

G-D NEVER FORGETS

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Today's Learning:

Ta'anit 1:7-2:1

Orach Chaim 320:12-14

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nedarim 59

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Kamma 16

R' Mordechai Hager shlita (the Vizhnitzer Rebbe in Monsey, N.Y.) related: I heard from my grandfather, the "Ahavas Yisrael" (R' Yisrael Hager z"l; 1860-1936) that he was once visited by the Satmar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum z"l (1887-1979). My grandfather told his guest the comment of R' Levi Yitzchak z"l of Bereditchev on the statement in the Rosh Hashanah prayers, "For You remember all the forgotten things." Said R' Levi Yitzchak:

"G-d remembers what man forgets, whether his mitzvot or his transgressions. If one performs a mitzvah and reminds himself of it so that it makes him haughty, Hashem ignores that mitzvah. G-d only remembers (so-to-speak) those mitzvot which we do and quickly put out of our minds, knowing that whatever we did, we have not even begun to serve G-d sufficiently.

"By the same token, if we transgress and quickly forget what we have done, G-d will remember it. Only if we keep our sins in mind so that they humble us will Hashem forget them (so-to- speak)."

Upon hearing this, the Satmar Rebbe said, "In this light, we may understand the verse [in this week's parashah, 26:13], 'I have not transgressed any of your commandments, and I have not forgotten.' Our sages call this section of the parashah, "Vidui Ma'aser" / "Confession Regarding Tithes," but what kind of confession is it when one says, 'I have not transgressed any of your commandments'?

"The answer," said R' Teitelbaum, "is that our confession is, 'I have not forgotten.' If one has not transgressed a single one of the commandments, he should forget that fact." (Quoted in Otzar Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot p. 576)

"You shall come to whomever will be the kohen in those days . . ." (26:3)

Could I possibly go to any kohen other than the one who is my days? Rashi explains: "As he is." [Don't compare him to previous leaders.]

It is told that R' Meir Shapiro z"l (1887-1933) once visited the Chafetz Chaim z"l (1838-1933) for a Shabbat. "Say a dvar Torah," said the Chafetz Chaim.

"I came to listen," answered R' Shapiro.

"But I am ill," said the Chafetz Chaim.

"But the Torah says, 'to whomever will be the kohen in those days' - as he is," replied R' Shapiro. [The Chafetz Chaim was a kohen.]

Thereupon, the Chafetz Chaim said a dvar Torah.

(Otzar Tzaddikei U'Geonei Ha'dorot p.575)

"This day, Hashem, your G-d, commands you la'asot these decrees and the statutes . . ." (26:16)

Translated simply, "la'asot" in the above verse means, "to do." However, "la'asot" also means, "to make."

Thus, says R' Aharon Perlow of Karlin z"l (see page 4), we can read this verse: "Hashem, your G-d, has commanded you to make this day," i.e., to make it worthwhile and memorable. How? Through "these decrees and the statutes," i.e., through mitzvah observance. (Bet Aharon)

"This day, Hashem, your G-d, commands you to perform these decrees and the statutes, and you shall observe and perform them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have distinguished Hashem

today to be a G-d for you, and [for you] to walk in His ways, and to observe His decrees, His commandments, and His statutes, and to hearken to His voice. And Hashem has distinguished you today to be for Him a treasured people, as He spoke to you, and to observe His commandments. And, to make you supreme over all the nations that He made, for praise, for renown, and for splendor, and so that you will be a holy people to Hashem, as He spoke." (26:16-19)

R' Avraham Shimon Halevi Ish Horowitz z"l (1876-1943; Mashgiach in Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin in Poland) used to encourage students to memorize these four verses and to review them regularly. He used to say, "If people would remember these four verses no matter how busy they are, the world would be purified thereby."

"When Jews travel on the trains to the regional fairs," he would say, "whatever their troubles, if they would sing together these four verses, everything else would work out." He also said: "One would dance from joy if he understood these four verses." (Naharei Eish p. 190, No. 82)

"Be attentive and hear, Yisrael: This day you have become a people to Hashem, your G-d." (27:9)

The gemara (Berachot 63b) states: Rabbi Yehuda opened his lecture by speaking of the Torah's honor. He expounded [on the above verse]: "Was the Torah then given to Yisrael on that day [that it could say, 'This day you have become a people to Hashem']? That day was at the end of the 40 years [in the desert]!

"Rather," Rabbi Yehuda answered, "this teaches that the Torah is beloved by those who study it every day as if it had been given from Sinai on that very day."

The gemara continues: Rabbi Tanchum the son of Rabbi Chiya, a man from Akko, added, "The proof that this is true is that a person recites Kriat Shema every morning and every evening, yet if he misses one evening, he is like one who never recited Shema in his life."

R' Yitzchak Yaakov Reines z"l (1841-1915; Rosh Yeshiva in Lida, Belarus, and founder of the Mizrachi) explains this gemara as follows:

When we recite Shema, we accept upon ourselves the yoke of Heaven. At first glance, this would seem counter-productive, for a master does not ask his slave to reaffirm his loyalty (and certainly not twice a day). To the contrary, asking a slave to reaffirm his loyalty implies that the slave has a certain measure of independence.

The answer is that Hashem wants us to feel that we serve Him voluntarily. He wants us to recognize that serving Him is what is best for us; that, in the words of Pirkei Avot, "Sechar mitzvah mitzvah" / "A mitzvah is its own reward."

It takes work to recognize this, but (hopefully) a person grows each day and gradually increases his appreciation of his relationship with Hashem. This is why we reaffirm our loyalty to Him twice a day:

because we have grown since yesterday, we recognize that yesterday's affirmation was based on an inadequate understanding, and we therefore accept the yoke of Heaven anew today.

(In this light, R' Reines explains the gemara [Berachot 17a] which says, "The goal of wisdom is teshuvah / return and good deeds." How can teshuvah be a goal? Isn't teshuvah something that a person does only if he has sinned?

The answer is that that is a mistaken understanding of teshuvah. Teshuvah means returning to the Source from which the soul came. It is precisely the idea described above, i.e., that one should become closer to Hashem and improve his relationship with Him every day.)

A person who is capable of failing to recite Shema one evening presumably has not grown spiritually since the last time he recited Shema. That, in turn, demonstrates that his recitation of Shema in the morning was lacking, for had he recited Shema properly, it would have given him the spiritual boost to ensure that his day was not wasted spiritually. This in turn calls into doubt the quality of his previous recitation of Shema, and so on, in a vicious cycle, until we can truly say (as the above gemara teaches), "A person recites Kriat Shema every morning and every evening, but if he misses one evening, he is like one who never recited Shema in his life."

How does this relate to Rabbi Yehuda's statement that "the Torah is beloved by those who study it every day as if it had been given from Sinai on that very day"? The idea, explains R' Reines, is that, properly done, Torah study, like Shema, brings about a renewal. When one studies Torah the way it was meant to be studied, he can find something new in it and in himself every time (even if he studies the same passage over and over). (Ohr Chadash Al Tzion, Part V, Ch. 10, p. 56a)

"Accursed is the man who will make a graven or molten image . . .

"Accursed is the man who degrades his father and mother . . ." (27:15-16)

The gemara (Kiddushin 30b) teaches that Hashem considers His honor and the honor of parents to be equivalent. The reason, R' Eliezer Dovid Gruenwald z"l (Hungarian rabbi and rosh yeshiva; died 1928) explains, is that as long as one honors his parents, he will not leave his faith, the faith which his parents have bequeathed to him. This is why our two verses above are juxtaposed to each other: A Jew who worships graven images (idols) degrades his parents as well. (Keren Le'Dovid)

R' Aharon Perlow of Karlin z"l

R' Aharon "the Second" of Karlin was born in 1802, the son of R' Asher of Stolin, the son of R' Aharon "Hagadol" of Karlin. Our subject, the younger R' Aharon, served as the Karliner Rebbe from 1827 until his death in 1872, and, under his leadership, Karliner chassidut reached its golden age. Besides his Torah scholarship, R' Aharon was known for his organizational skills, and entire villages joined his

following. According to eyewitness reports, as many as 4,000 chassidim visited R' Aharon on some holidays.

The period of R' Aharon's leadership included the dark days of the reign of Czar Nikolai I, but R' Aharon knew how to cheer-up his chassidim and help them to bear their heavy burdens. However, some powerful residents of Karlin objected to the extent to which song and dance permeated the Rebbe's "Court," and in 1864, the Rebbe himself was run out of town. He resettled in Stolin, and since then, this dynasty has been known as "Karlin- Stolin."

Like his father, R' Aharon was a strong supporter of the chassidic settlement in Eretz Yisrael, and many of his own chassidim moved there. Also in the Karlin tradition, R' Aharon's prayer was accompanied by outward displays of great emotion and excitement. He was also known to love all people and to draw them close.

It is told that one day, a woman appeared before R' Aharon and wailed that her daughter had been engaged for several years, but that her family was unable to meet its financial commitments and the groom threatened to break the match. "How much do you need?" the Rebbe asked, and when a sum was named, he took out that amount and gave it to the distraught mother of the bride.

The next day, the woman returned. "Thank you, Rebbe," she cried. "You saved the match, but I can't afford a wedding dress." Again R' Aharon asked how much she needed and gave her the sum she named.

After the woman had left, R' Aharon's wife challenged him: "Why can't her daughter get married without a wedding dress? What of all the paupers who have no bread to eat?"

"At first," replied R' Aharon, "I, too, had that thought. However, I then asked myself why I did not have that thought until today. If I am truly concerned about hungry paupers, why did I not give that money away to hungry paupers yesterday? I therefore concluded that it was the yetzer hara that was advising me not to give the bride's mother money for a wedding dress." (Sources: Gedolei Ha'dorot p. 680; Encyclopedia La'chassidut p. 172)

The Sabrin family, in memory of mother Bayla bas Zev a"h

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob S. Edeson and family in honor of the birthday of daughter Raizel Stern

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