

THE FOOTSTEPS OF MASHIACH

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:

Eduyot 3:6-7

Orach Chaim 627:1-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 24

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ma'asrot 20

One of the mitzvot in this week's parashah is Brit Milah / circumcision. In the additional Harachaman prayers recited in Birkat Hamazon following a circumcision, we ask G-d to send us "His anointed one who walks with wholeness." This is a reference to mashiach. We then ask Hashem to send "the righteous priest who was taken to concealment." This is a reference to Eliyahu Hanavi.

This requires explanation. Is not Eliyahu supposed to come before mashiach? Why, then, is the order of the supplications reversed?

R' Moshe Zvi Neria z"l explains: Eliyahu will indeed appear before mashiach, but the Ikvita D'meshicha / footfalls of mashiach will be felt before Eliyahu comes. Specifically, the beginning of the material aspects of the redemption, the building of the land and its agricultural development, will appear before the spiritual awakening heralded by Eliyahu is felt.

This sequence of redemption is alluded to in the verse (Tehilim 28:9 -- the well-known 10-word pasuk used to count Jews), "Save Your people and bless Your heritage, tend them and carry them forever." First, "tend" to their material needs in a rich pasture; afterwards, "carry them" - raise them and elevate them spiritually. (Mo'adei Hare'iyah)

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael saying, 'When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male...' (12:2)

Rashi quotes a midrash: "Rabbi Simlai said, 'Just as the formation of man took place after that of every cattle, beast and fowl when the world was created, so the law regarding man is set forth after the law regarding cattle, beast and fowl,' i.e., after the laws of kashrut which are found in last weeks parashah.

R' Simcha Zissel Broide z"l (Rosh Hayeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim; died 2000) observes: The midrash is not merely telling us about a "cute" parallelism in the verses. The Zohar teaches: "G-d looked in the Torah and created the world." The world was built from a blueprint - the Torah - no differently than the way buildings are constructed. It necessarily follows that the formation of man took place after that of every cattle, beast and fowl just as the law regarding man is set forth after the law regarding cattle, beast and fowl. (Sahm Derech)

A related thought:

R' Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht z"l (founder and Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh) writes: We are used to thinking that some mitzvot are logical and we would observe them even if the Torah had not commanded us to do so, while other mitzvot are kept only because G-d has so commanded. (Examples of the former are the prohibitions on theft and murder.) But this is not so! Rather, the Torah is the blueprint of creation. Society abhors theft and murder because that is Hashem's Will.

We read in Pirkei Avot (Ch. 2): "Make His Will your will... Nullify your will before His Will..." Asks R' Goldvicht: Aren't these two statements redundant? He explains: "Make His Will your will" instructs us that we should have no desires other than to do what Hashem wants (and not to do what He doesn't want). However, I still would not know what my motivation in observing the mitzvot should be - perhaps it is sufficient if I do not steal or murder because such acts are abhorrent to civilized man. Thus the mishnah teaches us: "Nullify your will before His Will." Whatever you may think are logical reasons for the commandments, set those reasons aside and keep the mitzvot solely because that is Hashem's Will. (Asufut Ma'arachot: Vayikra p. 222)

"When a woman conceives and gives birth..." (12:2)

What is added by mentioning that a woman conceives before she gives birth? asks R' Mordechai Ze'ev Margulies z"l (died 1893). This is obvious!

The Midrash Tanchuma states: "After G-d created the animals, birds, reptiles and insects, He created man. Similarly, as long as a baby is in the womb, G-d teaches him and tells him, 'Eat this; don't eat that. This is pure; that is not, etc . . .'" The message of the midrash, and of our verse, R' Margulies explains, is that G-d's involvement with man begins in the womb, at the time of conception, long before birth. Just as G-d took six days to create the animals, birds, reptiles, insects and everything else that man needs in his environment, so He takes nine months to prepare the baby for entry into the world. (Kol Haramaz)

"If a person shall have on the skin of his flesh a s'eit, a sapachat or a baheret..." (13:2)

There are three kinds of tzara'at wounds mentioned in this verse: s'eit, sapachat and baheret. R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita writes that these allude to three types of people who speak lashon hara (the sin for which tzara'at comes).

S'eit is related to the Hebrew word for "uplift." This refers to people who put down others in order to uplift themselves and increase their own importance.

Sapachat is related to the Hebrew word for "attach." This refers to people who speak lashon hara as a result of keeping bad company.

Finally, baheret is related to the Hebrew word for "clear." This refers to people who think they know everything.

The common denominator among these three types of people is that the Torah calls them tamei / impure. (Ta'am Vada'at)

"The kohen shall look at it and declare him contaminated." (13:3)

A person is not considered to have tzara'at until a kohen declares that he is "tamei." If the kohen declares, "tahor," then the person, by definition, does not have tzara'at.

Why? R' Aharon Lopiansky shlita (Yeshiva of Greater Washington) explained: Tzara'at is a punishment for speaking lashon hara. Whether you see bad in another person and thus come to speak lashon hara is dependent on how you look at that person. You can look at him in a good light and give him the benefit of the doubt, or you can look at him badly.

The Torah drives this message home through the tzara'at- examination process. The fate of the lashon hara speaker is placed in the hands of someone (the kohen) who must look at him and must make a decision about him. [Literally a hairsbreadth separates a lesion which is tzara'at from one which is not.] (Heard from R' Lopiansky)

Chazal teach that "lashon hara" is worse than murder, adultery, and idolatry. Why, asks R' Shimon Schwab z"l, is it so terrible?

Imagine, he says, that you have witnessed another Jew sinning, and that he knows that you saw him. If this person later regrets his act and wishes to repent, he will be hindered by his knowledge that somebody saw him sin and will surely relate it to others. Knowing what he has done, he is convinced that everyone who observes him (after his repentance) will think that he is a phony. Thus the yetzer hara tells him, "You are lost! Nobody will believe that you have repented, so why bother?"

On the other hand, if this hypothetical sinner could be absolutely certain that word of his transgression will never cross the witness' lips, the sinner will then feel more secure. Thus he will be able to repent.

What will happen if his fear causes him not to repent? Feeling that he is lost, he will stray from Judaism, and, within a generation or two, his children will be completely lost to our nation. On the final day of reckoning, the person who spoke lashon hara will be held accountable for all those children and grandchildren who were estranged from Judaism because of his gossip. On the other hand, again, if the sinner does repent because he knows that his secret is safe, all those children and grandchildren who do grow up as Jews will be credited to the witness who held his tongue. (Selected Speeches p.90)

R' Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l

Part II

In 1931, R' Soloveitchik married Dr. Tonya Lewitt (1904-1967). The following year, they emigrated to the United States, where R' Soloveitchik's father, R' Moshe, had been Rosh Yeshiva of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, or RIETS, since 1929. (RIETS was part of Yeshiva College, which in 1945 became Yeshiva University.) The younger R' Soloveitchik and his family were brought to the U.S. by the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago, but that yeshiva was, in the end, unable to offer the young scholar a position.

On December 11, 1932, R' Soloveitchik was installed as rabbi of the Va'ad Ha'ir of Boston. (The Va'ad Ha'ir was an organization that united many of that city's congregations.) R' Soloveitchik's main responsibilities in that position were to provide spiritual leadership for the community and to deliver derashot in various shuls on appropriate occasions. The new rabbi soon encountered opposition and resentment from some of his older colleagues as he tried to standardize and raise the kashrut standards in Boston's meat and poultry industries. For example, R' Soloveitchik instituted the use of plumbas (metal tags) to identify meat slaughtered according to his standards, and he demanded that the cost of the plumbas, one cent each, not be passed on to consumers. So vicious were the attacks on the rabbi that the Massachusetts Attorney General appointed a judge to investigate R'

Soloveitchik's activities. Although the judge's final report cleared the rabbi entirely and commended him for "his honesty of purpose and the order which he brought out of the chaos" in the shechitah industry, R' Soloveitchik reportedly said that this experience led directly to his decision to devote his life to teaching, rather than to more public activity.

In 1935, R' Soloveitchik visited Eretz Yisrael as a candidate for the Chief Rabbinate of Tel Aviv. While in Eretz Yisrael, R' Soloveitchik met Chief Rabbi Kook, who passed away soon after, and delivered a lecture in his yeshiva. This was the only time in his life that R' Soloveitchik visited Eretz Yisrael.

In 1937, R' Soloveitchik founded the first Jewish Day School in New England. For many years, he not only guided the school's religious curriculum, but was involved in its day to day affairs and was also its fundraiser. In 1939, at the urging of his father, R' Soloveitchik also organized an advanced yeshiva for arriving European immigrants. To be continued...

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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.
