

PARSHIOS VAYAKHEL-PEKUDEI

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:

Nach: Yechezkel 41-42

Niddah 3:2-3

O.C. 442:5-7

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Sanhedrin 29

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Berachot 60

The Midrash Rabbah on Sefer Shmot concludes by describing the joy that accompanied the completion of the Mishkan--in our parashah--and the Bet Hamikdash--approximately 480 years later. The midrash continues: When the Bet Hamikdash was destroyed, simchah / gladness and mesos / joy ceased (literally, "simchah was darkened and mesos was exiled"). In this world, the midrash states, joy has ceased. However, when Ha'kadosh Baruch Hu will rebuild Yerushalayim, he will return to it all of the gladness, as it is written (Yeshayah 51:3), "For Hashem shall comfort Zion, He shall comfort all her ruins, He shall make her wilderness like Eden and her wasteland like a garden of Hashem; sasson and simchah shall be found there, thanksgiving and the sound of music." [Thus concludes Midrash Shmot Rabbah.]

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917; Yerushalayim) writes: The midrash states that Hashem will return to Yerushalayim all of the gladness that it lost during the long exile. The midrash is teaching that, at the End of Days, we will retroactively understand how everything that happened was good, and this will bring us joy. [Ed. note: One analogy that can help us understand this idea is a patient undergoing surgery. To a bystander who does not understand the reason for the procedure, the

surgeon looks like a knife-wielding attacker. The patient, however, is happy that he is being cured. (Heard from R' Zev Leff shlita-16 Shevat 5770)

R' Yadler continues: The verse cited by the midrash appears to be redundant: "For Hashem shall comfort Zion, He shall comfort all her ruins." In reality, the verse is expressing the same idea. We will be doubly-comforted, once by the fact that Yerushalayim has been rebuilt, and once by the realization that every bad that ever happened was a necessary prerequisite to the redemption. (Tiferet Zion)

"The people ceased bringing" (36:6)

The Ba'al Ha'turim z"l (14th century) notes that the word "va'yi'kalei" (meaning "ceased") appears twice in the Torah, once here and once in the verse (Bereishit 8:2), "Va'yi'kalei ha'geshem" / "The rain ceased."

What is the significance of the similar wording of these two verses? R' Yosef Pazanovski z"l (Poland; died 1930) writes: I heard in the name of R' Shimon Sofer z"l that the verse is alluding to human nature. When the "rain" ceases, i.e., when the economy takes a downturn, the people cease to bring, i.e., people give less charity. (Pardes Yosef)

R' Avraham Yaakov Pam z"l (1913-2001; rosh hayeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas in Brooklyn) elaborates: Maggidim / preachers like to say that the phenomenon referred to by the Pardes Yosef is also alluded to in the verse (Yeshayah 44:6), "I [G-d] am first, and I am last." When the economy is bad, G-d, i.e., charitable giving and Torah institutions, is the first to suffer. When the economy improves, G-d, i.e., charitable giving and Torah institutions, is the last to recover.

R' Pam continues: At first glance, it is logical for a person to think that he must cut back his charitable giving when he is suffering. [Needless to say, the following is not addressed to those who are truly in need.] The Torah, however, expects the opposite. In bad times, we must give more. Why? The Gemara (Ketubot 66b) as explained by Rashi z"l states expressly that the way to increase one's wealth is to "invest" in charity. This implies that the reason for an economic downturn is our own failure to give charity as we should.

We read (Malachi 3:9 -- in the haftarah for Shabbat Ha'gadol), "You are afflicted with a curse, yet you steal from Me." Commentaries explain that Hashem is expressing wonder, so-to-speak: "You failed to give tithes, so you were cursed, and now you are making it up from My share [i.e., charity]?"

R' Pam concludes: We are all believers, so why is it that our belief weakens in tough times? The answer must be that our emunah / faith is of the type that Rambam z"l calls, "Emunah sh'yeish ba dofi" / faith that has a blemish." Even if we have emunah, there are higher levels to strive for. Our challenge in these times is to strengthen our own faith. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Mareh Kohen p.1)

Shabbat

"You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day." (35:3)

R' Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (the Shelah Hakadosh; rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim; died 1630) writes: This alludes to the fires of machloket / disputes and ka'as / anger. A person must always be careful not to kindle these fires, but especially on Shabbat. On Shabbat, the "fires" of gehinom do not burn, but one who gets angry on Shabbat or causes machloket causes them to be rekindled, G-d forbid. (Shnei Luchot Ha'berit: Torah Shebichtav)

R' Chaim Hakohen z"l (rabbi of Aleppo, Syria; died 1655) explains further: The verse instructs, "You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day." Man's essence is his soul, his body is his dwelling, and "fire" includes the fire of anger. [Thus, the instruction not to get angry on Shabbat is not merely a derashah; it is literally included in this verse.]

He continues: Halachah forbids lighting a fire late on Friday afternoon unless there is sufficient time for the flames to take hold of the wood before Shabbat begins. This is also a hint that one should take care not to initiate an argument on Erev Shabbat. [See further below.]

What can one do if he is already angry? From the above analogy we learn that it is permitted to maintain a well-burning fire on Shabbat. This refers to Torah study, about which we read (Yirmiyah 23:29), "Behold, My word is like fire, so says Hashem . . ." The antidote to anger is Torah study, preferably a relatively light topic that will draw the person in and not make him more excitable. (Mekor Chaim, siman 255)

Why are many people more susceptible to anger on Erev Shabbat? One explanation is that the more holy something is, the harder the yetzer hara works to oppose it. Given the holiness of Shabbat, the yetzer hara tries very hard to interrupt Shabbat preparations and upset the restfulness of the day. (Kuntreis Matanah Tovah p.51)

Pesach

R' Yehuda Loewe z"l (the Maharal of Prague; died 1609) writes: The Exodus is the foundation of our faith on which everything else rests. This refers, not to the miracles that occurred in connection with that event, but to the mere fact that there was an Exodus, as will be explained below. Anyone who believes that there was ever in Jewish history a greater miracle than the Exodus is simply unaware of the Torah's viewpoint on the matter, writes Maharal.

The midrash analogizes Hashem's role in the Exodus to a goldsmith who reaches into the fire to remove the gold and also to a shepherd who reaches into an animal's womb to birth the offspring.

Why does the midrash offer two analogies? Maharal explains that the Exodus must be seen from two perspectives.

First, like a goldsmith who reaches into the fire to remove the gold, Hashem reached into the most powerful nation on earth and freed its slaves. Second, like a shepherd who reaches into an animal's womb to birth the offspring, who is connected to the mother by an umbilical cord, Hashem separated Bnei Yisrael from their attachment to Egypt and freed them.

Maharal continues: Bnei Yisrael's existence in Egypt was deficient in two respects. First, they were slaves, not a free nation. That was a physical deficiency. Second, the descendants of Avraham Avinu were subjugated to the most debased and immoral nation on earth. That was a spiritual deficiency.

The Exodus cured both of these deficiencies.

(Why was a lofty nation--Yisrael--enslaved specifically by the lowliest nation? Maharal explains that the inherent uniqueness of the Jewish People is an all-or-nothing proposition. Either we maintain our level or we fall to the lowest possible depths.) (Gevurot Hashem, chapters 3-4)

Why does Maharal mention in the explanation above that Bnei Yisrael are descendants of Avraham, as if that fact made their oppression at the hands of the Egyptians worse?

Perhaps it is because Avraham was the pillar of chessed / kindness, whereas the Egyptians, by oppressing Bnei Yisrael, turned their backs on the kindness that a Jew (Yosef) had done for them. Had Bnei Yisrael been a people with a callous nature, not a kind people, perhaps they would have suffered less from the ingratitude of the Egyptians. In fact, however, the Jewish People have inherited the trait of chessed from their ancestor Avraham.

"This is the day Hashem has made, let us rejoice and be glad 'bo'." (Tehilim 118:24 - included in Hallel)

The midrash states: I do not know whether "bo" means "with it" [i.e., the day] or with Him [i.e., Hashem]. Therefore King Shlomo writes (Shir Ha'shirim 1:4), "let us rejoice and be glad with You."

R' David Dov Meisels z"l (1814-1875; rabbi of Lask, Poland) explains: The midrash is teaching that, when a person experiences any type of salvation, his primary joy should not be over the salvation itself. Rather, it should be because the salvation means that G-d cares enough about the one who was saved to save him. (Haggadah Shel Pesach: Rei'ach Dudaim p.94)

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://www.torah.org) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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