

TRANSITION

by Shlomo Katz

Transition

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Today's Learning:
Mikvaot 10:2-3
O.C. 218:3-5
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Chullin 134
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nedarim 2

R' Gedaliah Schorr z"l teaches that in this week's parashah, Bnei Yisrael enter a transitional period - the beginning of the end of Moshe's reign. He explains:

According to one opinion in the gemara, there are not five books of the Torah, but seven. The Book of Bemidbar is actually three books, of which the end of one, all of the second, and the beginning of the third are found in our parashah. (According to this view, verses 10:35-36 are a free-standing book.)

At the end of the "first" book, we read that Bnei Yisrael traveled a distance of three days from Har Sinai. Rashi writes that they made this trip in only one day because Hashem was "in a hurry" to take His people into Eretz Yisrael.

Indeed, had Bnei Yisrael loyally followed Moshe, they would have entered the Land at that time and never been exiled. However, this did not happen. Instead, the "third" book opens by informing us that Bnei Yisrael were complaining about an unspecified subject. What was their complaint?

Chassidic works explain that Bnei Yisrael were unsure whether the miracle of traveling three-days' distance in one day was good or not. The root of this uncertainty, R' Schorr explains, was the fact that Bnei Yisrael had made the golden calf at Har Sinai, thus distancing themselves from Hashem and also from Moshe. Because of this distance between Moshe and Bnei Yisrael, he could not lead them once-and-for- all into the Land. [Bnei Yisrael were unsure whether it was good to rush to the Land because they sensed that Moshe was no longer the right leader for them.]

In the verses which follow, Bnei Yisrael lodge their complaints against the mahn. This is consistent with the above, for Chazal say that the mahn fell only in Moshe's merit. This is why Hashem's response to Bnei Yisrael's complaints was to appoint a sanhedrin / high court alongside Moshe. This is also why it is in our parashah that two Jews prophecy that Moshe will not enter the Land. (See Rashi to11:28) (Ohr Gedalyahu)

"With matzot and bitter herbs they shall eat it." (9:11)

R' Moshe Sherer z"l (1921-1998; prominent Jewish lay leader) writes: Compared to the symbols of the other holidays, matzah is rather low-key. On Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is blown loudly. On Sukkot, we parade with the lulav standing tall. On Chanukah, we light menorahs in our windows. On Simchat Torah and Purim, we also celebrate conspicuously.

Why is it, then, that throughout history, it was Pesach which seemed to enrage our gentile neighbors the most? Why was it typically at Pesach time that Jews suffered from blood libels and pogroms?

Certainly, writes R' Sherer, this was the work of the sitra achra (loosely translated: the angel who is the guardian of all evil forces) himself. Matzah represents too much for us to be allowed to eat it in peace.

What does matzah represent? It reminds us of Hashem's strong hand and of the eternity of the Jewish people. Even when our ancestors in Egypt fell perilously close to spiritual oblivion, Hashem saved them. Also, matzah represents the transmission of our heritage and beliefs from generation to generation, as it is written (Shmot 13:8), "And you shall relate to your son . . ." Over the matzah, we tell our children of the many empires that forced our ancestors to eat matzah in secret and of the fact that we outlived those empires.

From matzah, we also can learn how to fight those empires, R'

Sherer writes. The gemara states that matzah which is made in direct sunlight is unfit for Pesach. So, too, our activism must be low-key. Matzah also may not contain food coloring. So, too, our activism must be free of foreign, non-Torah influences.

(Be'shte' Enayim p. 43)

"When you go to wage war in your Land against the enemy who oppresses you, you shall sound short blasts of the trumpets . . ." (10:9)

From the seemingly superfluous words, "against the enemy who oppresses you," Rambam derives that there is a mitzvah to sound the trumpets and pray to Hashem over any form of oppression, be it a drought, plague or other trouble. He writes that this is part of the process of teshuvah / repentance, and that through teshuvah one causes his troubles to depart. The biggest sin, Rambam writes, is to ascribe one's troubles to fate or coincidence.

R' Yaakov Yitzchak Halevi Ruderman z"l added (during the Yom Kippur War): Even those who ascribe troubles to coincidence start to pray when the troubles are their own. That is how we must see the troubles of our brethren in Israel - as our own.

Moreover, said R' Ruderman, Chazal teach that every person should believe, "The whole world was created for me." This obligates each of us to believe that his prayers can make a difference.

(Masat Levi p. 332)

"Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and its officers . . ." (11:16)

Rashi quotes the midrash which says that the term "officers" refers to those people who were assigned by the Egyptians to whip Jews who failed to meet their work quotas. In fact, these officers failed to do their "duty" and were beaten themselves.

R' Aharon Kotler z"l asks: Why is this a qualification to serve on the sanhedrin / high court? He explains that a Jewish leader can succeed, not in his own merit, but only in the merit of the Jewish people. It is therefore incumbent upon a would-be leader to demonstrate his total commitment and self-sacrifice for his people. Moshe, too, the midrash tells us, used to help his brethren with their slave labor although, as a Levite, he was exempted by Pharaoh.

(Mishnat R' Aharon Vol. II, p.113)

"My servant Moshe, he My whole house he is trusted." (12:7)

What does it mean to be a "servant" of Hashem? R' David Kimchi z"l ("Radak") explains (in his commentary to Yehoshua 1:1) that someone who devotes all of his powers to serving Hashem and who, even when he is engaged in mundane matters, does them for the sake of serving G-d, is called a "servant of Hashem."

R' Elchanan Wasserman z"l hy"d elaborates: Slaves cannot own property; everything they acquire belongs to their masters. Similarly, when a person recognizes that all of his powers and belongings belong to Hashem and must be used exclusively to serve him, he can be called a "servant of Hashem." [Ed. note: Hebrew uses the same word - "eved" - to mean "slave" and "servant."]

In this light, adds R' Wasserman, we can understand Rambam's statement that, although no person will ever be as great a prophet as Moshe, one can be as great a tzaddik as Moshe. Anyone can choose, as Moshe did, to direct all of his actions to serving G-d.

Of course, it was easier for Moshe to do this than it would be for any of us. However, the gemara teaches that a poor person's sacrifice of wheat is as beloved to Hashem as a rich man's sacrifice of an ox. One must only make the sacrifice.

(Kovetz Ma'amarim p.48)

How can one serve G-d all of the time? R' Eli Reingold shlita (maggid shiur at the Yeshiva of Greater Washington) answered with the following parable:

Imagine that you need to move your car from City A to City B, but you do not wish to drive it there yourself. There are companies whose business is finding people who need to travel from City A to City B but who have no cars. These companies match car to driver, collect a fee, and everyone's needs are satisfied.

To ensure the delivery of the car, the company gives the driver a deadline by which he must arrive at the destination (after which the police will be called). The length of time that the driver is given depends on the distance; however, the driver is not expected to drive 24 hours a day. Time is built in to the schedule for an appropriate amount of rest and relaxation.

As long as the driver keeps his destination in mind, a reasonable amount of time may be spent on diversions. So it is with serving Hashem. One is not expected to learn Torah and perform mitzvot 24 hours a day or even at every waking moment. One is expected to keep the ultimate destination in mind and to relax so that he will be able to serve Hashem better. If he does that, even his diversions become part of serving Hashem.

(Heard from R' Reingold shlita)

Letters from Our Sages

This week we present excerpts from the will of R' Yaakov Lorberbaum of Lissa z"l (died 1832), best known by the names of two of his many works, *Netivot Hamishpat* (the "Nesivos") and *Chavat Da'at*. R' Lorberbaum's works cover the areas of Torah commentary, the five megillot, halachah, and Talmud commentary. He also served as rabbi in several Eastern European cities.

It is written in the Torah [about Avraham - Bereishit 18:19]: "For I have loved him, because he commands his children and his household after him to keep the way of Hashem . . ." If commanding one's children after him brings on G-d's love, it is proper and right for every person to have written before him things that relate to the ways of Hashem and awe of Him so that he may leave it for his children - maybe they will accept it from him, and he will merit thereby to be bound up in the bond of life. Therefore, I have applied my heart to write instructions that relate to the fear of G-d Who is Honored and Awesome.

1. My beloved sons! Man is first judged [in Heaven] with regard to his Torah study [Kiddushin 40a]. You should have a fixed quota of verses and mishnayot every day; even though Chazal said [Sanhedrin 24a], "Talmud Bavli includes everything" [and therefore it is not necessary to study Tanach or Mishnah - see Tosfot to Kiddushin 30a], they [Chazal] had already filled their bellies with Tanach and Mishnah. While you never saw me do this [i.e., study these subjects], I did so in my youth. In my old age I was overwhelmed by my responsibilities and I could not fulfill my heart's desire.
2. If you merit to be among those who are capable of studying, establish for yourselves a simple quota of not less than one daf / folio of Talmud a day, following the order of the Talmud. This is besides your in depth study, and it should be like a law that is not broken. [Ed. Note: This was a century before the founding of the Daf Yomi movement.] If you are skilled in developing original interpretations of Torah, set aside one hour a day to study in depth, for the main question that man is asked [in Heaven] is: "Did you debate and discuss wisdom?" However, your in depth study of gemara should be directed at clarifying the halachah and not the pilpul / sophistry which is popular in this generation because of our great sins . . .
3. Study Tehillim several times, including the meanings of the words. It should be fluent on your lips, with Rashi's commentary, so that you will understand well when you recite it in supplication. Recite five chapters a day - no fewer - because it inspires the heart to serve Him, may His Name be blessed . . . (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 **Torah.org** 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/>.

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