

HIS WAY IS THE RIGHT WAY

by Shlomo Katz

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz

Mattos-Masei

Volume XIII, No. 38
26 Tammuz 5759
July 10, 1999

Today's Learning:

Terumot 2:6-3:1

Orach Chaim 131:7-132:1

Daf Yomi: Rosh Hashanah 6

Yerushalmi Chagigah 19

In the second of this week's two parashot we read of Bnei Yisrael's travels. On the verse (Vayikra 6:6), "An eternal flame shall burn on the altar, it shall not be extinguished," the Talmud Yerushalmi comments: "Even during the travels." What does this teach us?

R' Aharon Lewin z"l (the "Reisha Rav"; died 1941) writes: There is an awesome ethical lesson here. When a person is at home, he is less likely to sin. Even if the yetzer hara tempts him, he will overcome the yetzer hara because he knows that whatever he does will come to the attention of his friends and neighbors. Not so when a person is traveling. When he is away, he can act with impunity and it will not become known at home. This fact is alluded to in the verse (Bereishit 4:7), "Sin lurks at the door." When one leaves the door of his house, he is more likely to sin.

However, "Fortunate is one who fears Hashem, who goes in his ways" (Tehilim 128:1). Even when he goes on his way, he fears Hashem. [Note that most commentaries translate: "His ways," referring to

G-d.]

This is the message of the Yerushalmi: The eternal flame of love of G-d should burn on the altar in a person's heart even when he travels. As Tehilim (119:1) says, "Fortunate are those who are perfect on the road, who go with the Torah of G-d." (Ha'drash V'Ha'iyun II p.91)

"Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of Bnei Yisrael, saying: 'This is the davar/thing that Hashem has commanded'." (30:2)

R' Klonimus Kalman Epstein z"l (early chassidic leader in Krakow; died 1823) writes: We must understand the phrase, "This is the thing that Hashem has commanded." Would one have thought, G- d forbid, that Moshe said this of his own?

He explains: "Davar" can also mean "word." In the verses which follow, the Torah teaches that a rabbi can release a man from his vow and a husband can nullify his wife's vow. The Torah is teaching us, however, that this release or nullification must be verbal. For example, if a man has made a vow that apples will be forbidden to him, it is not enough if the rabbi feeds him an apple. The rabbi must say, "They are permitted to you."

We do not appreciate the power of speech, R' Epstein adds. There are many laws in the Torah that require action, for example, sitting in a sukkah or putting on tefilin. However, there are other laws which are dependent on the spoken word. For example, if a man appears before a kohen with a mark that may be tzara'at, the man is not legally considered to have tzara'at until the kohen says the word: "Tamei"/"impure." Similarly, when the mark disappears, all of the legal implications of having tzara'at remain in effect until the kohen intones: "Tahor"/"pure." Such is the effect that one word can have on another person's life. (Ma'or Va'shemesh)

Why is the chapter that discusses the laws of vows always read during the "Three Weeks" when we commemorate the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash? R' Meir Horowitz z"l (1819-1877; the "Dzikover Rebbe") explains:

The first Bet Hamikdash was destroyed because King Tzidkiyahu transgressed his vow not to rebel against the Babylonian king, Nevuchadnezar. Also, the final redemption will take place only after certain vows that Hashem took are nullified.

The mishnah (Chagigah 10a) states: "Release from vows floats in the air." [Literally, this means that the idea that a rabbi can nullify a vow is barely alluded to in the Torah and is learned from the Oral Law.] R' Horowitz taught: On the verse (Beresheet 1:2), "A Divine spirit hovered upon the surface of the water," Chazal commented, "This is the soul of mashiach." It is mashiach who is hovering over the waters - floating in the air - who will nullify Hashem's vows. (Imrei Noam)

"Moshe sent them . . . and Pinchas . . . and the sacred vessels." (31:6)

The gemara explains that the "sacred vessels" included the Aron Hakodesh. Inside the Aron were the remnants of the luchot that Moshe broke.

R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach z"l (died 1927; the "Belzer Rebbe") asks: Why would they take a reminder of the sin of the Golden Calf to the battlefield. Should we not fear that it will "testify" against them before the Heavenly Court?

He answers: Just the opposite - the broken luchot are a reminder that no matter how low the Jewish people fall, Hashem remains willing to accept their repentance and take them back. (Sefer Maharid)

"We shall arm ourselves swiftly . . ." m (32:17)

R' Zvi Elimelech of Dinov (the "Bnei Yissaschar"; died 1841) observes that the same Hebrew words that can be translated, "We shall arm ourselves swiftly," can also be translated, "We will detach ourselves from our senses." He explains:

The tribes of Reuven and Gad accepted upon themselves to leave their wives, children and belongings on the east bank of the Jordan and to lead the invasion of Eretz Yisrael. It was only natural to fear that because of their on the battle and would be ineffective. They therefore promised Moshe, "We will detach ourselves from our senses," and not let our feelings affect us. (Derech Edotecha; quoted in Torat Bnei Yissaschar p.258)

"Aharon was 123 years old at his death on Mount Hor. The Canaanite king of Arad heard - he was dwelling in the south of the Land of Canaan - of the approach of Bnei Yisrael." (33:39-40)

Rashi writes: "To teach you that what the king heard was that Aharon had died and the Clouds of Glory disappeared. He therefore felt that he had been granted permission to attack. This is why it is written again here."

R' David ben Shmuel Halevi z"l (1586-1667; the "Taz"; rabbi of Krakow and other towns) explains Rashi's meaning as follows: Earlier (21:1) we read, "The Canaanite king, who dwelled in the south, heard that Israel had come by the route of the spies . . ." Rashi wrote there too that the king heard that Aharon had died and the Clouds of Glory had disappeared. But how could Rashi write that? Does not the Torah say what he heard - "that Israel had come by the route of the spies"?

Rashi here answers this question: In our verse, the Torah reports again that Aharon died and the king of Arad heard. Here, the Torah does not say that he heard that Israel had come by the route of the spies. This repetition but with a change, is: "To teach you that what the king heard was the Aharon

had died and the Clouds of Glory disappeared. . . This is why it is written again here."

The Taz adds: Aren't we taught that although the Clouds of Glory disappeared when Aharon died, they reappeared in Moshe's merit? The answer is that they reappeared only after the king of Arad attacked, for Hashem wanted the Jewish people to notice the loss of the tzaddik Aharon. The same thing happened when Miriam died. The well that had traveled with Bnei Yisrael disappeared, and it did not reappear in Moshe and Aharon's merit until after Bnei Yisrael had felt its absence. (Divrei David)

Letters from Our Sages

This week's letter is the famous "Zettil Hakattan"/"Little Letter" by the early chassidic rebbe, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk z"l (died 1787). The full letter consists of seventeen numbered paragraphs of advice.

4. No matter what one does, whether learning Torah, praying or doing mitzvah deeds, one should accustom oneself to say, "L'shem yichud . . ."/"I am doing this for the sake of unification of the Holy One Blessed Be He and His Shechinah, to be pleasing to the Creator." One should accustom oneself to say this in the deepest recesses of his heart and, after a time, one will feel a great light when he says this. . .

8. One should accustom oneself not to begin a conversation with any person except in a time of great need. Even then, one should speak as briefly as possible, words strained through 13 strainers [i.e., carefully chosen words], so that he will not speak any falsehood, G-d forbid, or any flattery or lashon hara or gossip or words that will embarrass another, or words that will show off one's [good] deeds to another. One should accustom oneself to fulfill the dictum of Chazal. "Accustom your tongue to say, 'I do not know'." When people who are not careful to refrain from speaking without a purpose speak to you, do your best to get away from them . . .

9. A person should accustom himself immediately when he wakes up to say, "Modeh ani . . ." He should say with a joyful heart, even in Yiddish: "Blessed is the G-d above Who has given me the mitzvah of tzitzit with which I am encircled, and the mitzvah of netilat yadaim/hand washing to remove the impure spirit from my two hands." One should see to it that his heart is full of joy when he says this . . .

11. One should accustom himself to pray with all his strength and out loud, which awakens one's kavanah/concentration . . . One should face toward the wall and pray from a siddur, and should not look to the sides from the beginning of the prayers until the end. During the chazzan's repetition [of shemoneh esrei], one should look in a siddur and answer amen with all his strength on each berachah. During the Torah reading, one should turn his ears to hear every word that comes out of the mouth of the one who is reading, just as one does during the Megillah reading. One should act

like a mute so long as he is in shul, even before the prayers, and afterward, until he gets home.

Copyright © 1998 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
