

EMULATE G-D, AGAIN AND AGAIN!

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Today's Learning:

Kiddushin 2:10-3:1

Orach Chaim 496:3-497:2

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 15

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Berachot 49

There are three verses in this week's parashah that command us to emulate Hashem's ways. This means, say Chazal, that just as He is merciful, so we should be merciful, just as He is giving, we should be giving, and so on with respect to all other attributes.

The first of the three verses places emulating Hashem's ways before fearing Him: "You shall observe the commandments of Hashem, your G-d, to go in his ways and fear Him" (8:6). The second verse places following in His ways between fearing Him and loving Him: "Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in His ways and to love Him" (10:12). Finally, the third verse places emulating Hashem after loving Him and before cleaving to Him: "For if you observe this entire commandment that I command you, to perform it, to love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him" (11:22). R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the "Chafetz Chaim"; died 1933) explains:

There are three levels in serving Hashem: yirah / fear, ahavah / love, and deveikut / cleaving or attachment. Emulating Hashem is a prerequisite for achieving each of these levels. First one must emulate Hashem, then he will learn to fear Him. Next one must emulate Hashem on a higher level, then he will learn to love Him. Finally, one must emulate Hashem on a still higher level, and then he will cleave to Him. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous than I [literally, "from me"]; how will I be able to drive them out?'

"Do not fear them! You shall remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt." (7:17-18)

R' Yissachar Ber of Radoshitz z"l (1765-1843) writes in the name of his rebbe, R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel z"l (the Ohev Yisrael"; 1746-1825): Moshe spoke these verses to a generation of tzaddikim about whom he had said (Devarim 4:4), "You who cling to Hashem, your G-d - you are all alive today." How could Moshe suspect that these same people would fear the inhabitants of the Land?

He answers: A tzaddik does not fear someone who is truly wicked. However, when we see a seemingly wicked person who is thriving, we have to wonder: "Does he possess within his soul some sparks of holiness? Is that what sustains him?"

This is what Moshe meant: "Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous from me - i.e., because they share the same holiness that is in my soul. If so, how will I be able to drive them out?'" The answer is: "Do not fear them! You shall remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt." Pharaoh, too, lived in a thriving society --indeed, in the world's most advanced civilization -- before the plagues. Nevertheless, that did not prevent Hashem from punishing Pharaoh as He saw fit. (Torat Emet)

"Not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live." (8:3)

R' Chaim Vital z"l (1543-1620; Tzefat and Damascus) writes: Certainly no one would entertain the idea that man will live an eternal life - the only "life" that matters - on bread alone. The Torah does not need to teach us that. However, one might mistakenly think that he can earn eternal life through mitzvot alone (of which the blessings associated with bread are examples). It is not so; "rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d - i.e., the study of Torah - does man live" forever.

Alternatively, one might think that the body lives on bread, while the soul lives on Torah. No, says the verse. The source of the body's life is the soul, and the soul lives on the word of G-d. (Etz Ha'da'at Tov)

"I grasped the two Tablets and threw them from my two hands . . ." (9:17)

There is an opinion among the Rishonim / medieval authorities that if one releases his hold on a stone and it kills someone, he is liable for murder. It is not necessary that one apply his own force to the stone, for example, by throwing it.

R' Yitzchak Yehuda Trunk z"l (Poland; 1880-1939) writes that this view may be supported by our verse. Why did Moshe mention that he was grasping the luchot before he threw them. down? Perhaps he meant to say that he did not actually throw the luchot. Rather, he was grasping them in his hands, and when he stopped grasping them, it was as if he threw them. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"At that time, Hashem set apart the tribe of Levi . . . Therefore, Levi did not have a share and a heritage with his brethren . . . I remained on the mountain as on the first days - forty days and forty nights . . ." (10:8-10)

What is the connection between the setting apart of the tribe of Levi and Moshe's remaining on Har Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights, praying for Bnei Yisrael to be forgiven the sin of the golden calf? R' Moshe Gruenwald z"l (1853-1911; one of the leading Hungarian roshei yeshiva of his generation) explains:

The role of the tribe of Levi is to be the teachers of Torah to Bnei Yisrael, as we read (Devarim 33:10), "They shall teach Your ordinances to Yaakov and Your Torah to Yisrael." This is why the tribe of Levi did not receive a portion in Eretz Yisrael, i.e., so that they would be free to teach Torah.

The gemara (Eruvin 54a) states that if the luchot had not been broken, Torah that was learned would never be forgotten. And, the luchot, we know, were broken because of the sin of the golden calf. It follows that the tribe of Levi's appointment as teachers and its not receiving a share in Eretz Yisrael are a direct result of that sin. (Arugat Ha'bosem)

"Now, Yisrael, mah / what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d . . ." (10:12)

Our Sages found in this verse an allusion that one should recite 100 blessings every day. They derived this by changing one word in the verse as follows: "Now, Yisrael, me'ah / one hundred does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you." [See below.]

Poskim / halachic authorities note that it is easy to recite 100 blessings on a weekday, as saying shemoneh esrei three times (Ma'ariv, Shacharit, and Minchah) already accounts for 57 berachot. On Shabbat, however, the amidah contains only seven blessings; saying it four times (Ma'ariv, Shacharit, Minchah, and Musaf) yields only 28 blessings. The gemara (Menachot 43b) suggests making-up

some of the missing blessings on Shabbat by snacking.

R' Yitzchak Weiss z"l (rabbi of Verbau, Czechoslovakia in the 1930s) observes that this creates a great potential for a person to recite unnecessary berachot or blessings in vain, for example, a blessing that is not halachically required because one just recited the same blessing on a different food. Therefore the Torah warns: "What does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d." At the same time that you are reciting the required 100 blessings, remember to fear G-d and not to take His Name in vain. (Siach Yitzchak)

How does this verse allude to an obligation to recite 100 blessings? One answer is that the verse has 100 letters. Alternatively, the word "mah" has a gematria of 100 using the form of gematria known as "at-bash." [In this form of gematria, each letter is paired with the letter which is in the "opposite" position in the aleph-bet. Thus, aleph is paired with tav, bet is paired with shin, etc. Under this system, mem is paired with yud, whose gematria is 10, and heh is paired with tzaddi, whose gematria is 90.] (Tosfot, Menachot 43b)

R' Menachem Mordechai Frankel-Teomim z"l (a 20th century scholar) suggests the following connection between this verse and the obligation to recite 100 blessings daily: The word "mah" is seemingly superfluous in this verse, for the Torah could just as well have said, "Now, Yisrael, Hashem, your G-d, asks of you to fear Hashem, your G-d . . ." Presumably, then, this "extra" word was used to tell us _how_ to attain fear of G-d. Hashem is asking something of us - "???" can also mean "something" - asking us to do something that will help us fear Him. What is that? Reciting blessings. Why one-hundred? Because kabbalists teach that that number represents completeness or perfection. (Ki Im L'binah Tikra p. 141)

Shemittah Observance Today

[This week, we continue our discussion of the "Hetter Mechirah" / the view that permits working the Land after selling it to a non-Jew for the duration of the shemittah year. We have already noted that the Hetter Mechirah may be relied upon only if one holds that shemittah does not apply according to Torah (as opposed to rabbinic) law when there is no Bet Hamikdash and most Jews live in exile. This will be discussed in greater detail next week. This week we address a more fundamental question: Does Eretz Yisrael retain _any_ of its holiness after the destruction of the Temple?] The gemara speaks in several places of the two times that the Land of Israel was "sanctified." The first time was in the days of the Prophet Yehoshua, 40 years after the Exodus (as related in the Book of Yehoshua). On that occasion, Bnei Yisrael conquered the Land militarily and settled it, and they remained there for 850 years, until the first Bet Hamikdash was destroyed.

Seventy years after the Destruction, Bnei Yisrael returned from their exile in Babylon and Persia and, again, they settled the Land. This was the second "sanctification." The dominant leader in this period

was Ezra Ha'sofer, the author of several books of Tanach.

The general consensus is that the "kedushah rishonah" / "first sanctification" (in the time of Yehoshua) was temporary, and that the Land lost its sanctity when the First Temple was destroyed. In contrast, the "kedushah sheniayah" / "second sanctification" (in the time of Ezra) was permanent, and the destruction of the Second Temple did not affect the Land's sanctity. Why?

Commentaries explain that because the first sanctification was based on military conquest, it remained in effect only so long as the Jewish people could maintain it militarily. The second sanctification, however, was not a military conquest. Rather, through a process of aliyah and settlement undertaken with the blessing of the greatest power of that time (Persia), the Jewish people re-sanctified the Land. Once the Land was given willingly, no power could take it away against the will of the Jewish people, just as one has no power to rescind the sale or gift of any item. (See Rambam, Hil. Bet Ha'bechirah, end of chapter 6; R' Shlomo Yosef Zevin z"l, L'Ohr Ha'halachah, p. 105.)

Because the sanctity of the Land remains in effect after the Destruction, the mitzvot of the Land remain in effect as well. Nevertheless, Rambam writes with regard to terumah and ma'aser / tithes that these mitzvot apply only according to rabbinic law because only a minority of the Jewish people returned to Eretz Yisrael with Ezra (Hil. Terumot 1:26). [Note that Rambam does not explicitly mention the status of shemittah, i.e., whether it applies according to Torah or only rabbinic law following the second sanctification. The various hints that Rambam gives regarding this question will be discussed next week.]

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