

TWICE THE RESPONSIBILITY

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Parshas Vaeschanan

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Today's Learning:

Chullin 4:2-3

O.C. 177:4-178:1

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Gittin 36

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Sotah 19

The haftarah opens: *"Nachamu, nachamu" / "Comfort, comfort My people - says your G-d. Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and proclaim to her that her time [of exile] has been fulfilled, that her iniquity has been conciliated, for she has received from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins."*

R' Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog z"l (first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel; died 1959) commented on these verses as follows in a 1948 address: How are these verses different when we read them today from when they were read in the past? In the past, the fulfillment of these verses was in the distant future. Today, these verses relate all at once to the present, the near term, and the distant future. How so?

Chazal comment on these verses, "She [i.e., Yerushalayim] sinned doubly, she was doubly punished, and she was doubly consoled." Yisrael / the People of Israel has a double nature. On the one hand, it is a nation; anyone who says that Judaism is only a religion is mistaken. On the other hand, anyone who thinks that Yisrael is a nation like any other nation is mistaken, and is misleading others. Yisrael is a holy nation, with the loftiest mission, given from G-d, of any nation. Therefore, when Yisrael sins, its sin is a double sin.

Yisrael is not the only nation that has been exiled from its land; many nations, large and small, have experienced this fate. However, those nations, once they are destroyed, disappear. They assimilate

and no memory remains of them, and, at the same time, their suffering ends. Such is not the lot of Yisrael. An invisible "hand" forced Yisrael not to assimilate, but rather to remain apart and dispersed, and to suffer without end. Why? Because Yisrael is a nation destined for greatness, specifically, for moral greatness - for that greatness which in the awesome future will be the lot of all of mankind. Therefore, they were doubly consoled: In the future, there will be open miracles. For now, the time for open miracles has not yet come, but certainly miracles have taken place and will continue to take place . . . (Ha'techukah Le'Yisrael Al Pi Ha'torah III p.258)

"I implored Hashem at that time, saying: 'My Lord, Hashem Elokim, you have begun show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand, for what power is there in the heaven or on the earth that can perform according to Your deeds and according to Your mighty acts? Let me now cross and see the good Land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon'." (3:23-25)

The form of Moshe's prayer in the above verses illustrates one of the laws of tefilah, i.e., that one should first praise Hashem and only then ask for one's needs. Why is this necessary? R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (Yerushalayim; late 19th century) explains:

G-d fulfills man's requests due to a combination of two factors. One is that Hashem desires to do good, and the other is that man deserves to receive a certain measure of goodness. Our prayer must acknowledge G-d's greatness, for otherwise it would appear that we are relying entirely on our own merit. This appearance of vanity might arouse the heavenly prosecutor against us and we would, in the end, receive nothing. (Tiferet Tziyon)

Midrash Rabbah at the beginning of our parashah teaches that there are ten different forms of prayer. R' Shimshon David Pinkus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel) writes that one who wishes to pray successfully must understand the nature of each of these forms, including the difference between "praise" and "requests" that was mentioned above.

For example, R' Pinkus continues, we say in the second berachah of Shemoneh Esrei that G-d is the "Rofei cholim" / "Healer of the sick." It is likely that many people, upon reaching these words, concentrate mightily and think, "G-d, heal my ill relative." But this is an out-of- place thought, says R' Pinkus. As stated above, one must first praise Hashem and only then ask for one's needs. The first three blessings of Shemoneh Esrei are meant to be praise, not requests. And, lest one think that there is no harm in making a request at the wrong point in the prayers, this too is incorrect. To the contrary, perhaps it is in the merit of the praise that one recites and the trust in Hashem that results from concentrating on G-d's power when one utters the praise "Rofei cholim" that the ill person will be cured. (She'arim B'tefilah p.2)

"I implored Hashem at that time, saying . . ." (3:23)

Midrash Rabbah comments on our verse that there are set times for prayer- morning, afternoon and nightfall. R' Yaakov Sakly (Spain; 14th century) observes that these times for prayer parallel three times when we see G-d's kindness toward His creations.

In the morning, we see G-d's kindness in taking us out of darkness (see Tehilim 92:3).

In the afternoon, when the sun is at its strongest, we see G-d's kindness in that He sustains all creations. (R' Sakly notes that mincha may be recited at any time in the afternoon. We commonly wait until the very end of the day only because it is more convenient then.)

At night, we see G-d's kindness in that He gives us an opportunity to rest in order to rejuvenate our weary bodies. (Torat Ha'minchah)

"But Hashem became angry with me because of you, and He did not listen to me; Hashem said to me, 'It is too much for you! Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter'." (3:26)

R' Zalman Sorotzkin z"l (1881-1966; rabbi in Lithuania and Israel) asks: How can this be reconciled with the teaching of our Sages that G-d desires, so- to-speak, the prayers of the righteous? He explains:

In general, G-d desires the prayers of the righteous because His Name is sanctified when He answers their prayers. (R' Sorotzkin adds parenthetically that he once heard a great wonder, "How can anyone doubt G-d's existence? We see regularly that one prays and is answered!") It follows that G-d does not desire a prayer that cannot be answered. For example, G-d already had sworn that Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. Thus, by continuing to pray, Moshe was not causing a sanctification of G-d's Name; to the contrary, he was causing G-d's Name to be desecrated, G-d forbid. (Oznayim La'Torah)

"Hashem, your G-d, shall you fear ('tira') . . ." (6:13)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (Italy; 1697-1777) explains: You should fear only the Master, and you should not fear any of His servants. To what end? To observe the Torah, which has the same gematria as "tira." (Be'ur Mishneh Torah)

Letters from our Sages

R' Yechezkel Levenstein z"l was one of the great mussar teachers of the 20th century, first in the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, then in Petach Tikvah, then back in the Mir in Poland and later in Shanghai, China, and finally at the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. He died in 1974. The letter below (Ohr Yechezkel: Michtavim No. 9) was written in the winter of 1937-38 after R' Levenstein had returned to Poland

from Petach Tikvah. In the letter, he explains the importance of living in Eretz Yisrael but why he had left there. The recipient's name is not published, but he apparently was connected with the yeshiva in Petach Tikvah.

I received your precious letter and I have delayed responding because I have no answer that will satisfy you. I know how much you desire to raise the level of the crown of Torah and fear of G-d in the yeshiva in Petach Tikvah. Indeed, that should be the desire of every person who has a share in the Torah of Moshe and Yisrael, for the holy land is in truth the central point in our hearts. One cannot separate the Land from the Torah, for they are included together in Birkat Hamazon / Grace after Meals: "We thank You, Hashem, our G-d, because You have given our forefathers as a heritage a desirable, good and spacious land; . . . for Your Torah which you have taught us . . ." There is no real Torah other than the Torah of Eretz Yisrael, for [Yishayah 2:3] "From Zion will go forth Torah." Attaining the Land really must precede attaining the Torah, for the Land is an inheritance from the Patriarchs, while the Torah was commanded to us by Moshe [who came after the Patriarchs]. What need is there for us to say more about the Land? It atones for sins. Anyone who walks four cubits in the Land has his sins forgiven. I think you, my friend, know how much I always loved to talk about our holy land. I spoke a number of times about the emunah / faith that can be obtained by living in the Land, and I myself benefitted in this way [presumably during his short stay in Petach Tikvah in the 1930s]. . .

Aside from this, I have personal family reasons for making my place in our holy land. But what can I do? The situation in the yeshiva here [Mir, Poland] absolutely precludes my returning to our holy land. You know how complicated things are here and that it is impossible to think about replacing me with someone else. Not only must I be here for the peace of the institution, but also for the good of the students I am needed here . . .

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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