

# PARASHAT REEH

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parashat Re'eh

In the final paragraphs of our parashah, the Torah presents once again the laws of the festivals-- Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (rabbi of Rzeszow, Poland; member of the Polish Senate; murdered in the Holocaust) explained in a derashah how the laws of Pesach (not necessarily those in our parashah) set forth important principles for the fledgling Jewish nation to bear in mind. We present one example.

The Korban Pesach should be eaten in family groups and must be eaten indoors. One is not permitted to take any part of the flesh out-of-doors. This teaches us the importance of unity, privacy and discretion. As a nation, we should keep our internal matters private. They should not be aired in a public manner. Moreover, we must stick together.

R' Lewin notes that this lesson is demonstrated by our experience in Egypt. The Torah records in Parashat Shmot (2:11), "It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man, of his brethren."

What does the last phrase, "of his brethren" add? Obviously we know that a Hebrew man was of Moshe's brethren. Rather, R' Lewin explains, the Torah is telling us why the Egyptian felt at liberty to hit the Jew. Why wasn't he afraid that someone would avenge the Jew's blood? It happened because "of his brethren," i.e., because the Egyptian knew that there were Jews who were traitors to the Jewish people. As soon as there are Jews who turn against their brethren or who fail to stand up for the honor of their brethren, the other nations know that they have a license to oppress us freely. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

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"You are children to Hashem, your G-d . . ." (14:1)

R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky z"l (the Slonimer Rebbe; died 2000) writes: If a Jew had any inkling of his own worth, he would not sin. In this vein, R' Avraham Weinberg z"l (1804-1884; the first Slonimer Rebbe) interpreted the verse (Mishlei 3:11), "Hashem's rebuke, my child, do not denigrate" - Hashem's rebuke is, "You are My child." Therefore, do not denigrate yourself. Remember that you are a prince, and a prince is expected to behave in a certain way. Don't embarrass yourself. One who appreciates

his own worth won't, so-to-speak, sell his birthright for a bowl of lentils.

R' Brazovsky continues: The legendary chassidic master, Reb Zusia, once heard an itinerant maggid / preacher deliver a fire-and-brimstone speech to a large group. When he finished, no one seemed to have been moved by his words. Then R' Zusia rose and said, "Dear brothers! Doesn't Hashem love you and care for you? How is it possible to transgress His will?" Immediately, heart-rending cries filled the synagogue.

Afterward, the maggid asked R' Zusia, "Did I not portray in vivid detail the terrifying punishments of Gehinom? Why did that have no impact on them, while your words, which were not frightening at all, had an immediate effect on them?"

R' Zusia answered: "Your words had the effect of closing their hearts, scaring them until they could no longer feel. My words had the opposite effect."

The Gemara (Sotah 3a) says that a person does not sin unless a spirit of insanity comes over him. What this means, says R' Brazovsky, is that a person cannot sin unless he forgets who he is and how much he is worth. (Netivot Shalom: Kuntres B'chochmah Yivneh Bayit p.8)

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"If there shall be a destitute person among you, any of your brethren in any of your cities, in the Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, you shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother. . . You shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him. . ." (15:7, 10)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (see above) writes: There are two attitudes that can lead one to give tzedakah / charity. One can feel sorry for the downtrodden pauper and give him charity as an expression of mercy. Such charity certainly is a worthy deed, but it is not the highest form of tzedakah. The highest form of charity is to give because it is a good deed; it is G-d's Will and His commandment to us.

R' Lewin notes that R' Yosef Albo z"l (author of Sefer Ha'ikkarim; 1380- 1444) uses the above idea to explain the verse (Yeshayah 32:17): "The product [literally, 'deed'] of charity shall be peace; and the effect [literally, 'service'] of charity -- quiet and security forever." The deed of giving charity, no matter why it is done, brings peace to the one who does it.

But, the service of tzedakah, giving charity because it is a form of service to G- d, is far greater. That brings the doer quiet and security forever.

R' Lewin continues, citing his grandfather, R' Yitzchak Shmelkes z"l (rabbi of Lvov; died 1905): One benefit of giving tzedakah because it is a mitzvah rather than out of pity is that the feeling of pity wears off eventually. Moreover, when poverty is widespread, we become insensitive to it. Not so if one gives charity to fulfill the Will of G-d. That Will is unchanging, and so one's charity will be

unending. This is the teaching of our verse: "Give him, you shall give him." Say Chazal: You shall give to a pauper repeatedly, even 100 times. How can you train yourself to do this? "Let your heart not feel bad when you give him" - don't give because you feel bad, but because G-d commanded it. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

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"You shall rejoice on your festival . . ." (16:14)

R' Eliyahu Shlomo Raanan z"l H"d (see biography below) writes, citing the anonymous medieval work *Orchot Tzaddikim*:

One must rejoice on Shabbat, Yom Tov and Purim, all of which recall the Exodus and other miracles that He performed wondrously for His chosen ones. Therefore, one should rejoice in his heart as he recalls G-d's kindness and His great goodness toward those who do His will. Because of this, we prepare fine delicacies and finer suits, and drink wine which gladdens the heart.

The key, however, is not to rejoice over "havalim" [loosely translated: "mundane trivialities"] but rather one should channel the joy toward loving G-d and reveling in the mutual love between G-d and His people. One should also reflect at this time on the ultimate pleasure that will be attained in Olam Haba and should yearn for it. The purpose of all of this, however, is not for one's personal enjoyment but to further promote one's service of Hashem.

Continuing this theme, R' Raanan cites R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772- 1810; chassidic rebbe): When one performs a mitzvah with joy, it is a sign that he is whole-heartedly allied with Hashem. The Arizal (16th century; the foremost teacher of kabbalah in post-Talmudic times, many of whose teachings have become incorporated into daily halachic practice) confided to a friend that all that he attained was because he rejoiced at performing mitzvot more than one would rejoice at finding a treasure. It was in this merit, said the Arizal, that the gates of the Heavens were opened for him and he understood what he understood.

R' Nachman adds: One must never become distracted for a moment from true rejoicing, which means rejoicing that one is associated with G-d and rejoicing in whatever good attributes one possesses himself, even if the only good in a person is that he performs mitzvot on a daily basis. (Quoted in *Neshamah Shel Shabbat* p.24)

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## Pirkei Avot

"Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in Egypt . . ." (Chapter 5)

R' Immanuel Chai Riki z"l Hy"d (1688-1743; Eretz Yisrael, martyred in Italy) writes: The Gemara and Pesach Haggadah distill the Ten Plagues to the acronym, "Detzach Adash Be'achav" We may interpret this as follows:

"Detzach" - "Your joy ("ditzah");

"Adash" - Singular of "adashim" / lentils;

"Be'ach chav" - To the sinful brother.

In other words, the joy of the Exodus has its root in the lentils that Yaakov gave his sinful brother, Esav. As a result of that transaction, Yaakov acquired the legacy of Avraham, including the mitzvah of Brit Milah, in the merit of which (our Sages teach) the Exodus occurred. (Hon Asheer)

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R' Eliyahu Shlomo Raanan z"l Hy"d

This Shabbat is the tenth yearzeit of R' Eliyahu Shlomo Raanan, who was murdered by an Arab terrorist in his home in Chevron. R' Raanan was born in Yerushalayim on 12 Tishrei 5694 (1934). His mother, Batya Miriam, was a daughter of Chief Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook. His father, R' Shalom Natan Raanan, was a teacher in, and director of, R' Kook's yeshiva (now known as Merkaz Harav). The child was named "Eliyahu" for the Vilna Gaon and "Shlomo" for his great-grandfather, R' Shlomo Zalman Kook.

R' Kook passed away before his grandson's first birthday, but the future R' Raanan grew up in his illustrious grandfather's house, which also housed the yeshiva. When he was old enough, R' Raanan himself enrolled in the yeshiva.

While he was still single, R' Raanan began teaching in several yeshivot ketanot / schools for pre-teenage and teenage boys. He also worked with new olim. In 1978, R' Raanan joined the staff of the Halachah Berurah institute, which publishes Torah works designed to bring to fruition one of R' Kook's educational goals - to tie together the advanced study of Gemara as practiced in mainstream yeshivot with the study of the practical halachic / legal conclusions that flow from each Gemara passage.

In 1963, R' Raanan married Chaya Weisfish. After living in Yerushalayim for more than 20 years, in 1985, they joined the tiny settlement which is now the city of Beitar. For six years, the Raanans lived in a caravan (trailer) in Beitar under very difficult conditions. In 1992, they moved to Chevron, settling in the Admot Yishai / Tel Rumeida neighborhood believed to be the site of the Biblical city. Here again, their home was a caravan, an inconvenience which they gladly accepted for the sake of settling the Land of Israel.

Those who knew R' Raanan used to say that he had a "soul of Shabbat," which in chassidic and kabbalistic literature refers to a certain purity of the soul and calmness of manner that characterize Shabbat. Indeed, Rebbetzin Chaya Raanan related that on their first date, she had absent-mindedly pulled a leaf from a branch as they walked and she was momentarily horrified at having violated a Shabbat prohibition. Suddenly she realized, however, that it was not Shabbat, but rather a weekday.

Such was the aura that surrounded R' Raanan and affected those who knew him!

The caravan where R' Raanan was murdered today houses a kollel named Ohr Shlomo in his memory. (Source: Neshamah Shel Shabbat)

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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.

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