

LAYING DOWN THE LAW FOREVER

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

These are the judgments which you will place before them. (Shemos 21:1)

Okay, the party's over. The initiation has passed. The sound-and-light show is completed, and now it's time to get down to business and learn a little, rather, a lot of halachah. Philosophy is great and the mystical exciting, but let's face it, one of the things that makes us unique as a nation is all the mitzvos that we MUST do.

And do. And do.

But hey, who's complaining? Well, in case you are, you might be interested to know that mitzvos won't always be applicable, because in Yemos HaMoshiach we won't have to do them anymore. Or will we? That too is a discussion in the Sha'arei Leshem . . .

The doing of mitzvos and all their rectifications affect every world, according to their relevancy.

[That is, Asiyah, Yetzirah, Beriyah, and Atzilus. These represent four levels of spiritual reality and correspond to the bottom nine sefiros of Malchus to Chochmah, the first being the lowest and the "place" of our quite physical reality. Even though all four levels are intimately connected we don't always sense their impact on us, or our impact on them, but it is an automatic reality decreed and designed by G-d. It is well known in Kabbalah, that the Ten Sefiros have been set up in a way that resembles a human being, or more accurately, we have been created to mirror the way the Sefiros were set up, creating the possibility for a spiritual link between our body parts and the corresponding levels in the Sefiros. Thus, just as specific mitzvos or sins are performed with specific parts of the anatomy they also affect the corresponding level in the Sefiros, bringing either rectification - or damage, G-d forbid, to that part of the Sefiros.]

It is the same for all prohibitions, as the Arizal wrote:

That which is pure in Beriyah is impure in Atzilus; there is a concept of k'lipos in all the worlds. What is considered to be the k'lipah in an upper world is considered to be pure in the lower world; that which is base and refuse in an upper world is pure and clean in a lower world. Likewise, that which is considered opaque and material in an upper world is considered to be transparent and spiritual in a lower world.

[In order for free-will to be possible, hester panim must also exist. How can evil exist if everything

about Creation screams, "G-d!" Therefore, a device was created by G-d that can, upon the fulfillment of certain conditions, block the reality of an Omniscient and Omnipotent G-d from the minds of men. That device is called the K'lipos, which literally means "peel" since it acts as a barrier between man and G-d. However, like evil, K'lipos are not an absolute reality but a relative one. For example, when a child steals it is less of an offense than when a mature adult steals, since the adult knows better and has a greater capacity to appreciate why stealing is wrong. Likewise, behavior that is acceptable on a regular day of the year can be totally unacceptable while standing in synagogue on Yom Kippur. So too, it is with the K'lipos: The higher the level of spiritual consciousness, the greater the expectations of and need for spiritual accuracy.]

Thus, everything ascends from world to world, including mitzvos and the tikun they have, according to the level of that world.

[The four worlds are like rungs on a ladder to be climbed to become closer to G-d. Anything done in the lower worlds ultimately must reach the upper worlds, and this is done by ascending from level to level, like climbing from one floor to the next in an apartment building. Do a mitzvah in the world of Asiyah, and it will cause a ripple effect that will reach the world or Yetzirah above it. This, in turn, will affect Beriyah, which will eventually affect Atzilus. At some point in the system a "top" is reached, and this causes a new flow of light to descend enhancing the spiritual reality of each world on its way down. It is like a person who walks into a bank and requests from the teller a large sum of money from his account. The teller, not possessing that much money in his till is forced to go to the manager and request the balance of the funds necessary. However, if the amount is sufficiently large, the manager may have to call the Central Bank, which has the funds, and request the missing amount.]

SHABBOS DAY:

Keep the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which I command you today to do them.
(Devarim 7:11)

This is the underlying principle behind many statements of Chazal regarding the keeping of mitzvos in the Time-to-Come, of which there seems to be a diversity of opinions. In Tractate Niddah (61b), it says that mitzvos will no longer apply in the Time-to-Come, as it does in Tractate Shabbos (151b) where it says that in the Days of Moshiach, the system of merit and demerit will no longer be operative.

[Even though we are told not to serve G-d only for the sake of being rewarded (Pirkei Avos 1:3), nevertheless, the point of mitzvos is to make reward possible for those who perform them, and punishment possible for those who transgress them.]

In Tractate Avodah Zarah (3a, 4b), it says, "Today, to do them" (Devarim 7:11), but not tomorrow to do them, for as Rashi explains, mitzvos will no longer be applicable in the Time-to-Come.

In Midrash Shochar Tov (Mizmor 146:5), it says: mattir assurim - He will permit that which is forbidden; some say that in the Time-to-Come, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will make pure all animals that were impure in This World, etc., and permit all that was forbidden, and some say that The Holy One, Blessed is He will not make them pure, etc. Tractate Kiddushin (72b) speaks along the same lines, with Rebi Yosi holding that, in the Time-to-Come, Mamzers and Nesinim will become pure, while Rebi Meir holds that they will remain impure.

[Children born from relationships that the Torah forbids and which carry the punishment of excision or death, and converts who converted under false pretenses.]

However, in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Megillah, 5), Rebi Yochanan says that the Book of the Prophets and the Writings, in the future, will no longer be relevant, whereas the five books of the Torah will be. For what reason? [It says,] "a great voice, never to be repeated" (Devarim 5:19).

[The Book of the Prophets deals mostly with criticism of the nation for straying from Torah, or what to expect at the End of Days, two matters that will become irrelevant in Yemos HaMoshiach. However, says Rebi Yochanan, the mitzvos of the Torah will still be applicable.]

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: Even Megillas Esther and the Halachos [of the Oral Law] will still be relevant, as it says, "for the ways of the world are His" (Chavakuk 3:6); look at the source inside.

The Rambam decided accordingly at the end of Chapter Two of Hilchos Megillah, also stating that mitzvos would never become irrelevant. This is also clear from Tractate Rosh Hashanah (30a), where they say: Should the Temple be re-built, speedily in our days, they will say that last year, we did not eat when the sun began to rise in the east, etc.

[The Talmud is talking about the usage of the new crop on the sixteenth day of Nissan, the day on which the omer was brought in Temple times. However, without the Temple, the bringing of the omer is not possible, so the Talmud wants to know if using the omer will become permissible at sunrise? Concerned that people will think this is true even after the Temple returns and the omer is once again made possible, the rabbis made it law that the new crop is only permissible from the seventeenth of Nissan onward during non-Temple times, proving that the Talmud assumes the mitzvah of bringing the omer will be applicable even after Moshiach arrives and the third and final Temple is built.]

From these sources, it seems that mitzvos will be applicable in the future, just as Rav Yochanan Yavetz points out in his appendix to the Talmud. We also find similar opinions in Beitzah (5b) and Sanhedrin (22b), and you should review these sources.

[And, just to make the point even stronger, the Leshem concludes with an amazing midrash:]

In Midrash Shochar Tov, it says:

In This World, a man goes to collect figs on Shabbos and the figs say nothing! In the future, a man

will go to collect figs on Shabbos and the figs will yell out, "Shabbos!" (Midrash Shochar Tov, Mizmor 73)

[Would it make a difference what the fig says if Shabbos is no longer applicable?]

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

I will put My spirit within you, and I will make it so that you will follow My decrees and keep My judgments and do them. (Yechezkel 36:27)

[However, the discussion is far from over, and the jury is still out on whether or not mitzvos apply.]

Yet, elsewhere it says that all sacrifices in the future will no longer apply, except for the Thanksgiving Offering (Mizmor 56, 100), and we find a similar statement in Vayikra Rabbah (9:7). In Midrash Mishlei, it says that all holidays will be cancelled in the future except for Purim which will always be kept; Rebi Elazar says: Even Yom HaKippurim will never be annulled.

[Oh well.]

Thus, we have many statements from Chazal that seem to contradict one another. In truth, this is amazing! For, it is explicit in many verses and parshios in Yechezkel, where it speaks about the ingathering of the exiles and the future rebuilding of Temple. There it clearly says that the Torah will be kept at that time:

I will sanctify My Great Name . . . And I will take you from the nations and gather you . . . And I will sprinkle pure waters upon you . . . And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit . . . I will put My spirit within you, and I will make it so that you will follow My decrees and keep My judgments to do them. You will dwell in the land . . . (Yechezkel 36:23-28)

They will no longer be divided . . . They will no longer be contaminated . . . My servant Dovid will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them; they will follow My judgments and keep My decrees and follow them. They will dwell on the land . . . (Yechezkel 37:22-25)

Specifically with respect to sacrifices, laws of the priests, and the keeping of the holidays, there are many such explicit verses. So, how is it possible to say that they will be annulled, G-d forbid, in Yemos HaMoshiach?

The resolution comes from knowing that, at the beginning of Yemos HaMoshiach, there will be a combination of nature and miracle working together all at one time, as we saw at the time of the Exodus of Egypt. Then, at the beginning of the redemption there were also great miracles, yet the Jewish people remained quite physical and material; the zuhama was not removed from them until the giving of the Torah. See the Zohar at the end of Parashas Yisro.

[In other words, even though great miracles occurred to destroy Egypt and break the will of Pharaoh, at the same time they also left the Jewish people unaffected, and life went on quite naturally for the

Jewish nation. Food had to be prepared, clothing had to be washed, etc. It wasn't until later, while standing at Mt. Sinai that the Jewish people were able to rise above physical limitations and remain that way, at least until the incident with the golden calf.]

So, even though G-d dealt with them on the level of great miracles, their lives were completely governed by nature.

It will be the same way in Yemos HaMoshiach: The redemption will be a function of both great miracles and nature. The entire world will remain quite physical including the Jewish people, and any annulment of zuhama and the refinement of physicality will only begin later and progress slowly. For, this will be a major transition.

[The transformation from our present physical state to that of man prior to the first sin when his skin was made of light - Kesones Ohr (Aleph-Vav- Raish), will not be a quick one. Therefore, the change from a natural world to a supernatural world will also take time as each day of Nature gives way to a more obvious and consistent miracle.]

MELAVE MALKAH:

Then your light will burst out like the dawn. (Yeshayahu 58:8)

[This is the verse that the prophet uses to describe the coming of the Final Redemption. We're accustomed to the Hollywood approach, quick and dramatic, and lots of shock amongst mankind. However, says the prophet, that's not the way it is going to happen, out of mercy for mankind and G-d's love of our chance to earn reward in the World-to-Come. Therefore, the Leshem concludes:]

One posuk says, "Who magnifies (magdil) the victories of His king" (Tehillim 18:51), and one posuk says, "He is a tower (migdol) of His king's salvations" (II Shmuel 22:51).

[In the Hebrew, except for the spelling of these two words, the pesukim are identical.]

Rebi Yudan says: It is because the redemption for this people will not come all at once but will progress over time. What does magnify (magdil) mean? It will become increasingly larger (misgadeles) and continue before Israel, etc. For this reason, the redemption is compared to dawn, as it says, "Then your light will burst out like the dawn" (Yeshayahu 58:8) (Midrash Shochar Tov, Mizmor 19). (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 487)

With this the Leshem has answered the question. As it turns out, though all the rabbis are talking about Yemos HaMoshiach and onward, those who say mitzvos will still be performed are talking about the beginning of Yemos HaMoshiach, when the world will still be quite natural. However, the rabbis who say that mitzvos will no longer apply in Yemos HaMoshiach are referring to a far more advanced state of Yemos HaMoshiach, when the world is already quite miraculous and Nature is a concept from the past.

It is not that we will ever stop doing the mitzvah, per se, at least on some level. For, the concept

behind every mitzvah is a part of Torah, and Torah is eternal. However, what makes a commandment a commandment, is the way that it goes against our innate nature, forcing us to CHOOSE to do it as matter of will. Doing that which is second nature is hardly a choice, at least one for which we can be rewarded since we obviously do it for our own good.

And that is how mitzvos will appear to us in Yemos HaMoshiach, and more so with each passing day, until our vision of reality and our role within it matches G-d's. Then we will be able to fully appreciate mitzvos in a way that we can barely relate to now in our physical bodies that also play host to the yetzer hara.

Have a great Shabbos,
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Text

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