

WALK, DON'T RUN

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:
Nach: Tehilim 55-56
Mishnah: Pe'ah 8:2-3
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Kiddushin 78

On this day, the 20th of Iyar, in the second year after the Exodus, Bnei Yisrael journeyed away from Har Sinai. Midrash Yelamdenu criticizes Bnei Yisrael, saying that they left Har Sinai "like a child fleeing from school." How are we to understand this? Doesn't the Torah (Bemidbar 10:11) say that Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael to travel? Indeed, at that point, before the sin of the Spies, they were destined to enter Eretz Yisrael almost immediately, which itself would have given them a great spiritual "lift"!

R' Nosson Zvi Finkel z"l (1849-1927; the Alter of Slobodka) explains that Hashem judges not only our actions, but the attitudes that accompany those actions. Our Sages' criticism of Bnei Yisrael is not for the act of traveling, but for the feelings with which they traveled. Though they left Har Sinai for the noblest of reasons--to travel to Eretz Yisrael--they still should have felt some regret over leaving Har Sinai. Apparently they did not; in some measure, however small, they were glad to leave the place where they had learned so much Torah. (Ohr Ha'ztafun Part I, p.203)

R' Yaakov Yisrael Baifus shlita add: Bnei Yisrael's experience is relevant to each of us. Granted, there are times when one must stop learning Torah to attend to other matters. However, the midrash is teaching, when one must close his sefarim / Torah books, it should be done with regret, not like a child happily fleeing from school. (Lekach Tov p. 94)

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, 'When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall observe a Shabbat rest for Hashem.'" (25:2)

Rashi z"l writes: This means a rest in honor of Hashem in the same sense as these words are used in the case of the weekly Shabbat (Shmot 20:10) where "Shabbat La'Hashem" cannot mean "a day for

G-d to rest."

R' Eliezer Lipman Lichtenstein z"l (1848-1896; Nowy Dwor, Poland) explains: On Shabbat, we are commanded to rest, and to cause our animals and belongings to rest as well. If such a thing were possible, we also would cause our land to rest and our crops not to grow on Shabbat. However, Hashem imposed laws of nature on the world. Therefore, our crops do continue growing on Shabbat. In exchange, we let our land rest for His honor every seventh year--one seventh of the time, as if it had rested one day each week. (Shem Olam)

"You shall perform My chukim / decrees, and observe My mishpatim / ordinances and perform them; then you shall dwell securely on the Land." (25:18)

Chukim are laws whose reasons we do not know; for example, kashrut or shatnez. Mishpatim are laws that we would perform even if the Torah had not commanded them, because they are logical; for example, honoring parents, not stealing and not murdering. Why, regarding chukim, does the Torah promise that we will dwell securely in our Land if we "perform" them, whereas regarding, mishpatim, the Torah expects us to "observe" and "perform" them?

R' Chaim Abulafia z"l (1669-1744; Eretz Yisrael and Izmir, Turkey) explains: Our Sages say that a person should not say, "I don't like the taste of meat and milk together" or "I don't enjoy wearing wool and linen together." Rather, he should say, "I am sure I would like it very much, but what can I do? The Torah forbade it!" Rambam z"l writes, however, that this attitude is appropriate only regarding chukim. After all, if not for the Torah's command, there would be no logical reason not to eat meat and milk together and not to wear wool and linen together. In contrast, if a person would say, "I am sure I would like committing murder or stealing, but what can I do? The Torah forbade it!" it would be morally reprehensible. This, continues R' Abulafia, answers our question. Regarding chukim, it is sufficient to perform them. It is not necessary to "observe" the mitzvah in the sense of agreeing with it. Not so regarding mishpatim; one must not only "perform" them, he must "observe" them in his thoughts as well. (Etz Ha'chaim)

R' Uri Sherki shlita (rabbi and educator in Yerushalayim) observes: When Rambam writes that it would be morally wrong to say, "I would like to steal, but what can I do? The Torah forbade it!" he is not referring merely to the act of stealing. The moral imperative not to steal also dictates the attitude one has toward another's property. Therefore, one should not even think, "Of course I will not steal, because that is morally wrong. However, I still desire the other person's property and I would take it if not for the fact that the Torah forbade it." A moral person does not even desire another's property. (Be'ur Al Shemoneh Perakim p.194)

"If you will say, 'What will we eat in the seventh year?'" (25:20)

R' Yisrael Isserlin z"l (author of Terumat Ha'deshen; died 1460) asks: Why would people worry about what they will eat in the seventh (i.e., the shemittah) year? In the seventh year they will eat the produce of the sixth year. If they have anything to worry about at all, it should be the eighth year!

He answers: It is human nature for people to hoard their belongings for the future. Thus, when they realize that there will be no harvest in the seventh year, they will hoard the produce of the sixth year to eat in the eighth year. Then they will worry, "What will we eat in the seventh year?" (Beur Mahari)

"The word of Hashem came to me, saying: 'Behold! Chanamel, son of Shallum your uncle, is coming to you to say, "Buy for yourself my field that is in Anatot, for the right of redemption is yours".'"
(From the haftarah - Yirmiyah 32:6-7)

In the continuation of the haftarah, after fulfilling Hashem's command and buying the field, Yirmiyah asks Hashem the meaning of His command. To paraphrase: The Babylonians are besieging Yerushalayim and will soon destroy the Temple, and You want me to invest in real estate? Hashem responds (verse 27), and with this the haftarah ends, "Behold! I am Hashem, the Elokim of all flesh; is anything hidden from Me?"

What was the purpose of Hashem's command that Yirmiyah buy his cousin's land, and why didn't Hashem answer Yirmiyah's question? R' Nosson Friedland z"l (1808-1883; one of the earliest European rabbis to speak and write extensively about the idea of mass resettlement of Eretz Yisrael) explains:

On the eve of the destruction of the Temple, Hashem was revealing to Yirmiyah one of the ways by which the Final Redemption may take place. Specifically, if Hashem will see that the Jewish People demonstrate their love for Eretz Yisrael by buying property to build homes and farms, He will hasten the Redemption. In that event, mashiach will arrive as a powerful king (see Daniel 7:13). Otherwise, he will arrive as a "poor man riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

Why didn't Hashem answer Yirmiyah's question? Because the Jewish People have free will to determine whether or not to bring this prophecy to fruition, i.e., whether to rebuild the Land. If Hashem had spelled it out for Yirmiyah, that would have made the outcome a given, thus depriving us of our free will. (Kos Yeshuah U'nechamah p.61)

Letters from Our Sages

This letter was written by R' David ben Shlomo ibn Zimra z"l ("Radvaz"; 1479-1573), Chief Rabbi of Egypt and a prolific author.

You asked me to tell you my opinion whether the dead that Hashem will resurrect (at "Techiyat

Ha'meitim"] will die again, because you have seen different opinions about this.

Answer: We learn in Perek Chelek (Sanhedrin 92a), "The tzaddikim that Hashem is destined to resurrect will not return to dust, as it is written (Yeshayah 4:3), "Of every remnant that will be in Zion and every remaining one in Yerushalayim, 'Holy' will be said of him, everyone who is inscribed for life in Yerushalayim." [Says the Gemara:] "Just as the Holy One exists forever, so they will exist forever." Lest you ask: what will be during those years when the world is being renewed, as it is written (Yeshayah 2:17), "Hashem will be exalted all alone on that day"? [The question refers to our Sages' teaching that, during the seventh millennium, the physical world as we know it won't exist. The Gemara answers:] Hashem will give them wings and they will hover over the waters . . . Lest you say that this will cause the tzaddikim pain, it already is written (Yeshayah 40:31), "Those whose hope is in Hashem will have renewed strength. They will grow a wing like eagles, they will run and not grow tired, they will walk and not grow weary." . . . [Radvaz continues:] It is apparent from the Gemara's statement that the tzaddikim that Hashem is destined to resurrect will not die. Rather, they will live long lives, they will have both body and soul, and they will use their physical senses to serve their Creator. During the seventh millennium, their bodies and flesh will be purified like that of Eliyahu and Chanoch [both of whom went up to Heaven alive], or close to that level, so that they can "float" without becoming tired, and they will bask in the light of the Shechinah without food or drink, as did Moshe and Eliyahu [see Shmot 23:18 and Melachim I 19:8, respectively]. Our Sages called this "having wings" to help us understand, for there is no physical activity that appears to require as little effort as a bird flying. This is the pinnacle of all the levels attained by tzaddikim and those who serve Hashem, the goodness hidden away for them, that which no eye has seen except His, may His Name be Blessed; thus He will do for those who wait for Him. (She'eilot U'teshuvot Radvaz II No. 839, quoted in Eretz Yisrael B'safrut Ha'teshuvot p.240)