

# THE VINEYARD

by Shlomo Katz

## Parshas Reeh

## The Vineyard

## Volume 26, No. 42

*Sponsored by Nathan and Rikki Lewin on the yahrzeit of his father, Dr. Isaac Lewin (Harav Yitzchok ben Harav Aharon a"h)*

The Midrash Tanchuma cites the verse in our parashah (12:29), "When Hashem, your G-d, will cut down the nations where you come, to drive them away before you, and you drive them away and settle in their land," and comments: Rabbi Levi said: To what may this be compared? To a king who planted a vineyard on his property which had great cedar trees. The king cut down the cedar trees but left the thorny undergrowth. His servants and household members asked him, "Our master the king! The thorns which grab onto and tear our clothes you left, but you chopped down the cedar trees?!" He answered, "If I had removed the thorns, with what would I have hedged my vineyard? Rather, I did the right thing, and when the vineyard is established, I will burn the thorns."

The midrash continues: The Jewish People are Hashem's vineyard, as we read (Yeshayah 5:7), "The vineyard of Hashem, Master of legions, is the House of Yisrael." When Hashem brought Bnei Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael, He cut down the cedars, as it says (Amos 2:9), "I destroyed the Emorite before them, whose height was like the height of cedars." However, He left some descendants of the Canaanites in the Land to ensure that the Jewish People kept the Torah, as it is written (Shoftim 3:1), "These are the nations that Hashem let remain, to test Yisrael through them." When the vineyard becomes established in its observance of Torah, then (as we read in Yeshayah 33:12), "Nations will be like burning-sites for lime, like cut thorns set aflame."

What is the midrash teaching? R' Avraham Meir Rosen z"l (Warsaw; 19th century) explains: When we are mature enough as a nation to remain dedicated to Torah without having the nations remind us of our obligations, then we will be free of their persecution. Until then, the nations of the world will continue to prick us like thorns surrounding a vineyard. (Be'ur Ha'amarim)

\*\*\*\*\*

"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, "Didn't I 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 doesn't 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)

\*\*\*\*\*

"Beware lest there be a lawless thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year approaches, the shemittah / sabbatical year,' and you will look malevolently upon your destitute brother and refuse to give him — then he may appeal against you to Hashem, and it will be a sin upon you." (15:9)

This verse warns us not to refuse to make loans although the shemittah year is approaching. (Because loans must be forgiven after the shemittah year, people may refuse to lend money close to the shemittah year.)

R' Shaul Yisraeli z"l (1909-1995; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav) writes: Imagine! The Torah warns elsewhere against trickery and deceit, against withholding wages from laborers and so on. The Torah commands us to conduct business faithfully, and to use honest measures and weights. In the face of all these laws, a man works and toils until he has saved a certain amount.

This money which a person has saved notwithstanding all these commandments is his money which

he earned honestly and through hard work, and now the Torah comes along and obligates him to lend it, and without interest or benefit! The Jew does this willingly and does not demand any return on his money; only one thought beats in his heart, there is only one thing that he wishes to guarantee --that he'll get his money back. And that single thought, the Torah refers to as 'lawlessness'! The Torah demands that he make loans knowing that he may never be repaid.

Going in the Torah's way and observing this commandment will effect a revolution in one's thinking about his membership in a community. Through the quiet observance of this mitzvah, one will solve many of the hardest social problems that have worried man from time immemorial. (Ma'amar "Ha'Shemittah Be'mahalach Ha'dorot")

\*\*\*\*\*

"For you departed from the land of Egypt b'chipazon / in haste . . ." (16:3)

R' Yitzchak Isaac Chaver z"l (1789-1852; rabbi of Suvalk, Lithuania) writes: Hashem interacts with His creation in two ways. In one, which we call "nature," Hashem's abundance flows through emissaries or filters, much as a human king uses the entire government to carry out his will and does not interact directly with his subjects. When G-d acts in this manner, He is also called "Elokim," a term which the Torah and prophets use to refer to any form of authority [e.g., judges--see Shmot 21:6].

In the second, Hashem interacts directly with the world. This latter relationship, which is called "chipazon" ["haste," as opposed to an orderly, methodical progression], began at the time of the Exodus. Another term for chipazon is "hashgachah pratit." By reflecting on the chipazon relationship, R' Chaver writes, we clarify and solidify the basis for our belief in Hashem. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Yad Mitzrayim: Potei'ach Yad p.1)

R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; chassidic rebbe in Lublin) focuses on the literal meaning of chipazon, i.e., "haste," and comments: Man's entry into the service of Hashem must be with chipazon, just as the korban Pesach in Egypt, the first ever, was eaten. The reason is that, at the beginning, one must seize the moment and forcibly detach himself from the desires of this world. Afterward, one can progress with greater deliberateness. (Tzidkat Ha'tzaddik No. 1)

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) writes similarly: Man's attainments follow a process of revelation, followed by toil, i.e., a sudden inspiration followed by a period of "work," during which one refines the details that are contained within the momentary inspiration. One can never exhaust all of the details contained within one flash of inspiration.

The ultimate revelation, R' Kook continues, was the Giving of the Torah, which all subsequent generations mine to reveal its light. All subsequent flashes of inspiration that one experiences when studying Torah are offshoots of that revelation. (Shemonah Kevatzim I, No. 423)

R' Yehuda Halevi z"l (Spain; died 1141, in Eretz Yisrael) writes: Only man-made laws and ideas go through a process of development. That which comes from the Divine is sudden, just as Creation did not exist one moment and did exist the next. (Kuzari I:81)

\*\*\*\*\*

## Letters from Our Sages

The letter below was written by R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (born 1879; killed in the Holocaust - 6 Tammuz 5701/1941), rabbi of Rzeszow / Reisha, Poland and a member of the Polish Sejm / parliament. It is dated 13 Nissan 5679 / 1919, and printed in She'eilot U'teshuvot Avnei Cheifetz no. 13.

This year is a time of trouble for us because of the war which has broken out between the two nations living in this land [a reference to the Polish-Ukrainian War of 1918-1919] -- may G-d have mercy on us and lead us to abundance. As of now, the paths of commerce are desolate like a mourner, and wine merchants have been unable to bring kosher wine as necessary for Pesach. With great difficulty, they have brought enough wine to suffice for one-third or one-quarter of the townsfolk. Therefore, many people will have only a small amount of wine, not enough for all of the cups [i.e., four cups times two nights], and they have asked me what to do.

The Magen Avraham states that one who has precisely enough wine for four cups should use them all on the first night and not two on the first night and two on the second night. One reason is that we have calendars [and we know that the first night is the real Seder night, unlike our ancestors who kept two nights because they were in doubt]. Second, publicizing the miracle [by drinking four cups] takes precedence over making kiddush over wine on the second night. (Until here from the Magen Avraham.) Now, why did the Magen Avraham need to argue that the second night's obligation is less significant? This implies that if the obligations were equal, then we would do half of the mitzvah [drink two cups] on one night and half of the mitzvah [drink two cups] on the other night. . .

From here we can infer that if one is obligated to do a mitzvah multiple times, but has only the resources to do it completely once, it is better to split his resources in parts even though he will fulfill only part of the mitzvah each time. . .

. . . Possibly, this is the meaning of the mishnah in Pirkei Avot (ch.3), "All goes according to the multitude of deeds." Rambam explains that it is better to give one coin to charity 100 separate times than to give 100 coins one time. Although the impression on the giver is greater if he gives 100 coins, still, experiencing more events that cause an impression is greater than experiencing one event that causes a large impression. [R' Lewin then presents arguments that suggest the opposite result.]

---

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](https://www.torah.org) start with

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

*Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. The low cost of sponsorship is \$36. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.*