

# THE LIGHT OF THE RIGHTEOUS

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King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (13:9), "The light of the righteous will rejoice, but the lamp of the wicked will flicker out." Rabbeinu Bachya ben Asher z"l (Spain; 14<sup>th</sup> century) explains: King Shlomo compares the soul of a tzaddik to light because the soul, like the concept "light," is eternal and is independent of the life-span of the Tzaddik's body. In contrast, the soul of a Rasha is like the light of a lamp; when the candle or wick is snuffed out, the light is gone. So, too, when the Rasha's body dies, nothing remains of him.

In reality, R' Bachya continues, a soul never dies. But, the soul of the wicked will suffer eternal punishment, which is a fate worse than death. This comes about because the Rasha did not pursue "light" during his lifetime. Therefore, King Shlomo says that the lamp will "flicker out." A faint memory of the light that could have been will remain, but it will not give light.

In contrast, "the light of the righteous will rejoice." This rejoicing is the Tzaddik's reward, and it refers to attaining levels of understanding of G-d that one could not attain in his lifetime. Because Tzaddikim serve Hashem with joy, they merit rejoicing in the World-to-Come, for the trait of happiness causes the soul to draw sustenance and exist forever.

R' Bachya continues: Another reason the soul is compared to light is that they both were created on the first day of Creation. Unlike man, who lights a candle from an existing flame, Hashem created light out of nothing. Nevertheless, though He is "light" and doesn't need our light, He commanded us to light a menorah in His Temple for the honor of the Shechinah, as described in our parashah. (Be'ur Al Ha'Torah)

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## ***"And Aharon did so." (8:3)***

Rashi z"l writes: This is stated to relate the praise of Aharon, that he did not act differently from what he was told." [Until here from Rashi]

Many wonder why the Torah feels the need to tell us that Aharon did as he was told; it seems that it

would be obvious.

R' Aryeh Leib Bakst z"l (1918-2004; Rosh Yeshiva in Detroit, Michigan) explains: When a person is given instructions, it is human nature to want to change some detail of, add to, or improve upon, those instructions. This gives a person a feeling of ownership over whatever it is that he was instructed to implement. Here, the Torah is teaching that that is not what Aharon did, and that is not what an Eved Hashem / servant of G-d does. (Quoted in Yadayim Mochichot)

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***"There were men who had been contaminated by a human corpse and could not make the Pesach-offering on that day; so they approached Moshe and Aharon on that day. Those men said to him, 'We are contaminated through a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem's offering in its appointed time among Bnei Yisrael?'" (9:6)***

Rashi z"l writes: This section ought to have been said by Moshe, just as all the other sections of the Torah were, but these men were privileged that it should be promulgated through their intervention, because "meritorious deeds are brought about by worthy people." [Until here from Rashi]

R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) writes: When Rashi says, "This section ought to have been said by Moshe," he means that it was ordained that Moshe would be the law-giver. In the "original plan," so-to-speak, there is no reason why this section should have been any different from other sections.

However, R' Zaichyk continues, certain people distinguished themselves from among the approximately 600,000 other men and volunteered to serve as the Chevra Kadisha / those who care for the deceased. Because of this altruism, they lost the opportunity to bring the Korban Pesach with the rest of the Jewish People. Would it be possible to not give special recognition to such people?! (Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Chaim Zaichyk zt"l p.20)

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***"Make for yourself two silver trumpets . . . and they shall be yours for the summoning of the assembly." (10:1)***

The Gemara (Menachot 28b) teaches that all of the vessels that Moshe made could be used by later generations as well. However, the trumpets were for Moshe to summon the nation and could not be used by subsequent leaders. Why?

R' Eliyahu Schlesinger shlita (rabbi of the Gilo neighborhood of Yerushalayim) suggests that there is a simple lesson here. The way that the leader of one generation calls his flock and relates to his congregants will not necessarily work for the leader of the next generation. (Eileh Ha'davarim)

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***"The people would wander and gather it . . . When the dew descended upon the camp at night, the Mahn would descend upon it." (11:8-9)***

In Shmot (16:4) we read, "Let the people go out and pick each day's portion." That implies that only a short walk ("go out") was required in order to collect Mahn. In contrast, our verse says that the people had to "wander" in order to collect Mahn. The Gemara (Yoma 75a) resolves this seeming contradiction by explaining that Bnei Yisrael were divided into three groups: the righteous found Mahn right outside their tents, the average person had to go for a short walk in order to collect Mahn, and the wicked had to wander far from home to collect it.

R' Ben Zion Nesher shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) writes: The Gemara (Berachot 48b) teaches that Moshe Rabbeinu established the first blessing of Birkat Ha'mazon when the Mahn fell. We say there, "He nourishes the entire world, in His goodness - with grace, with kindness, and with mercy." These three phrases ("with grace, with kindness, and with mercy") seem to parallel the three groups of Mahn-gatherers: "With grace" refers to those who found favor in Hashem's eyes and, therefore, found Mahn right outside their doors; "With kindness" refers to the average person, who needed some measure of kindness from Hashem in order to find food; and "With mercy" refers to those who received their sustenance despite not being worthy at all.

R' Nesher notes that, in later generations, the three phrases in this Berachah also can refer to three groups of people: Those who find their sustenance effortlessly, those who find it with modest effort, and those who find it only after a struggle. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.89)

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## **A Torah Tour of the Holy Land**

***"It shall be that if you come with us, then with the goodness with which Hashem will benefit us, we will do good to you." (10:32)***

Rashi z"l comments: What good did they actually bestow upon him [i.e., Yitro]? Our Sages say: When Bnei Yisrael were parceling out the Land, the most fertile part of Yericho was found to extend over an area of 500 by 500 amot; they left that area undivided and said, "He in whose portion of land the Bet Hamikdash will be built shall take this land as a substitute for the land he will give up and upon which the Temple will be built." In the meantime, they gave that area of Yericho to the children of Yitro -- to Yonadav the son of Rechev. [Until here from Rashi]

R' Yehosef Schwartz z"l (1805-1865; Germany and Eretz Yisrael; Torah scholar and geographer) writes: Yericho is in the portion of the tribe of Binyamin, about four German parsah'ot [a measure of distance] east-northeast of Yerushalayim and one parsah from the Jordan River. It is called "Yericho" [from the root meaning "to smell"] because of the balsam plants that grew there in earlier times and gave off a pleasant aroma. It also is called the "City of Dates" (Devarim 34:3) because of the many date palms in the region.

(In a footnote, R' Schwartz observes that "Yericho" is sometimes found in later works as a reference to a city in France or Spain; perhaps Lunel, in southern France. ["Yericho" and "Lunel" share a root meaning "moon."])

R' Schwartz continues: Today [in the mid-1800s], there is a small Arab village called "Recha." It is said that this village is on the site where Yericho stood in the time of the first Bet Hamikdash. One hour's walk to the west are ruins, which people say is where Yericho stood in the time of the second Bet Hamikdash, i.e., during the Herodian dynasty. Northwest of the afore-mentioned village is a spring called "Ein Elisha." It is said that this is the spring that the prophet Elisha "cured." (See Melachim II 2:21). (Tevuot Ha'aretz p.96-97)