heaven forbid, they may deviate entirely from the path of God and violate all the precepts of the תורה (ליקוטי הלכות סוטה כא ע"ב).

Many contemporary פוסקים follow this lead. For example, Rav Ben Zion Firrer explains that "Today, the question is not whether or not a woman should study תורה, but rather should a woman study תורה or should she study other subjects which are unrelated to the תורה. An obsession to pursue the tree of knowledge has taken hold of all people, women as well as men... If a modern woman does not study תורה, she will certainly study תפלות."¹ Similarly, according to ש"ת מקוה המים (חלק ג) (יר"ד סימן כא), "Modern woman plays a significant role in society, engaging in scientific research, filling the universities, managing offices and businesses, participating in government and political affairs. Surely רבי תורה שבעל פה would now waive his ban on teaching women even תורה שבעל פה, so that they might carefully observe all the laws of the תורה affecting their activities and employment. Furthermore, we must intensify their uprightness, and serve as an antidote to their evil inclination."

Others do not want to go quite this far, retaining some ambivalence about תורה שבעל פה. "Our age differs from earlier ages. In the past, Jewish homes followed the שולחן ערוך, and one could learn the entire תורה from experience. There was no need to teach Jewish girls תורה from text. Now, however, our sins being many, many homes are totally divorced from many מצוות and laws of the תורה. Indeed, Jewish girls coming from such homes to attend a religious school are almost like converts, and consequently they must be taught the fundamentals of Judaism and the essentials of practice.... Not only is it permitted to teach תורה to girls in our generation, it is an absolute duty. It is a great מצוה to found schools for girls and to inculcate in their hearts pure faith and knowledge of תורה and מצוות. We may have certain reservations as to

¹ נועם כרך ג עמוד קלא

the Oral תורה, but there should be no hesitation about teaching Scripture” (מאזנים למשפט חלק א סימן מב).

Conclusion

There is clearly a difference between a man and woman’s חיוב in תלמוד תורה. Men are obligated to study תורה on a larger, broader scale, while women are obligated to study the תורה that applies to them. However, just because women do not have the same חיוב in תלמוד תורה as men do, does not mean that it is אסור or unnecessary for them to study what they are not obligated in studying. On the contrary! When women study תורה that they are not obligated in studying, they are considered like an אינו מצווה ועושה, and unquestionably receive a שכר for what they studied. Women should study even things that do not translate directly into practice.

Secondly, one could mount an argument that women should be studying תורה as well. If a woman has obligation to study the תורה that applies to her, it is understood that she should excel in that before studying תורה that she’s not obligated in knowing. In order to master something, it requires learning the topic from beginning to end. Therefore, a woman who wants to know the מצוות that apply to her would have to study the סוגיות in depth, from the גמרא through the משנה ברורה. There may be some who argue against this method of study, claiming that it is sufficient to study only the bottom-line הלכה גמרא. Personally, however, I believe that when I study הלכה starting with the גמרא, not only does it help me remember what I have learnt, but helps me to have a much clearer and stronger understanding of what I am studying. Furthermore, גמרא is the primary source of הלכה, and it seems fitting to start studying הלכה from its beginning, its foundation.

In conclusion, I think that our goal as Jews is to serve and feel connected to ה’. There are certain requirements and obligations that each person must fulfill in order to serve ה’ correctly. However, there are many ways that a person can find a connection with ה’. If one finds a connection through חסד, then that should be an emphasis. If one finds this connection through studying תורה, then תורה might get higher priority. There is not one set prescription that every Jew can follow in order to find this personal connection. Therefore, one should concentrate on fulfilling one’s obligation in תורה, and then move on to find those ways that help to personally connect with ה’.

Defending Crime

Sharon Shmuel

The תורה regulates a justice system, but it is difficult today to live up to the תורה's high standards. דין בתי דין today are rare, and even the ones that exist do not deal with criminal law. What do we do when a Jew murders (God forbid) and is taken to a secular court? Does a Jew have the right, or perhaps obligation, to testify against another Jew in front of a secular court? Is a Jew allowed to defend another Jew when he committed a crime, particularly if that crime is also prohibited by the תורה? These issues will have to be closely examined.¹

Rav Herschel Schachter, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva University, in an article he wrote for *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, states that there is איסור מסירה of איסור סח under these circumstances.² A Jew is allowed to testify against another Jew because the general courts are the only available justice system today. For the sake of law and order, a Jew may even be required to testify against his fellow Jew. The one restriction Rav Schachter mentions is that in order for a Jew to testify, the Jewish criminal had to violate an איסור from the תורה. The witness, however, has no היתר to lie; he must tell the complete truth.

רבי אליעזר who tells a story of רבי אבהו who agreed to arrest thieves for the Roman government. רבי יהושע reprimanded him, telling him that he is giving over a fellow Jew to be executed by the Romans. This גמרא addresses the two conflicting sides of the issue: a) In order to fulfill the מצוה of "ובערת הרע מקרבך" (דברים יג:), sometimes we have to follow the only justice system available. This was רבי אליעזר's point, when he said, "קוצים אני מכלה מן הכרם". b) Testifying against a fellow Jew and giving him over to the hands of non-Jews is highly problematic, as רבי יהושע strongly stated when he rebuked his colleague, telling him to leave those thieves in the hands of ה'. What is this גמרא telling us? Who is right, רבי אליעזר or רבי יהושע? The ריטב"א in his חידושים on this גמרא explains that for a גדול like רבי אליעזר, it is improper to

¹ This article is largely based on Rabbi Michael J. Broyde, "On the Practice of Law According to Halacha," *The Journal of Halachah in Contemporary Society*, 20.

² Rabbi H. Schachter, "Dina Dimalchuta Dina" *Journal of Halacha in Contemporary Society*, 1, pp. 103, 118.

work for a gentile government (not אסור, simply discouraged), but for most people nowadays, it would not be a problem.

The אסור is explicitly stated in שולחן ערוך, חושן משפט טע"ט: to hand a Jew to the hands of idolators, even if he is a רשע. Anyone who violates this does not have a חלק in עולם הבא. Rabbi Michael J. Broyde explains that the שולחן ערוך prohibits one from testifying against a Jew only to an unjust government, but if the government is fair then it is מותר.

Rav Moshe Feinstein wrote a תשובה regarding a person who wanted to work as a financial auditor for the government. The individual realized that if he discovered any financial misconduct, he would have to report it even if the criminal was a Jew. Rav Moshe explained that there is no problem with this because even if the Jew did not take this job, there would be someone else in his place finding the same wrongdoings, and any Jew who acted illegally would be caught in any case (אגרות משה) (צב דינא דינא דמלכותא דינא). Rabbi Broyde adds that the principle means that a government has the right to enforce laws, and Jews have to abide by these laws. We can infer, therefore, that Jews can also help enforce the laws.

We have seen that it is not necessarily a problem for a Jew to testify against another Jew. However, is a Jew permitted to defend another Jew who is accused of violating the law of the land and a law of תורה? First, let us examine if a Jewish criminal would be allowed to plead not guilty himself. According to רמב"ם, if a Jew was to plead guilty in front of בית דין his testimony would not be accepted without two עדים, like any other case in a Jewish court (הלכות סנהדרין יח:). From this we can conclude that a Jew is not required to plead guilty, even if he is guilty. Rabbi Broyde adds that proof is required both in Jewish and secular law, and therefore, it is the court's responsibility to find the necessary evidence, not the defendant's.

There is an interesting גמרא in ע"א that discusses a group of people who were suspected of murder. They asked רבי טרפון to defend them. רבי טרפון declined but advised them to go and hide. There is a dispute between רש"י and תוספות. רש"י says that he declined because it is אסור to defend criminals. According to this, even if there is just a chance that they committed the crime, it would be אסור to defend them. ערוך לנר, cited by R. Broyde, reads רש"י differently. He says that רש"י is saying that it is only אסור to defend a criminal if defending the criminal is prohibited according to the secular law. Otherwise, it is completely מותר. תוספות say that רבי טרפון refused because he was afraid that he would get punished for defending murderers, but that it is מותר to defend them. According to this, being a defense attorney is completely מותר. If we follow the סברא of

the ערוך לנר and תוספות might even agree, and if the client pleads not guilty, a complete defense is מותר. Rabbi Broyde brings an appealing twist on ערוך לנר's logic, explaining how this fulfills the mitzvah of "ובערת הרע מקרבך". He says that according to American law, even a criminal has the right to representation in court. Without a lawyer (if he desires one), there can be no conviction. In fact, a defense attorney makes it possible to convict the criminal. Therefore, it is always permissible to defend a criminal. Rav Schachter disagrees. Based on the חכמת שלמה and רבי עקיבא, he says that defending a criminal is only מותר if the lawyer is not 100% sure that he is guilty. If he is sure, then it is אסור because every Jew has the mitzvah of "ובערת הרע מקרבך", even lawyers. There is, however, general agreement among the פוסקים that a lawyer may not lie in defending his client. He may only make claims that he things might be true. If a lawyer, for example, knows that the client is perfectly sane, he may not mount an insanity defense.

Although we see through all these sources that it is permissible both to testify against a Jew and defend a guilty Jew in court, we must always keep in mind that it is not permissible for us to cheat and lie. There are many limitations regarding what a lawyer can and cannot say. But that is a topic for another article. May God help us live in a world of true justice, according to the רצון ה'.

Faculty Articles

פסח, מצה ומרור

הרב עזריה ברזון

“שלשה המה נפלאו ממני... דרך הנשר בשמים דרך, משלי declared in שלמה המלך
“There are three that are beyond me: the way of an eagle in the heavens; the way of a snake upon a rock; the way of a ship in the heart of the sea” (משלי ל:יח-יט). חז"ל comment that these three – the eagle, the snake, and the ship – represent respectively מצה, פסח, ומרור (ילקוט משלי תתקג) i.e. the three central מצוות of the Seder night.

I would like to raise two questions. First, what couldn't the חכם מכל אדם understand about these three phenomenon? Second, how did חז"ל connect these three with “פסח, מצה ומרור”? I suggest that what perplexed the mind of כלל ישראל and its survival throughout history.

I.

The “נשר” is an endangered species in most parts of the world. It never flies low. It is either soaring above all creatures, or trudging on the ground. When one sees it on the ground, the eagle looks clumsy, unable to fly. But, suddenly it zooms up to the heavens. The “נשר” symbolizes “כשהם יורדין, יורדין עד למטה. וכשהם עולים, כלל ישראל עולים עד לרקיע” When they are low, they reach the depths; when they are up, they soar to the skies.

Our People reached a low during the Holocaust. During that horrible period we were tortured, murdered, humiliated and trampled upon. Yet, a mere three years later, our People established their own independent State in ארץ ישראל. And less than twenty years later, we experienced the amazing miracles of the Six Day War.

This “נשר” phenomenon is also true in the spiritual realm. In our time, we have witnessed, thank God, an incredible increase in כשרות standards and מצה שמורה. We have seen the proliferation of ישיבות. We are “עד לרקיע.” But, at the same time, we are witness to a plague of intermarriage and “עם הארצות” which threatens to cut off major branches of the tree of our people. This is “עד למטה.”

פסח dramatizes this fact. One day we were “עבדים”: beaten, brutalized, and humiliated. Overnight we became “בני חורין”: free, independent, and proud. Our People experienced a dramatic transition in the spiritual arena as well. ועכשיו קרבנו. ומתחילה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו.

"המקום לעבודתו". From תרח to אברהם – in just one generation – there was a change from עבודה זרה to the belief in, and love of, One God. This is the paradoxical nature of the Jewish People, symbolized by the "נשר" and "פסח."

II.

We can also explain the "נחש" in a related fashion. The snake thrives on a minimal diet – "עלי צור". For over two centuries in מצרים, Jews lived on "לחם עוני". For forty years in the desert they survived on מן: "לחם עוני" (שמות יב:לט) "כי גרשו ממצרים... וגם צדה לא עשו להם". Throughout the גלות we lived like the נחש in conditions of deprivation and poverty. And yet, we survived. This is the paradox that engaged the mind of שלמה המלך!

When the מטה of Moshe was cast to the ground it became a dangerous נחש. But when Moshe was told "אחז בזנבו," handle it with tenderness, "ויהי למטה" it became the "מטה" which led to גאולה (שמות ד:גד) גאולה. ה' has cast His People to the ground during the many long centuries of גלות. Yet, He has consistently redeemed us with great חסד and the tender affection of a loving mother.

The נחש also requires wit to survive. It represents cunning. It is the "ערום מכל חית השדה" (בראשית ג:א). The Jew has survived due to his "Yiddishe kop." There is a story told about Moshe Montefiore. He was summoned to the palace of the king for an emergency meeting on Shabbat. Following the meeting, the king offered him a cigar as a gift. The king lit the cigar, but Montefiore refused. When the king asked why, Moshe responded, "Because a gift from my king is too precious to let go up in smoke!" מצה, the bread of affliction, the לחם עוני, stresses the idea of חיפזון, quick wittedness and the ability to survive.

The Sachachaver Gaon said the following. Normally סור מרע comes before עשה טוב. First we should cleanse ourselves from חטאים and then sanctify ourselves with מצוות. First, should be חרטה and only then על קבלה. But, during יציאת מצרים, God did not wait for the cleansing process. He redeemed us בחיפזון. That is why קדש comes before ורחץ חס וחסד. Sanctification (עשה טוב) should be before purification (סור מרע).

III.

שלמה המלך also wondered about the "דרך אניה בלב ים". Imagine the picture of the helpless and lonely sailboat in the face of a storm. Artists used to bind themselves to the mast of sailboats to experience the fury of a typhoon. The crew might become discouraged, but not the seasoned captain. He knows that the hurricane pushes the אניה closer to shore.

The bitterness of “מרור” represents the furious storms of “גלות” and the situation of the lonely אִינְיָה. But, מרור often drives the אִינְיָה of our people closer to the shore of “גאולה.” In our days we are experiencing bitterness of מרור. Our People is as lonely and as the battered “אִינְיָה בלב ים.” We hope and pray that the fury of the storm of hatred will hasten us to the shores of “גאולה” and “ישועה.” Amen!

"משה קיבל תורה מסיני"

הרב אליעזר לרנר

כולנו מכירים את הפתיחה למסכת אבות: "משה קיבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע". אבל אם נחשוב רגע, נגלה שיש בה משהו מוזר. מה מוסיף מאמר זה על שלשלת המסורה, ליתר המסכת? בפרקי אבות, אין אף מאמר או פתגם של משה או יהושע, הזקנים או הנביאים. המשנה יכלה לפתוח במילים: "אנשי כנסת הגדולה אמרו שלשה דברים... " ולא היה חסר דבר מתוכן המסכת!

כנראה שמסדר המשנה רצה ללמדנו מסר חשוב לגבי מסכת זו. ברור לכולם שהמקור לעינינו מסיני, שבת, קידושין, נזיקין, קרבנות, פרה אדומה וכו' וכו' בתורה שבכתב. אבל באשר לדברי מוסר ואתיקה ישנם מי שחושבים שרק דעותיהם ומחשבותיהם האישיות קובעות. כדי לדעת הלכות נטילת ידיים יש ללמוד תורה, אבל כדי לדעת איך להתנהג באופן מוסרי, יכול כל אדם בעצמו. לכן המשנה כאן אומרת בפתיחה לפרקי אבות - "משה קיבל תורה מסיני" - רק דרך המסורה האמיתית מסיני יכול אדם להגיע למסקנות אמיתיות ונכונות בעינינו אלו. לא כל הרוצה לבוא ליטול את התואר מומחה לאתיקה, יכול ליטול. השכל האנושי מוגבל ביותר ומשועבד לכל מיני כוחות ויצרים חיצוניים, ולמרות מאמציו לעשות את הטוב והישר, אין ספק שניכשל ללא הדרכת התורה.

יסודות המוסר הם התורה שקיבל משה מסיני, ובלעדיהם אי אפשר להתחיל לעסוק בענינים הנידונים בפרקי אבות. זו כוונתו של ר' אלעזר בן עזריה (אבות ג: ז') "אם אין תורה אין דרך ארץ", ומפרש רבינו יונה, שמי שאינו יודע תורה אינו שלם במידות של דרך ארץ.

אולם הסבר זה הוא רק צידו האחד של המטבע. אמנם, "אם אין תורה אין דרך ארץ". אבל ר' אלעזר בן עזריה גם אומר ש"אם אין דרך ארץ אין תורה". מהי כוונתו? שוב מסביר רבינו יונה שאי אפשר להצליח בלימוד התורה אם אדם לא תיקן קודם את מידותיו, ואין התורה שוכנת במי שאינו בעל מידות טובות. על כן ניתן לתת פירוש אחר לשמה של המסכת. מקובל לתרגם את השם "פרקי אבות" ל-*Ethics of the Fathers*. המסכת נקראת אבות כי החכמים נמשלים לאבות, ואנו, התלמידים, נמשלים לבנים (כך מפרש התוספות יום טוב). אבל ה"תפארת ישראל" מציע הסבר אחר. מידות טובות וישרות הדעות מולידות את שמירת התורה. אמנם מסכת אבות מופיעה בסוף סדר נזיקין, אבל מבחינה רעיונית, מקומה בתחילת ששה סדרי משנה. המסרים שיש ללמוד ממנה וההתנהגות שהיא דורשת הם האבות לכל התורה.

מצד אחד, אי אפשר להגיע לשלמות המידות ללא התורה, ומצד שני, השאיפה הזו לשלמות היא תנאי להצלחת הלימוד. "משה קיבל תורה מסיני" ומסרה לאבותינו ולנו לעשות הטוב והישר בעיני ה' אלוהינו.