

"HOW I SEE MYSELF"

by Shlomo Katz

BS"D
Volume 33, No.27
1 Nissan 5779
April 6, 2019

Sponsored by
Nathan and Rikki Lewin
in memory of her father,
Harav Eliyahu Moshe ben Yitzchak Dov Gordon a"h

Rabbi and Mrs. Barry Greengart
on the yahrzeit of his mother
Yuta bat Yosef a"h

Harold and Gilla Saltzman
in memory of his father,
Yosef Noach ben Yitzchak Isaac a"h

Most of this week's and next week's Parashot discuss the condition known as Tzara'at. The Gemara (Arachin 15b) teaches that one of the causes of Tzara'at is the sin of speaking Lashon Ha'ra.

Why do we have so strong a temptation to speak Lashon Ha'ra? R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (1923-1986; Mashgiach Ruchani of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) explains: It is human nature to judge ourselves based on how we think others perceive us. That is why we put so much effort into making a good impression on other people. It also is why many people put so much emphasis on fashion, i.e., because it affects how other people perceive them. Man tends to think that he only has worth if other people recognize his worth. We tend not to be aware of our own true level--both our own goodness and our own faults. Instead, we judge ourselves based on our surroundings and our friends.

R' Friedlander continues: Just as we think our true standing is whatever others perceive it to be, so we think others' true standing is whatever we perceive it to be. This means that when I put someone down, I believe I have thereby diminished him. At the same time, we think that by putting down someone else, we elevate ourselves. We are effectively saying, "Look at that person who has a fault that I don't have." We also tend to think that if someone else shares a good trait that we have, it

diminishes us, because we are no longer special.

In reality, writes R' Friedlander, no one's standing in this world is dependent on anyone else's. This is what our Sages are teaching when they instruct us to say, "The world was created for me!" (Siftei Chaim)

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael, saying, 'When a woman conceives and gives birth to a male . . .'" (12:2)

Rashi z"l quotes Midrash Rabbah: "Rabbi Simlai said, 'Just as the creation of man took place after the creation of cattle, beasts and fowl, so, too, the laws regarding man are set forth after the laws regarding cattle, beasts and fowl [a reference to the laws of Kashrut at the end of last week's Parashah]."

R' David Halevi z"l (1586-1667; Poland; known as the "Taz") asks: What are we to learn from this Midrash?

He explains: Man was created last so that "the table would be set for him," i.e., he would find the entire world ready for his use, a sign of his special standing. So, too, the laws regarding kosher and non-kosher animals are presented before man is "introduced" to teach that those laws are ready and waiting to serve as the means by which man can purify himself. (Divrei David)

Parashat Ha'chodesh

"Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year'." (Shmot 12:1-2)

Why is the Mitzvah to sanctify the new moon part of the story of the Exodus? R' Ben Zion Neshher shlita (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) explains:

People in general are not aware of how strong an influence the calendar has over them. A nation's calendar commemorates that society's significant days, both happy occasions and the opposite. This is why the Gemara (Avodah Zarah 8a) states: "Jews in the diaspora serve idols in purity." The life of a Jew in the diaspora is very heavily influenced by the calendar of the culture in which he lives. Their days off are our days off, their national holidays are our national holidays. This is not necessarily objectionable from a Halachic viewpoint; thus, it is "in purity." Nevertheless, it introduces a bit of "idolatry" into our lives.

Our ancestors in Egypt were, no doubt, under the influence of their host nation's calendar. Therefore, the first step in the redemption was to get a new calendar, the Jewish People's very own calendar. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon p.58)

Thirty Days Before Pesach

"The Omnipresent has bestowed so many favors upon us! . . . Dayeinu / It would have sufficed for us." (From the Pesach Haggadah)

R' Aharon Yosef Auerbach shlita (Bnei Brak, Israel) asks: The text of the "Maggid" portion of the Haggadah is derived from Mishnah, Gemara, and Midrashim. In contrast, this poem--while more than 1,000 years old--does not date to the time of the Talmud or Midrashim. Why then is it recited or sung in the middle of Maggid?

He explains: Much of Maggid is an exposition of verses in Parashat Ki Tavo--beginning with (Devarim 26:5), "An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather," and continuing with the three following verses. In fact, the Mishnah (Pesachim 116a) states that we are supposed to expound upon the entire section in which that verse appears, but we don't do that. Instead, we conclude with verse 8, and we do not expound upon verse 9, "He brought us to this place, and He gave us this Land, a Land flowing with milk and honey" (or the two verses that follow).

Apparently, writes R' Auerbach, when the Bet Hamikdash stood and each of the Jewish People held his Seder in Yerushalayim, he would expound on verse 9 as well. They could say, "He brought us to this place . . ." Even though entering Eretz Yisrael and building the Bet Hamikdash did not happen until long after the Exodus, they were the purpose of the Exodus, and they therefore are discussed as part of the Seder.

In later generations, when the Jewish People were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, Europe, and other places of exile, it no longer made sense to say (and expound upon) the verse, "He brought us to this place . . ." Even so, the authors of the Haggadah did not want to erase all memory of that part of Maggid. Therefore, they introduced this poem that speaks of Hashem's kindness to us, concluding with, "He built for us the Bet Ha'bechirah," a reference to the Bet Hamikdash.

R' Auerbach concludes: This explains as well why we begin the Seder proclaiming, "This year we are here; next year in Eretz Yisrael!" We are telling our children: Know that the story that you are about to hear is incomplete. Next year, in Eretz Yisrael, we will tell the whole story.

(Parenthetically, R' Auerbach notes that there is a Midrash stating that Bnei Yisrael were transported miraculously to Yerushalayim on the night of the Exodus to offer their Korbanot Pesach at the future site of the Bet Hamikdash. According to that Midrash, the verse, "He brought us to this place . . .," is literally part of the Exodus story.) (Haggadah Shel Pesach Pitchei Avraham)

Tehilim

Siddur Avodat Yisrael cites a custom to recite Psalm 106 on the Shabbat on which Parashat Tazria is read. However, on the Shabbat when Parashat Ha'chodesh is read, Psalm 77 is substituted. Accordingly,

we present here verses from, and commentaries on, that Psalm.

R' Ovadiah Seforno z"l (1470-1550; Italy) writes: This psalm bemoans, and expresses a prayer about, the pain caused by the exile. It also expresses the hope for redemption, even for a generation that is unworthy.

"When I lift my voice to G-d and I cry, my voice will reach G-d, and I will be heard." (Verse 2)

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch z"l (1808-1888; Germany) writes: If I direct my voice to G-d and I cry, my voice will reach Him, and even though I may not receive an immediate answer to my plea, I shall still be heard. G-d sees my misery and knows of my sufferings; He bears every sigh that comes forth from my breast. R' Hirsch adds: The speaker in this psalm is Yisrael in exile. (The Hirsch Psalms)

R' Avraham Chaim Hakohen z"l (Central Europe; 1700s) writes: "When I lift my voice to G-d" refers to the parts of prayer that are supposed to be said loudly--for example, Kri'at Shema and "Amen, Yehei Shemei Rabbah." "My voice will reach G-d, and I will be heard" refers to the parts of the prayers that are supposed to be recited silently, i.e., Shemoneh Esrei. (Eretz Ha'chaim)