

# SHABBAT IN SPEECH, THOUGHT & ACTION

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BS"D

Volume 32, No. 21

16 Adar 5778

March 3, 2018

Our Parashah teaches again the Mitzvah of Shabbat, saying: "However, you must guard My Sabbaths" (31:13); "You shall guard the Sabbath" (31:14); and "Bnei Yisrael shall guard the Sabbath" (31:16). Why is Shemirat Shabbat / guarding the Sabbath mentioned three times in such a short span of verses? Also, why are the first two commands in second person and the third one in third person (referred to in Hebrew as "Lashon Nistar," literally, "hidden language")?

R' Eliyahu Ha'Tzarfati z"l (1715-1805; rabbi of Fez, Morocco) explains: The Torah is teaching us to guard Shabbat in all respects--in speech, action, and thought. Thought is "hidden"; therefore, Lashon Nistar is used. Alternatively, the Mitzvah of Shabbat is repeated again and again to teach us that all sins, even those that apply on weekdays, carry an extra stringency on Shabbat because of the holiness of the day.

Or, perhaps, the Torah is referring to three specific types of sins. The first group is sins involving speech--for example, Lashon Ha'ra, gossip and profanity. Regarding such sins, the Torah says (verse 13), "You shall speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying--i.e., regarding what they say--'However, you must guard My Sabbaths.'" The second group is sins involving deeds, regarding which the Torah says (verse 14), "You shall observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you . . . for whoever does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among its people." Lastly, "Bnei Yisrael shall observe the Sabbath" (verse 16), using Lashon Nistar, refers to sins involving thought. (Aderet Eliyahu)

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***"This they shall give -- everyone who passes through the census -- a half Shekel of the sacred Shekel . . . to atone for your souls." (30:13-15)***

Midrash Tanchuma relates: Moshe had difficulty understanding the sacred Shekel until Hashem showed him a coin of fire. [Therefore the verse says, "This they shall give . . .]

R' Moshe Midner z"l (1860-1929; Mashgiach ruchani of the Slonimer yeshiva Toras Chessed in Baranavich, Belarus) writes in the name of R' Moshe of Kobrin z"l (1784-1858; chassidic rebbe): Moshe

Rabbeinu constructed many complicated parts and implements for the Mishkan. Why did he have trouble understanding the half-Shekel, of all things?

He answers: Hashem said that the half-Shekel would atone for Bnei Yisrael. Moshe wondered: Could such a small coin really provide atonement? In response, Hashem showed him a coin of fire, i.e., He showed Moshe how the Yetzer Ha'ra burns with resistance to giving even such a small coin to charity. One who can overcome that burning Yetzer Ha'ra deserves atonement for his sins. (Kitvei R' Moshe Midner)

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***"Remember for the sake of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself, and You told them, 'I shall increase your offspring like the stars of heaven, and this entire land of which I spoke, I shall give to your offspring and it shall be their heritage forever'." (32:13)***

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1785-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) writes: This verse seems unnecessarily wordy! However, it should be understood as follows:

Moshe said to Hashem, "Remember for the sake of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, Your servants, to whom You swore by Yourself." – You promised the Patriarchs that they would receive Eretz Yisrael. However, it was understood that You would not give the Land to them personally; rather, You would give it to their descendants.

Separately, "You told them, 'I shall increase your offspring like the stars of heaven, and this entire land of which I spoke, I shall give to your offspring and it shall be their heritage forever'." What was the purpose of that promise, since You already had told the Patriarchs that their descendants would receive the Land, as just explained? The answer must be that the first promise referred to Bnei Yisrael when they are righteous, while the second promise referred to Bnei Yisrael when they are not deserving--as was the case after the sin of the Golden Calf. Indeed, Moshe's argument concluded, that must be why You said, "Forever"! (Chochmat Ha'Torah p.225)

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***"Yehoshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting, and he said to Moshe, 'The sound of battle is in the camp!'"***

***"He (referring to Moshe) said, 'Not a sound shouting strength nor a sound shouting weakness; a sound of distress I do hear!'" (32:17-18)***

Rashi z"l explains Moshe's words: "This sound does not seem to be the sound of the victorious who cry, 'Victory,' nor is it the sound of the defeated who cry, 'Alas let me flee.' [Rather, it is] a sound of blasphemy and cursing which distresses the soul of he who hears it."

R' Michel Zilber shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of the Zvhil yeshiva in Yerushalayim) elaborates: When Yehoshua heard shouts coming from the camp, he assumed that he was hearing the sounds of a

religious war taking place. He assumed that some of Bnei Yisrael had constructed the Golden Calf and were rebelling against Hashem, while others were fighting back. If that was the case, there was hope that the side fighting for Hashem would achieve victory.

But, Moshe Rabbeinu told Yehoshua that he was mistaken. A war can be won, but once the encounter has degenerated into blasphemy and cursing, victory is impossible. That is why Moshe opened a new front in the war (verse 20), "He took the calf that they had made and burned it in fire." [Only after that, he waged war against the sinners themselves.]

R' Zilber concludes: The above idea is what R' Ovadiah Seforno z"l (1470-1550; Italy) means in his comments on the pasuk (verse 19), "It happened as [Moshe] drew near the camp and saw the calf and the dances, that Moshe's anger flared up. He threw down the Tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain." R' Ovadiah Seforno writes: When Moshe saw that the people were pleased with the spiritual damage they had caused, he gave up hope of their repenting and being worthy of the Luchot." Therefore, he broke them. (Tippah Min Ha'yam)

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## Pesach

***"He said to Avram, 'Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own, they will serve them, and they will oppress them four hundred years'." (Bereishit 15:13)***

***"The habitation of the Bnei Yisrael during which they dwelled in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years." (Shmot 12:40)***

Rashi z"l writes that 400 years passed from the birth of Yitzchak until the Exodus, and Yitzchak's birth was 30 years after Hashem spoke the first verse above to Avraham. That explains the 430 years mentioned in the second verse quoted above.

R' Chaim Zaichyk z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buchach, Poland; later in Israel) elaborates: Midrash Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer teaches that Bnei Yisrael were in Egypt for only 210 years. Although Hashem had told Avraham the exile would last 400 years, He shortened the time in the merit of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

What "merit" is referred to? R' Zaichyk explains: The Gemara (Makkot 11b) teaches that a person who commits accidental manslaughter must flee to one of the cities of refuge and remain there until the Kohen Gadol dies. If the Kohen Gadol is disqualified from office after the murderer is sentenced to exile, but before he begins his exile, then, according to one opinion, it is as if the Kohen Gadol died and the murderer goes free. R' Yom Tov Asevilli z"l ("Ritva"; Spain; 1260s-1320s) asks: The reason an accidental murderer goes free when the Kohen Gadol dies is that the latter's death provides atonement for the Jewish People's sins. But, if the Kohen Gadol was merely disqualified, what

provides that atonement? He answers: The anguish that the Kohen Gadol feels at being disqualified provides atonement. Another commentator, R' Menachem Meiri z"l (Spain; 1249-1306) explains, on the other hand, that the anguish that the murderer himself feels when his sentence sinks in and he pictures himself in exile subdues his heart and thereby provides atonement.

In light of this, R' Zaichyk continues, we can understand the above Midrash as follows: When the Patriarchs and Matriarchs envisioned the suffering that their descendants would undergo in Egypt, they were so shaken and pained that it was as if they were in Egypt. Hashem placed that anguish of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs on the "merits" side of His "scales" and used it to shorten the exile in Egypt. (Ohr Chadash: Pesach p.78)