

THE BEAUTIFUL ACCOMPANIMENT

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Today's Learning:

Bava Kamma 3:5-6

Orach Chaim 504:2-4

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Kamma 36

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pe'ah 2

The midrash states that the verse (Mishlei 1:9), "For they are a beautiful accompaniment ('livi'at chen')," refers to the many mitzvot of the Torah, and especially to those that are found in this parashah. The midrash says: Wherever you go, the mitzvot accompany you. If you build a house, build a fence around the roof (Devarim 22:8). When you install a door, put up a mezuzah (Devarim 6:8). When you put on new clothes, make sure they have no sha'atnez / a prohibited mixture of wool and linen (Devarim 22:11). When you cut your hair, do not cut the pe'ot / corners (Vayikra 19:27). If you have a field and you wish to plow it, make sure that your team does not have an ox and donkey together (Devarim 22:10). When you sow, do not plant kilayim / forbidden mixtures (Devarim 22:9). When you harvest your fields, make sure to leave gifts for the poor (Devarim 24:19-21).

Even if you are doing nothing, says the midrash, but merely walking down the road, the mitzvot accompany you, as it is written, "If you will chance upon a bird's nest . . ." (Devarim 22:6).

R' Gedalya Schorr z"l writes that this midrash is explaining the purpose of mitzvot. When a host accompanies a guest down the road, he shows that he feels a continuing relationship with the guest, even if the host and the guest must now be separated for a time. Similarly, the mitzvot that Hashem gave us are an "accompaniment" for us. Although in this world we are relatively distant from Hashem, the mitzvot demonstrate our continuing relationship to Him. When we go about our business in this world, there is a natural tendency to become more distant from G-d. Therefore, we are surrounded by mitzvot which draw us back to Hashem.

This can be understood on a deeper level. We are used to thinking, for example, that because we have houses, G-d gave us the mitzvah of mezuzah to sanctify the house. In fact, the cause- and-effect relationship is the reverse. G-d created the concept of housing in order to give us the mitzvot associated with it. In everything we do, we can find, if we look below the surface, a hidden spiritual message which can aid us in our service of Hashem. This is alluded to in the verse quoted above, "For they are a liviat chen." The word "chen" is the abbreviation of "chochmah nistarah" / "hidden wisdom," for every action that we take has hidden mitzvot accompanying it.

The month of Elul, concludes R' Schorr, is a particularly appropriate time to look for the hidden wisdom in creation, for creation began in Elul. (The sixth day of creation was Rosh Hashanah.) In this way, all of our actions in the coming year can achieve their deeper religious significance. (Ohr Gedalyahu: Elul section 3)

"All of the men of his city shall pelt him with stones and he shall die; and you shall remove the evil from your midst; and all Israel shall hear and they shall fear." (21:21)

If one sinner is executed, how will all of Israel hear? R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita (rabbi of Johannesburg, South Africa and Vice-President of the Eida Charedit of Yerushalayim) explains that this is one of the secret workings of the world which we cannot understand rationally: When evil is eradicated in one place, the spiritual impact is felt around the world.

R' Sternbuch also quotes the comment the R' Moshe Teitelbaum z"l (1759-1841; the "Yismach Moshe") on this verse: If you want all of Israel to hear your rebuke and fear G-d, first eradicate the evil from within yourself. (Ta'am Va'daat)

"If a bird's nest happens to be before you . . . you shall not take the mother with the young. You shall surely send away the mother . . . so that it will be good for you and will prolong your days." (22:6-7)

The midrash comments on this verse: "Thus it is written (Mishlei 4:23), 'More than you guard anything, safeguard your heart, for from it are the sources of life.'" How does this verse relate to the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird? What is the midrash teaching us?

R' Moshe Shmuel Glasner z"l (1856-1924; rabbi of Klausenberg, Rumania; known as the "Dor Revi'i") explains: There is only one other mitzvah regarding which the Torah makes a promise similar to the promise made here: "So that it will be good for you and will prolong your days." That is the mitzvah of honoring parents. [See Devarim 5:16, where a slight variation of this verse appears.] This implies that the reward for sending away the mother bird - one of the easiest of all mitzvot - is equal to the reward for honoring parents - one of the most difficult of all commandments. How can this be?

Chazal teach that we should not serve G-d with an expectation of reward. If we serve G-d for the reward, we will be repaid according to the effort we put in - one reward for the difficult mitzvot and a different reward for the easy mitzvot. However, if we serve Hashem as servants who expect no reward, if we view all mitzvot equally as the Will of G-d, no more and no less, then the reward for an easy mitzvah will be no different than the reward for a difficult mitzvah. In short, our reward depends on what is in our heart when we do the mitzvot.

This is the lesson of the midrash: The similarity of the reward for these two mitzvot teaches us the importance of the attitude with which we approach mitzvot. "More than you guard anything, safeguard your heart, for from it are the sources of life." (Shevivei Aish)

"When you come into the vineyard of your fellow, you may eat grapes as is your desire, to your fill, but you may not put into your vessel." (23:25)

Rashi explains that the verse is referring to a hired harvest- worker. While he is harvesting the grapes, he may also snack from the vines. However, a worker is not permitted to take home any of his employer's harvest.

R' Moshe Avigdor Amiel z"l (1883-1945; Chief Rabbi of Antwerp and Tel Aviv) applies this halachah to life in general. The entire world is Hashem's vineyard, and everything in it is available for you to eat and enjoy as long as you are serving the Master of the vineyard. However, you can't store it away for after your lifetime. It is futile to spend your life filling your vessels for naught.

Another point: If only we recognized that we cannot fill our vessels, then we would be able to eat our fill. As it is, we are never satisfied, we never feel full, because we are too busy trying to fill our vessels with more and more riches.

R' Amiel continues: The gemara (Avodah Zarah 8a) states that after Adam repented from his sin, he sacrificed an ox "whose horns preceded its hooves." What does this mean?

An ox's hooves are used for standing on, while its horns can be used for self-defense or for aggression. A newborn ox has hooves but does not have horns; similarly, the way of the world should be that a person first places his existence on a solid and meaningful foundation ("hooves") and only later, if it becomes necessary to defend his lifestyle, he uses his fighting abilities ("horns"). However, Adam's sin corrupted that order and turned man's "horns" into instruments of

combativeness.

The Torah informs us that after Adam sinned, he saw that he was naked and he made clothes for himself. Before his sin, all the creatures of the world lived in harmony; there was no competition. After Adam sinned, he became competitive; however, since there were no people with whom he could compete, he competed with animals. He saw that he was no different than the animals because he, like they, had no clothes. Therefore, his first act after his sin was to fashion clothing for himself.

When Adam repented, he sacrificed an ox "whose horns preceded its hooves," i.e., he gave up his competitive nature. We, too, are called upon to rectify Adam's sin and correct our natures. (Derashot El Ami)

"You shall not take the garment of a widow as a pledge. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and Hashem, your G-d, redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing." (24:17-18)

"When you harvest your vineyard, you shall not glean behind you; it shall be for the convert, the orphan and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, therefore I command you to do this thing." (24:21- 22)

Both of these sets of verses instruct us regarding our treatment of the poor, and both of them remind us that we were slaves in Egypt. However, only one of verses reminds us that Hashem redeemed us from Egypt. Why?

R' Chaim Kanievsky shlita (prominent sage in Bnei Brak; son of the "Steipler Gaon") explains: The mitzvah contained in the second set of verses (known in Hebrew as "olelot" / "gleanings") does not cause a person a real loss for it merely requires a vineyard owner to leave behind isolated grapes and very small bunches. In no case does the farmer lose the principal of his investment. This is a relatively easy mitzvah, and it suffices for the Torah to remind a person that he too was once down-and-out in order to encourage this mitzvah's performance.

In contrast, the mitzvah in the first set of verses presents a potential loss of principal. After all, the very purpose of taking a pledge is to guarantee repayment of the loan. Accordingly, the Torah offers additional encouragement: "You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and Hashem, your G- d, redeemed you from there." The Sages teach that the generation of the Exodus included numerous idolators and did not deserve to be redeemed. Remember that Hashem redeemed you nevertheless. (Ta'ama D'kra)

Shemittah Observance Today (From Rambam's Mishneh Torah, Hil. Shemittah Ve'yovel, ch. 8)

1. Just as one may not work the Land during the shemittah, so one may not lend assistance to Jews who work the Land [impermissibly] and one may not sell farm implements to them. The reason is that one may not aid a person who is committing a sin.
2. The following are the implements which may not be sold to one who is suspected of violating the shemittah: a plow and all of its associated tools . . . This is the rule: Any implement whose only use is a prohibited activity may not be sold to one who is suspected of being a shemittah-violator. However, a tool which has both a forbidden use and a permitted use may be sold to one who is suspect.

[Paragraph 3 discusses the application of this law to specific farm implements.]

4. One may sell any implement to a person who is not suspected of violating the laws of shemittah -- even a tool that has no permitted use during the shemittah -- as it is possible that he is buying the implement to use next year. [Why don't we give every buyer the benefit of the doubt and presume that he is buying implements to use next year? Because all of the tools listed by Rambam are readily available and are not ordinarily bought so far in advance of being needed. Coupled with the fact that a would-be buyer is a suspected shemittah-violator, this is sufficient reason to not give him the benefit of the doubt. However, if the buyer is not a suspected shemittah-violator, we give him the benefit of even a far-fetched doubt, such as the possibility that he is buying implements to use next year. (Based on the commentary of Mahari Korkos)]

[Paragraphs 5-9 discuss related laws.]

10. Just as one may not do business with the produce of shemittah or store it, so one may not buy such produce from an am ha'aretz / one who is ignorant of the laws of shemittah, for one may not give money that has the holiness of shemittah to such a person. The reason is that the am ha'aretz will not use the money to buy other produce of shemittah to eat, as required.
11. When one buys a lulav from an am ha'aretz during shemittah, he should receive the etrog as a gift. If not, he should pay for the lulav and etrog as a package. [When the etrog is obtained from an am ha'aretz, we must be concerned that it was acquired in violation of the laws of shemittah. This concern does not apply to the lulav, which is not edible and therefore not subject to the laws of shemittah (Radvaz). Ed. note: This law will be discussed further prior to Sukkot, for it applies to us on the Sukkot after, rather than during, shemittah.]

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