

SPIRITUAL HEALING

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Parshas Behaaloscha

Spiritual Healing

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Today's Learning:
Bava Kamma 4:2-3
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 30
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 55

Our parashah opens with the command to Aharon to light the Menorah in the Mishkan. The third verse relates: "Aharon did so; toward the face of the Menorah he kindled its lamps, as Hashem had commanded Moshe." What is this pasuk teaching? Rashi writes: "Aharon did so - the verse speaks Aharon's praise, i.e., that he changed nothing."

How are we to understand this? asks R' Yaakov Kranz z"l (the Dubno Maggid; died 1805). Is there anyone who would deviate from what G-d had commanded him?

He explains with a parable: Three patients came to one doctor with the same serious illness, and the doctor gave each of them the same prescription. One of the patients was a simple fellow who understood nothing about his illness. He followed the doctor's instructions to the letter and was soon healed.

The second patient thought he knew something about medicine. He altered the doctor's instructions, taking only some of the medicines that had been prescribed. He did not recover from his illness.

The third patient also was knowledgeable about medicine, but he nevertheless followed the doctor's instructions. He also was healed.

The Torah is our prescription against the spiritual illness brought on by the yetzer hara, says the Dubno Maggid. And, the same three types of people can be found among Mitzvah-observing Jews. Some understand nothing and simply do the mitzvot. Others think they understand and they pick and choose among the mitzvot. Finally, there are the scholars who do have some understanding of what lies behind the commandments, but they nevertheless do not try to "improve" on the mitzvot. This is the Torah's praise of Aharon--whether he thought he understood the commandments or not, he fulfilled them to the letter. (Quoted in Ve'karata La'Shabbat Oneg)

"This is the workmanship of the Menorah, [hammered-out of] a block ('mikshah') of gold . . ." (8:4)

The word "mikshah" / "a block" is related to the word "kasheh" / "difficult." Midrash Bemidbar Rabbah (46:10) explains as follows:

R' Levi bar Rabbi said: The pure menorah came down from heaven, for Hashem told Moshe (Shmot 25:31), "You shall make a Menorah of pure gold."

Moshe responded, "How shall I make it?"

Hashem answered (in the same verse), "Mikshah shall the Menorah be made."

However, Moshe found this difficult, and when he descended from Har Sinai, he forgot how to make it.

This was repeated several times until finally Hashem showed Moshe a picture of what the Menorah was to look like. Again, however, Moshe forgot, and again, Hashem showed Moshe the image of the Menorah.

Finally, Hashem said to Moshe, "Go to Betzalel; he will make it." So Moshe instructed Betzalel, and immediately, Betzalel made the Menorah.

Moshe was shocked, and he said, "Hashem showed me the Menorah several times, yet I was unable to make it, and you, who did not see, made it on your own! Were you perhaps in the shadow of ('B'tzel') G-d ('El') [a play on the name Betzalel, meaning, were you so close to G-d that you could eavesdrop when He spoke to me]?"

This is what the midrash relates about the making of the Menorah. What, however, was the purpose of Moshe's difficulty?

R' David Luria z"l (see below) explains: Man must prepare himself so that the Light from Above can rest on him. Nevertheless, all a person can do is prepare; he cannot ensure that the Light will, in fact, rest upon him. (Rather, we are taught that the yetzer hara would defeat man if Hashem did not come to his aid.)

Moshe, who prepared himself by studying the menorah over and over, could not make the Menorah.

Betzalel, who was given wisdom as a gift from G-d, was able to make the Menorah.

(Chidushei Ha'Radal)

"According to the word of Hashem Bnei Yisrael would journey and according to the word of Hashem they would encamp . . . When the cloud lingered upon the Tabernacle many days, Bnei Yisrael would maintain the charge of Hashem and would not journey. Sometimes the cloud would be upon the Tabernacle for a number of days . . . and sometimes the cloud would remain from evening until morning . . . or for a day and a night . . . or for two days, or a month, or a year . . ." (9:18-22)

Why? Yitzchak Elchanan Waldshein z"l hy"d (Assistant Mashgiach in Baranovitch) explains:

Hashem's intention was to teach Bnei Yisrael three traits -- patience, restraint, and alacrity. They learned patience from staying in undesirable places longer than they wished. They learned restraint by staying in pleasant places a shorter time than they would have liked (and thus being restrained from enjoying whatever fruits that particular oasis offered). Finally, they learned alacrity by having to pack and unpack in a short time.

(Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Baranovitch p. 222)

"Make for yourself two silver trumpets . . . and they shall be yours for the summoning of the assembly." (10:1)

The Gemara (Menachot 28b) teaches that all of the vessels that Moshe made could be used by later generations as well. However, the trumpets were for Moshe to summon the nation and could not be used by subsequent leaders.

Why?

R' Eliyahu Schlesinger shlita (rabbi of the Gilo neighborhood of Yerushalayim) suggests that there is a simple lesson here. The way that the leader of one generation calls his flock and relates to his congregants will not necessarily work for the leader of the next generation.

(Eileh Ha'davarim)

From the same work:

"When the ark would journey, Moshe said, 'Arise, Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered; let those who hate You flee before You.' And when it rested, he would say, 'Reside, tranquilly, Hashem, among the myriads of thousands of Israel.'" (10:35-36)

In the Sefer Torah, these verses are set off by special symbols to highlight that they form a separate "book" on their own. What is so important about these verses that the midrash would refer to them

as a separate book?

R' Schlesinger explains: These two verses contain the fundamentals of our existence in exile. At times, the "ark journeys," and the Jewish people are tossed about from one exile to another. At such times, our primary concern is our physical safety, and we pray that Hashem's foes will be scattered and those who hate Him will flee before Him.

On the other hand, when the ark rests, i.e., when the Jewish people are living peacefully in their own land or in a benevolent kingdom, the primary threat is spiritual. It is primarily in those nations which have treated us well that the threat of assimilation has been greatest. Therefore we pray, "Reside, tranquilly, Hashem, among the myriads of thousands of Israel."

R' Schlesinger adds: We read a few verses earlier that Moshe asked his father-in-law Yitro to accompany Bnei Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael, and he told him (10:31), "You will be as eyes for us." Moshe knew that Bnei Yisrael would be in grave spiritual danger once they had settled peacefully on their land, and he therefore wanted Yitro among them so that Bnei Yisrael could look upon him -- they could set their "eyes" upon him -- as an example. What had Yitro done that could serve as an example? He had been living tranquilly in Midian -- indeed, he had been the high priest of Midian -- but he gave it all up and went "against the flow" once he realized that the prevailing beliefs were wrong.

R' David Luria z"l

"And the sun rises and the sun sets" (Kohelet 1:5) - so it was said of R' David Luria ("Radal"), who was born in 5598 (1797), the year that the Vilna Gaon died. Although he was a businessman who never held a rabbinic position, Radal was recognized as a leading Torah scholar in his day. In 1854, he was elected rabbi of Warsaw in place of R' Chaim Davidson, but he did not accept the appointment. Despite not holding any official position, Radal did participate in rabbinic conferences relating to issues affecting Russian Jewry and he represented the Jewish community before the Czar's government.

Although he had no formal secular education, Radal was fluent in several languages. In 1838, he was arrested on false charges of spying and was imprisoned for 105 days. It is told that during Radal's interrogation by Russian officers, the latter began speaking amongst themselves in French in order that their prisoner would not understand. Suddenly, Radal began inching toward a corner of the room. "Why don't you stand still?" the commanding officer bellowed, and Radal's explanation that he understood French and did not want to eavesdrop earned him the respect of the officers and facilitated his release.

Radal was a prolific writer. His works include Talmud commentaries, kabbalistic works, halachic responsa, glosses to several works of Jewish history, and commentaries on midrashim, including

Midrash Rabbah, Midrash Shmuel, Pesikta, and Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer. (The last of these is the leading commentary on that midrash, and it not only explains the text but cross - references related sources in the Talmud and other midrashim.) The first work that Radal published was Kadmut Sefer Ha'Zohar, whose purpose was to establish the antiquity of the Zohar. (The Zohar is classically attributed to the Sage of the Mishnah Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. However, because it was never published before the 13th century, some have questioned that attribution.)

Radal died at the age of 58 on 5 Kislev 5616 (1855). (Sources: Rabbotenu She'ba'golah p. 29; Gedolei Ha'dorot p. 618)

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