

OUR EYES AND EARS

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:

Avot 1:4-5

Orach Chaim 649:4-6

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 73

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Challah 10

In this week's parashah, Moshe's father-in-law Yitro prepares to depart from Bnei Yisrael to return to his homeland. Moshe pleads with him (10:31), "Please do not forsake us, inasmuch as you know our encampments in the wilderness, and you will be as eyes for us." Rashi explains: "You know our encampments" means, "You have seen the miracles which G-d has done for us." "You will be as eyes for us" means, "If something escapes us, you can enlighten us."

Rav Elya Meir Bloch z"l explains further that Yitro joined the Jewish people (as told in Parashat Yitro) after hearing of the miracles which G-d performed in Egypt and at the Yam Suf/Red Sea. Although the Jewish People actually saw those miracles, while Yitro did not, it appears that Yitro appreciated the miracles more than Bnei Yisrael did. He was the one who recognized that Hashem acted middah-keneged-middah / measure for measure against the Egyptians.

This is why Moshe wanted Yitro to stay, because, through him, Bnei Yisrael could gain a greater

appreciation for Hashem's kindness. This is a lesson for us as well, says Rav Bloch; specifically, it demonstrates that we need sages to help us see events correctly, even when the events themselves are well known to us. (Peninei Da'at)

"In the second month, on the fourteenth day, in the afternoon, shall he make it; with matzot and bitter herbs he shall eat it." (9:11)

When the Torah speaks of Pesach Sheni, the "make-up" day for offering the Korban Pesach if one unavoidably missed bringing it on the 14th of Nissan, the Torah places the word "with" before the matzot ("with matzot and bitter herbs shall he eat it") In contrast, when the Torah speaks of the Korban Pesach that is brought on Erev Pesach (in Shmot 12:8), the word "with" is placed after the matzot ("They shall eat the flesh on that night -- roasted over the fire -- and matzot; with bitter herbs shall they eat it"). Why?

R' Yedidyah Tiah Weil z"l (1722-1805; rabbi of Karlsruhe, Germany) explains that this difference reflects the fact that one can make-up a missed Korban Pesach, but he cannot make-up the other mitzvot of the Seder if he missed them. On the first night of Pesach, there are two mitzvot - eating the Korban Pesach and eating matzah. As the verse in Shmot states, one should eat the flesh of the sacrifice and matzot. How? With bitter herbs. Eating maror is not an independent mitzvah, but merely a detail of the Korban Pesach service. On the night of Pesach Sheni, in contrast, there is no longer an independent mitzvah to eat matzah; rather, the matzah is "downgraded" to an accompaniment to the Korban Pesach, just as the maror was before. Thus, says our verse, one shall make the sacrifice. How? With matzah and maror. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Marbeh Le'sapair p. 20)

"[W]ith matzot... he shall eat it." (9:11)

Matzah is called "lechem oni" / "poor man's bread." R' Levi Yitzchak Horowitz shlita (the "Bostoner Rebbe") comments:

The real poor man is someone who lacks proper understanding. One whose focus in life is tied to "bread" - to materialism - is a poor man. On the other hand, one who wishes to grow should focus on spirituality; he should break the bread - symbolized by "Yachatz" at the Seder - and disassociate himself from materialism. He should do this with the full knowledge that the ultimate reward is Tzafun / "hidden away." [Tzafun is the stage of the Seder at which the broken matzah is eaten.] (Haggadah Shel Pesach Ezrat Avoteinu p. 183)

"Moshe said to Hovav son of Reuel the Midianite, the father-in-law of Moshe, 'We are journeying to the place of which Hashem has said, "I shall give it to you." Go with us and we shall treat you well, for

Hashem has spoken good for Yisrael... ve'hayah / and it shall be that if you come with us, then ve'hayah / it shall be the goodness with which Hashem will benefit us, we will do good for you'. (10:29, 32)

Why does the verse repeat "ve'hayah / and it shall be"? What is being emphasized here? R' Menachem Meir Fried shlita (a Torah scholar in Antwerp, Belgium) explains:

"Good" is relative; what a recently-freed slave considers to be good is not necessarily what a former High Priest considers to be good. Yitro might suspect that Eretz Yisrael had nothing to offer him; therefore, Moshe emphasized "It shall be good for you."

R' Fried continues: We read in Tehilim (126:1-2), "When Hashem will return the captivity of Zion... Then our mouth will be filled with laughter and our tongue with glad song. Then they will declare among the nations, 'Hashem has done greatly with these'." Of course when we are finally redeemed, our mouth will be filled with laughter, for our exile has been a long and painful one. However, will the "good" of the Redemption-time really be good? Yes, says the verse, even the nations that have lived in comfort all of these centuries will declare, "Hashem has done greatly with these." (Imrei Menachem)

"When the Ark would journey, Moshe would say, 'Arise, Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You'." (10:35)

It is customary to recite this verse when the Torah is removed from the ark. R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld z"l (1848-1931; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Eidah Ha'chareidit) offered the following explanation for this practice:

The Zohar teaches that at the moment when the ark is opened and the Sefer Torah is removed in order to be read from in public, the gates of Heavenly Mercy open as well and G-d's Love is awakened, so-to-speak. Thus, says R' Sonnenfeld, it is a time when one can attain great spiritual levels. And, we are taught that the greater the spiritual potential of a particular moment or event, the harder the yetzer hara fights to oppose the forces of holiness. Therefore, we pray at this moment: "Let Your foes - the yetzer hara and the forces of evil and impurity - be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You." (Quoted in Chochmat Chaim)

"Mouth to mouth I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles." (12:8)

Ramban writes (in his commentary to Yevamot 49b): "All the other prophets looked with their eyes and saw. Moshe, however, looked through a clear lens. i.e. the knowledge which is the glory of Yisrael, and did not see Hashem's face."

R' Shimon Starelitz z"l (co-editor of Encyclopedia Talmudit; died 1955), explains: "Spiritual vision does not reach as far as spiritual hearing. The eye focuses on particulars, but the ear can take in all of the

world's sounds together." Moshe Rabbeinu rose to the level where he knew Hashem's Will -- he was attuned to it -- and he had no need to "see" what was going on in the Heavens. This is the most glorious thing a Jewish soul can accomplish -- being attuned to the Divine Will -- and is the meaning of the statement, "Yisrael and the Torah and the Holy One, blessed is He, are one." (Quoted in B'Sdeh Ha'Rei'yah p. 383)

R' Yitzchak of Drogobych z"l

R' Yitzchak of Drogobych was one of the leading followers of the Ba'al Shem Tov and helped disseminate the latter's teachings in the province of Galicia. Neither the year of R' Yitzchak's birth or death is known, but he lived from approximately 1700 to the sixth or seventh decade of that century. He was a descendant of R' Yitzchak Chayon, author of Apei Ravrevai, and many generations of his ancestors were respected rabbis. His mother Yente was known as the "prophetess."

R' Yitzchak was an itinerant maggid / preacher who traveled throughout Galicia and Volhynia, and even visited Slutsk, Lithuania. He lived for a time in Brody, where he was supported by R' Yosef Ostra, a well-known philanthropist who maintained a shul and kollel at his own expense. Brody was the home of R' Yechezkel Landau (the "Noda B'Yehuda"), a fierce opponent of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and R' Yitzchak, too, was at first opposed to the budding chassidic movement.

It is told that R' Yitzchak had the gift of falling asleep immediately upon retiring at night. Once, after making a derogatory remark about the Ba'al Shem Tov, he was unable to sleep, so he decided to travel to Mezhibozh to ask the chassidic leader's forgiveness. The Ba'al Shem Tov greeted him warmly, saying, "You have come a long way to ask forgiveness for having mocked me. I forgive you wholeheartedly."

R' Yitzchak eventually became maggid and dayan / rabbinical judge of Horochow, Volhynia. He used to say that a preacher must consider three things: First, his goal should be to cause the spirit of the Torah to permeate every listener; second, he should direct himself to the entire community; and third, he should not speak unless he is confident of the truth of his words as if he heard them from the Almighty himself. He used to say, "When I am setting out to preach in different communities, the yetzer hara comes to me and says, 'Yitzchak, you had better stay home and study Torah. Why do you want to exhaust your energy? Why do you want to neglect the study of Torah?'

"I reply, 'I am only going to preach in order to make money,' and the evil inclination then leaves me alone. However, the moment I begin to preach, I cast away all material considerations and concentrate on imbuing the audience with a love of Torah and fear of the Almighty."

R' Yitzchak used to say: "It is not right that people wait until Erev Yom Kippur to be reconciled. How can one bear a grudge against a Jew for an entire year? Reconciliation should take place every day."

R' Yitzchak's son was the chassidic rebbe R' Yechezkel Michel of Zlotchov.

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