

LOOK OUT!

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

As we mentioned before, these parshios form the basis of Moshe's parting words to the nation he sacrificed his life for. Though it seems from the parshios that Moshe was saying all of this over a period of months, the truth is, it was more a matter of weeks.

In the midst of all these words of advice, and the review of many of the mitzvos, is the section reiterating the blessings for following the Torah, and the curses for straying from it. Though the actual blessings and curses are not spelled out until Parashas Ki Savo, they are referred to already at the beginning of this parsha, which begins:

"See, I place before you today blessing and curse ... The blessing for listening to the mitzvos of G-d which I command you this day, and the curses for when you don't listen to the mitzvos of G-d and stray from the way which I commanded you this day to walk to walk after other gods which you never knew ..." (Devarim 11:26)

One question that can be asked is, why did Moshe start off with the word "see"? In everyday vernacular, we often use the word "see" to mean, "pay attention," or, "understand this well." Here also, Moshe means to focus the Jewish people on the seriousness of what is coming up. However, the same thing can be accomplished with the word "hear," which is what Moshe used in last week's parsha.

Vision is a unique sense. You can be in a room with many people, and hear someone enter the room from ten feet away, and barely notice his entrance. Yet, if you look up and catch the person's eye, even accidentally, not only do you notice the person, and the person you, but you even feel "exposed" somewhat, as if the person "stole" a peek into your very soul.

Eyes have often been called "windows" to the soul. Even though they are merely balls made of tissue and blood, and are hollow, somehow they project personality, and allow the outside world to have direct access to our consciousness. This is why seeing is associated with one's own personal philosophy, which, in English is called "outlook," and in Hebrew is called "*Hashkofa*," from the word "to look."

This is why in a previous parsha it was so important for Moshe to climb the mountain and **SEE** all of

Eretz Yisroel. After all, where Moshe was going after he died his view of the land was bound to be better. So then, why did he have to see the land before he left this world?

The Pri Tzaddik explains that the point of Moshe's seeing the land was more a matter of what he was going to give to it, as opposed to what he was taking from it. Moshe represented a special strength and energy which was vital for the Jewish people to survive on the land. However, for reasons previously discussed, Moshe was not able to lead them into the land. Now what?

However, by Moshe climbing the mountain and looking at the land, he sent out from himself his inherent spiritual ability which made a spiritual mark on all parts of the land. Moshe's body didn't cross the border into the Land of Israel, but Moshe's soul did, so-to-speak, a process made possible through the eyes.

This is what Moshe was alluding to by beginning his words with "see." He was trying to reach the collective national soul, to create an eternal bond between the Jewish psyche and the Torah, a connection that can last throughout all the generations, especially after he was gone. And even though only an element of the Jewish people has adhered to the Torah throughout the long and bitter exiles, even that small element was made possible because of the soul-connection made in this week's parsha.

This is why Amalek is called Amalek, whose name is spelled: *ayin, mem, lamed, kuf*, the first letter spelling the word "*ayin*," which means eye. The other three letters spelled the word: *mem-lamed-kuf*, or, the word "sever." In other words, Amalek is the nation that "severs" the eye, by creating intellectual doubt (*ayin, mem, lamed, kuf*, in gematria equals the word "*sufek*," which means doubt), and by disgracing Torah in the eyes of those who follow her, all for the sake of severing the Jewish soul from the Torah, and ultimately, G-d Himself.

Shabbos Day:

Today, if a person wants to eat meat, he or she merely needs to visit the local butcher shop, and feast his or her eyes on a large selection of delicious meats. And this is the case in Jerusalem, and it is the case thousands of miles away in Johannesburg as well. But that's not the way it always was.

Until G-d said so, the only meat that was permitted to the Jewish people after leaving Egypt was the meat from a sacrifice brought and offered in the Tabernacle. However, as the Torah says:

When G-d, your G-d, will enlarge your boundary, as He has promised you, you may eat flesh whenever your soul longs to. If the place (the Temple) which G-d, your G-d, has chosen to place His Name is too far from you, then you may sacrifice from the herd of your flock, which G-d has given to you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat in your gates whenever

your soul longs to. (Devarim 12:20)

In other word, this possuk put a lot of local butchers throughout the ages in business, and has kept them in business to this very day. And it has made the eating and enjoying of meat possible, especially for people who live far thousands of miles away from the Temple. How much more is this so when we don't even have a Temple to go to today!
This story is not over yet; there is still more to learn.

When G-d, your G-d, will enlarge your boundary ... The Torah teaches you proper conduct, that one should not desire meat except when he lives amidst abundance and wealth. (Rashi)

Is meat only for the wealthy? And who controls his desire for meat like this? Usually our drive for food is quite spontaneous, demanding instant gratification!
The main sacrifice that used to provide meat for the person was the Korban Shlamim, or Peace-Offering. It was a sacrifice that a person brought to show G-d appreciation for all he had, and for good that he had experienced. It was a very holy and elevated way of saying thank you to G-d for all the good in life, and consuming its meat was a way of integrating into the very being of a person this sense of appreciation.

As the Torah says elsewhere in this parsha, the blood is the place of the Nefesh, a part of the soul that keeps our body living. Sacrificing an animal was a way of consciously realizing how tenuous life is, and how much of a gift everything we have is. In other words, nothing is coming to a person, and the sooner a person realizes this, the happier he or she will feel, and the wealthier her or she will be.

This is what Rashi means. Rashi is telling us that to simply long for meat to satiate an animalistic drive is to deny the whole purpose of being permitted to eat meat in the first place. Jews don't simply eat meat, they partake of an offering to G-d in appreciation for the gift of life, and all that it brings. How much more so is this the case when the meat is eaten sparingly, and at special holy occasions, like at the meal of wedding or after a Bris Milah.

This is why the rabbis have written: There is no joy but through meat and wine. Both were part of the sacrificial procedure in the Temple, and both played a major role in elevating the consciousness of the entire nation to realize that the gift of life is exactly that: a gift.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

In this week's parsha, among many other very important lessons for the generations, is the one about the false prophet:

If there arise among you a prophet, or dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass that he spoke of ... Do not listen to the

words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, for the G-d, your G-d is testing you, to know if you really love G-d your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul ... (Devarim 13:2)

False prophets are not a rare breed among the Jewish people. They are as common to our existence as multiple opinions. Jewish history is replete with corrupt leaders bearing false messages, some of which have been able to even perform miracles before the eyes of masses. However, though many have been fazed by such intelligent, eloquent, and charismatic leaders, mighty people who have come in the name of the people only "to serve" the people, the Torah is not.

It is frightening to think that false leaders can be so successful, and even possess the potential to do miracles. Miracles are usually taken by the masses to be a sign from heaven that G-d supports the miracle-worker. However, the Torah is saying, **WRONG-G-G-G**. Miracles count for very little when it comes to picking your leader, and especially your Moshiach. Then how is anyone supposed to know who to follow? How is one supposed to know if a person is a "Man-of-G-d," or a "Man-of-Guilt"?

The Torah answers this question, by adding the words:

... G-d, your G-d is testing you, to know if you really love G-d your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul ... (Devarim 13:2)

False leaders are a litmus test of sorts, to see whether we love G-d more, or ourselves more. Anyone who loves G-d loves truth, and will relentlessly strip away the layers of falsehood and confusion to get to the bottom line. G-d-lovers are people who aren't interested in mere opinion and champions of the masses; they are interested in "Vos Zohgt Got," which, in English, "What does G-d say about all of this?"

Well, what does G-d say about all of **THIS**?

In the history of mankind, there is only one people, and one segment of that people who have claimed, for good reason, that they **KNOW** what G-d says about everything, because G-d told it to their ancestors, and those very ancestors meticulously passed that information on down through the generations. It is a claim only mainstream Torah-Judaism has proudly maintained and upheld, even at the cost of great personal sacrifice and comfort.

However, anything other than this perspective admits to be only an opinion. No other way of life has ever reported that three million of its ancestors heard G-d speak at Mt. Sinai, or anything mountain for that matter, and that the message its main prophet brought down was dictated letter-by-letter by G-d Himself. Many have disputed that claim, but no one has duplicated it.

That's phenomenal. In a world of opinions more vast than the seas and oceans, one small body of people claim to be living by a way of life above the world of opinion, and its leaders, in humility and with all their life's energy have subjugated themselves to that way of life, again, at great personal cost, and often without reaping any physical rewards. The G-d-lover is the truth-seeker, and the

truth-seeker possesses the strength of character to put personal opinion aside to get to the "bottom-line," and pass the test of G-d.

Melave Malkah:

In this week's parsha, the mitzvah to "not boil a kid in its mother's milk" appears again (Devarim 14:21). This same mitzvah appears three times throughout the Torah, and the Oral Law tells us that each time a different part of the prohibition is being mentioned: do not cook meat and milk together; do not eat a cooked milk and meat mixture, and do not derive any benefit from such a mixture.

This is different from other forbidden foods, like improperly slaughtered meat, which can be sold to non-Jews for money. Furthermore, the Torah-prohibition of milk and meat applies only to kosher milk and kosher meat, which, on their own, are permissible to eat.

One of the reasons given for this prohibition (which, for the most part is treated like a statute, that is, as a mitzvah whose Divine reasoning is incomprehensible to us), is that borders exist in this world that cannot be defied. G-d, as the Creator, has established limits and boundaries that cannot be transgressed by man, no matter how logical such a transgression seems to be. Even the combination of permissible substances can lead to a "poisonness" and dangerous mixture, spiritually unhealthy for the person and the future of mankind. The right thing at the wrong time leads to damaging results.

I remember years ago when a fellow student experimented on his own during one of our science lab sessions. "Pssssssppp," he called to us, and we innocently joined him at the back of the class. We should have known from the twinkle in his eye (not to mention his past history of such antics), that something unusual and potentially dangerous was coming up.

There, in the sink, was an innocuously looking test-tube with a little harmless water in it. What he dropped into that tube I don't know to this very day (but I think it is the basis of many antacid stomach tablets). What followed makes me wince everytime I recall it, remembering what would have happened to us and to him had we been standing inches closer at the time of the explosion. The test-tube blew up, and across the room, and my friend ended up in the principle's office.

We learned that day about limits and boundaries, and about how the mixture of "good" things at the "wrong" time (and without the permission of a "higher authority") can lead to very detrimental results for all of mankind.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston

P.S. On behalf of my wife and family, I wish to thank all the people who wrote words of support

after reading last week's parsha sheet. When we shared our experience, we did so to breathe "life" into the situation, and to show sympathy and empathy for others who have suffered. However, the unexpected show of support has provided us with added strength, and a greater sense of unity with the rest of our people. Thank you.

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