

SHE BUILDS WITH WISDOM

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King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (9:1), "With all forms of wisdom she did build her house; she carved out its seven pillars." R' Yaakov Sakly z"l (Spain; 14th century) comments: It is well known that both the meshalim / parables and the nimshalim / morals of King Shlomo deserve study, for the parable is not randomly chosen, and it has its own importance. Indeed, the more important the lesson to be taught, the more important the subject of the parable should be. In the words of Mishlei (25:11), "Like golden apples carved on silver platters." True, silver is not as valuable as gold, but it is nevertheless a worthy material on which to serve golden apples. [On the other hand, one would not serve golden apples on paper plates.]

In our verse, the parable is about a woman. R' Sakly explains that King Shlomo is acknowledging the special role that women play in the development of human civilization. No other creature needs its food prepared or its home cared for in the manner that humans do, and this is a role filled by the woman. Thus, "With all forms of wisdom she did build her house." What is the meaning of, "She carved out its seven pillars"? R' Sakly explains that a basic house requires only four pillars—one at each corner. Thus, "seven pillars" signifies a larger, more luxurious home. When a man has a large house and is able to host guests (as one should), this, too, is to the credit of the woman of the house.

The nimshal of our verse is wisdom in general, and Torah in particular. In those contexts, the number seven refers to many things, including: the "seven wisdoms," the seven books of the Torah (see Shabbat 115b), and the seven "places" where Hashem gave the Torah: from His mouth; face-to-face; from the heavens; at Har Sinai [as mentioned in the opening verse of our parashah]; in the Ohel Mo'ed; in Trans Jordan; and in Zion, as it is written (Yeshayah 2:3), "From Zion the Torah shall go forth." (Torat Ha'minchah)

"You shall sanctify the year of the fiftieth year . . . and each of you shall return to his ancestral

heritage . . . " (Vayikra 25:10)

Why is the word "year" mentioned twice? R' Yechezkel Shraga Lifschutz-Halberstam z"l (1908-1995; the Stropkover Rebbe) explains:

During the 49 days of the Omer, we are supposed to be preparing ourselves to receive the Torah on Shavuot, the 50th day. But what if Shavuot comes and we realize that we have not prepared at all? It is taught that one should not become depressed, for, on Shavuot itself, one can make-up all of the spiritual gains that he should have accomplished during the Omer.

The same, says the Stropkover Rebbe, is true of the Yovel / Jubilee year, which has additional holiness compared to other years. The repetition of the word "year" in our verse teaches that one can attain in one year everything that he should have achieved in the preceding 49 years. This is similar to that which Rambam writes: "Even the repentance of one who does not repent until he is on his death bed is accepted."

Why is it that one can repent in his old age after a lifetime of sinning? Why is it that one can accomplish in a short time (in the 50th year or on Shavuot) what one should have spent a long time accomplishing? Our verse tells us the answer: Such a person is merely returning to his ancestral heritage. In reality, no Jew ever lets go of that heritage completely, whether he realizes it or not. (Divrei Yechezkel Shraga Vol. III)

"If you will follow My decrees . . . " (26:3)

Rashi writes that "If you will follow My decrees" refers to toiling in Torah study. If so, writes R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (Hungary and Yerushalayim; died 1922), we can understand why this verse follows immediately after the verse, "My Sabbaths you shall observe." Specifically, the Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu states that the primary time for Torah study is on Shabbat, when one is free from work. (Torat Yechiel)

"I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you; I will cause wild beasts to withdraw from the land . . . " (26:6)

The Midrash Sifra records a dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai regarding the interpretation of this verse. Rabbi Yehuda interprets it as a promise that G-d will eliminate all predatory species of animals from the earth. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, on the other hand, interprets the verse as a promise that G-d will domesticate those species so that they will no longer be predators. He asks rhetorically: Which is a greater praise of G-d: that there are no dangerous species, or that there are dangerous species, but He causes them not to harm anyone? The latter, says Rabbi

Shimon bar Yochai, is foretold in the famous prophecy (Yeshayah 11:6-9), "A wolf will dwell with a sheep and a leopard will lie down with a kid; and a calf, a lion and a fattened animal together, with a young child leading them. A cow and a bear will graze, and their young will lie down together; and a lion will eat hay like a cattle. A suckling will play near the hole of a viper; and a newly weaned child will stretch his hand toward an adder's lair. They will neither injure nor destroy . . ." [Until here from the Midrash]

In light of this Midrash, writes R' Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg shlita (Tolner Rebbe in Yerushalayim), we can understand another, very famous dispute between Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai--one which led to the latter's needing to flee and hide in a cave for 13 years. The Gemara (Shabbat 33b) records that Rabbi Yehuda praised the Roman Empire's many infrastructure and construction projects, which included marketplaces, bridges and bathhouses. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai responded, "They made marketplaces for immoral purposes, bathhouses to luxuriate in, and bridges to collect tolls!" (When word of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's comments reached the Romans, he had to go into hiding.) [Until here from the Gemara]

The Tolner Rebbe explains: We can infer from Rabbi Yehuda's interpretation of our verse in the above-quoted Midrash that he holds that evil cannot be redeemed. That is why, according to Rabbi Yehuda, the verse promises that predatory animals will be eradicated from the earth. It follows, that since we see that there is good in the Romans--after all, we, too, benefit from their construction projects--it must be that the Romans are not inherently evil.

In contrast, Rabbi Shimon holds that evil can be redeemed. Thus, a day will come when predatory animals will be domesticated and all will live in harmony. It follows, then that so long as the Romans engage in evil, they are to be condemned. It follows, also, that every person can, and is obligated to, redeem the bad within himself. (Butzina D'Oraita p.6)

"Then they will confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers, for the treachery with which they betrayed Me . . . I, too, will behave toward them with casualness, and I will bring them into the land of their enemies." (26:40-41)

Why, if Bnei Yisrael confess their sins, will Hashem behave toward them with casualness and bring them to the land of their enemies? R' Moshe Freidiger z"l (communal leader in Pest, Hungary) explains:

Teshuvah means confessing one's sins and not making excuses. Here, Bnei Yisrael will confess, but they will justify their actions by saying that their forefathers acted the same way. Such "teshuvah" will be rejected. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

A Torah Tour of the Holy Land

"Yirmiyahu said: 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'." (Yirmiyah 32:6-7 - Haftarah for Behar in a leap year, not read this year)

"The words of Yirmiyahu son of Chilkiyahu, of the Kohanim who were in Anatot in the land of Binyamin." (Yirmiyahu 1:1)

R' Yehosef Schwartz z"l (1805-1865; Germany and Eretz Yisrael; Torah scholar and geographer) writes: About 1½ hours [on foot] northeast of Yerushalayim is the small village of "Anata" [presumably the present-day Arab neighborhood of the same name just across Highway "1" from the Har Ha'tzofim (Mount Scopus) campus of the Hebrew University]. Just to the north is the village of "Machtzav Even" [literally, "stone quarry"], from which building stones are brought to Yerushalayim. In the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 5:1), there is a "Rabbi Yochanan Antniyata." In the same tractate (6:5), there is a "Rabbi Chanina Antniyah." It seems to me, writes R' Schwartz, that they were both from Anatot.

R' Schwartz continues: "Almon" (Yehoshua 21:18), "Allemet" (Divrei Ha'yamim I 8:36), "Azmavvet" (Nechemiah 7:28) - These places are not known to any researchers, but through G-d's kindness, I merited to locate them. When I traveled through that district, I saw about half-an-hour northeast of the above-mentioned Anata a tall mountain on which were ancient ruins. I asked the inhabitants of Anata if they knew the name of that town, but no one could tell me. Then I met an old man who had heard in his childhood that it was called "Almavvet," and that its inhabitants rebelled and therefore it was destroyed. I (R' Schwartz) searched through the Book of Yehoshua among the cities of Binyamin and could not find such a place. However, among the cities of the Levi'im [specifically, Kohanim - see Yehoshua 21:18] were "Anatot" and "Almon." [R' Schwartz then deduces from verses that "Anata" and "Almavvet" (aka "Allement," "Azmavvet") are none other than "Anatot" and "Almon." Today, the Jewish town of Almon sits on that approximate site.] (Tevuot Ha'aretz p.154)