

MAKE YOUR TEACHERS PROUD!

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Parshas Emor

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In our parashah, we read the laws of the festivals, including Sukkot. We also read about this holiday in the book of Nechemiah, where we read about the first Sukkot holiday that was observed after the Jews' return from the Babylonian exile. Verse 8:17 there states: "The entire congregation that had returned from the captivity made sukkot and dwelt in sukkot, for Bnei Yisrael had not done so from the days of Yehoshua bin Nun until that day, and there was great joy." Yehoshua bin Nun lived almost 1,000 years before this event, when Bnei Yisrael first entered Eretz Yisrael! The Gemara therefore asks: Is it possible that King David, who lived in the intervening period, did not observe Sukkot? The Gemara offers several answers to this question.

R' Shlomo Goren z"l (1917-1994; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel) notes that the Zohar offers another explanation of this verse, stating: "One who has a portion in the People and in the Holy Land sits in the "shadow of emunah" (the kabbalistic term for the sukkah) to receive the ushpizin, to rejoice in this world and the next." In contrast, "One who leaves the shadow of emunah inherits exile for himself and his children." It appears, writes R' Goren, that the mitzvah of sukkah is connected to the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. In the Diaspora, the mitzvah of sukkah is incomplete.

The eras of Yehoshua and Nechemiah shared the fact they both were times when large scale Jewish settlements were established in Eretz Yisrael, and the Land became "sanctified" in a halachic sense. Before Yehoshua's conquest, the Land was not "sanctified"; thus, the agricultural laws unique to Eretz Yisrael did not apply. Likewise, during the Babylonian exile, the Land lost its halachic sanctity until Nechemiah's generation re-sanctified it. Of course Sukkot was observed by all generations, but the generations of Yehoshua and Nechemiah both experienced a special joy on Sukkot--the holiday connected with the sanctity of the Land. This is what the verse in Nechemiah is teaching. (Torat Ha'Shabbat Ve'ha'moed p.224)

"You shall count for yourselves -- from the morrow of the rest day, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving -- seven weeks, they shall be temimim / complete." (Vayikra 23:15)

Midrash Rabbah records: Rabbi Chiya taught, "'Seven weeks, they shall be complete.' When are they complete? When Yisrael does Hashem's will."

R' Moshe Zvi Neriah z"l (1913-1995; founder of the Bnei Akiva yeshiva network and youth movement) explains: Whether time fulfills its purpose is entirely dependent on whether Hashem's will has been done. Time which is used in a manner contrary to Hashem's will is not "complete" but "blemished." [The word used by our verse, temimim, can mean either "complete" or "unblemished."] There is a popular expression in the secular world, "Time is money." In contrast, we recite the blessing [after reading the Torah], "He has implanted everlasting life in us." [This blessing reflects the Torah-observant Jew's conception of the value and purpose of time.] (Ner La'maor)

R' Shalom Rokeach z"l (1779-1855; the first Belzer Rebbe) is quoted as saying: "From the telegraph, one can learn the value of speech, for one must pay for every word. From the railroad, one can learn the value of time, for being one minute late can mean missing the train." (Quoted in Orchot Rabboteinu p.22)

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field as you reap and you shall not gather the gleanings of your harvest; for the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them; I am Hashem, your Elokim." (23:22)

Rashi z"l quotes the Mishnah (Pe'ah 5:6): Leave these in front of them and they shall gather; you are not allowed to assist one of them to the detriment of another poor man.

R' Eliezer Dovid Gruenwald z"l (1867-1928; rabbi and rosh yeshiva in Oyber Visheve and other Hungarian towns) notes that this is the opposite of the law regarding the portions of the produce that are given to a kohen. These must be delivered to the kohen, for the kohen is prohibited from coming to the fields to collect terumah and other gifts. Why the difference?

R' Gruenwald explains: Our Sages teach that one is prohibited to embarrass a pauper while giving him charity. In fact, it is preferable not to give at all than to give in a way that humiliates the recipient. Thus, a farmer is commanded to leave a portion of his produce for the poor people to harvest, for, were he to present it to them, they would be embarrassed.

Not so the kohen! Terumah and other gifts that are given to the kohen are not charity. Rather, the Torah gave these gifts to the kohanim in lieu of a share in Eretz Yisrael. Thus, they should be

presented to the kohen. He should not be running after his share.

One might argue, however, that leaving part of the produce for the poor is risky, for who is to say that it will be collected by worthy people? Therefore, writes, R' Gruenwald, our verse concludes, "I am Hashem, your Elokim," as if to say, "If you are worthy of having your charity reach worthy recipients--for not everyone is worthy of that--I, Hashem, am capable of ensuring that it reaches the right hands." (Keren Le'Dovid)

"The son of an Israelite woman went out [and blasphemed]." (24:10)

Rashi z"l comments: From where did he go out? Surely not from the camp, since our verse states "and they fought in the camp"! Rabbi Levi said, "He went out from his eternal life."

R' Elya Meir Bloch z"l (1894-1955; founder and rosh yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland) explains: Going out to do evil is leaving the world itself, for a person's real life is his soul's connection to the World Above. One who, like the blasphemer, curses G-d, severs that connection.

Rashi quotes a second explanation of our pasuk: Rabbi Berachya said, "He went forth from the above section [the commandment to leave the Lechem Ha'panim on the Table in the Mishkan from Shabbat to Shabbat]. He said sneeringly, 'Surely it is the way of a king to eat fresh bread every day! Is it perhaps His way to eat bread nine days old?'"

R' Bloch explains this opinion as well: In fact, the Lechem Ha'panim miraculously remained fresh and warm from the time it was baked until it was eaten nine days later. However, the blasphemer could not fathom this, because he did not believe that there is holiness within this material world, and that man's duty is to sanctify the material world. (Peninei Da'at)

"Remove the blasphemer to the outside of the camp, and all those who heard shall lean their hands upon his head, and the entire assembly shall stone him." (24:14)

R' Moshe Leib Shachor z"l (1894-1964; Yerushalayim) writes: The Gemara (Sanhedrin 43b) teaches that every person who is about to be executed by bet din is encouraged to repent first, and he or she is told, "Anyone who repents has a share in the World-to-Come." Presumably, the blasphemer in our parashah repented as well, and that is why he merited having a section of the Torah--albeit, the laws of capital punishment--taught because of him. This illustrates how, when a person repents, his sins are converted to merits. (Koach Ha'teshuvah)

Pirkei Avot

"Rabbi said, 'What is the proper path that a person should choose for himself? Whatever is a credit to himself and earns him the esteem of his fellow men'." (2:1)

R' Chaim Kreiswirth z"l (1920-2002; rabbi of the Machzikei Hadas Congregation in Antwerp, Belgium) comments that the "fellow men" whose esteem a person should aspire to earn are his rabbeim / Torah teachers and other Torah sages. This idea is illustrated by the following story found in the Talmud (Nedarim 22b):

The sage Rava used to praise Rav Sechorah in the presence of Rav Nachman until the latter said, "When he comes to town, bring him to me." It so happened that when Rav Sechorah next came to town, he wanted to annul a vow that he had taken. [To annul a vow, a bet din must ask the vow-taker, "Would you have taken your vow if you had realized that the following unpleasant consequences would occur?" If the vow-taker says that he would not have taken the vow under those circumstances, the bet din may annul the vow.] Rav Sechorah came before Rav Nachman, who asked him, "Did you take your vow with such-and-such consequences in mind?" Rav Sechorah responded in the affirmative. "What about these-or-those consequences?" Rav Nachman asked. Again, Rav Sechorah responded in the affirmative. No matter what opening Rav Nachman offered, Rav Sechorah answered that he had intended his vow to be effective even under those conditions. Finally, Rav Nachman became angry and ordered Rav Sechorah to leave. Rav Sechorah said, "Now I have an opening to annul my vow, for the Mishnah says, 'What is the proper path that a person should choose for himself? Whatever is a credit to himself and earns him the esteem of his fellow men.' I never would have taken this vow if I had known that Rav Nachman would become angry at me."

R' Kreiswirth adds: The Gemara (Shabbat 152b) records: Rabbi Eliezer asked the sage Rav, "Who is destined for Olam Haba?" Rav answered him, "Anyone whose rabbeim are pleased with him." We might have expected Rav to answer that one is destined for Olam Haba if he is so meticulous in his performance of mitzvot that he even puts on Rabbeinu Tam's tefilin, but this is not what Rav said. Rather, if one follows in his teachers' ways and they are proud of him, then he is destined for Olam Haba. (Quoted in Avot Mi'shulchan Rabboteinu p.146)

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** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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