

EFFECTS OF OUR ENEMIES

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion: Tape # 21, The "Ins and Outs" of Mezzuzah. Good Shabbos!

Alshich Predates Golda on the Effects Our Enemies Have Upon Us

In this week's Parsha we find the mitzvah of Mikrah Bikkurim, in which the Jew -- when he brings his first fruits to the Beis HaMikdash -- recites the portion thanking HaShem for reaching this stage in life where he can bring Bikkurim. The Halacha requires that the recital of thanksgiving begin, not just with the farmer's harvest or even with the purchase of his farm. He needs to go back to the earliest roots of Jewish history, and thank HaShem for all that has transpired until this point [26:5-10].

One of the verses describing the historical background reads "...and the Egyptians did Evil to us (vaYare-u osanu haMitzrim) and caused us suffering...". The Alshich notes a grammatical "problem" with this verse. To say that the Egyptians did us harm, it would be more correct to say vaYare-u **Lanu** haMitzrim (they did bad **unto us**). VaYare-u **Osanu** haMitzrim seems to imply they made US bad rather than they were bad to us.

The Alshich says, the verse is teaching us something important. Not only were the Egyptians bad **to** us, but they made **us** bad! As a result of living in the decadent society of Egypt we were affected. We became worse people. You cannot expect to live in an immoral or amoral society, without that having an effect on the Jewish soul. This is indeed hinted at in the choice of words "vaYare-u **Osanu**". Golda Meir once said she is willing to forgive the Arabs for the wars and for the thousands of lost lives caused by the wars; but she is not willing to forgive the Arabs for what they did to the Jewish people. Living in a constant state of war, having to look even at every child and every woman as a potential enemy, having to live with constant tension and threat... all take a toll on the Jewish soul. Over the last 45 years, we have perhaps become different -- harder, crueler, less compassionate than a Jew really is. Instead of Israel exporting grapefruits and oranges, etc. now they are known for their Uzzis and Kfirs and other modern weaponry. This is a modern recurrence of the concept of "vaYare-u **Osanu** haMitzrim". We became different people as a result of this experience; it affected

our collective Neshama; and that was and is a tragedy.

Missing Samech and Strange Order Provide Insight

In this week's Parsha we find the "Blessings and Curses" that were delivered to the Jewish people on the mountains of Gerizim and Eval [27:11-26]. There are two noteworthy phenomena in the appearance of the curses.

First, each pasuk of the curses is separated from one another by the letter Samech (a mid-line break in the Torah scroll). There is one exception to this pattern. Verses 19 and 20 have no Samech between them. Verse 19 is "Cursed be the one who corrupts the judgment of the stranger, the orphan, or the widow..." and verse 20 is "Cursed be the one who lays with his father's wife..."

A second feature to note in these curses is their sequence. We first have a series of societal laws (verses 15-19), then we have a series of Arayos (forbidden sexual relations) (verses 20-23), then we go back to societal laws (verses 24-26). It would seem more "logical" to either put all the Arayos at the beginning or all the Arayos at the end; but not to mix them up with the societal laws.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch says -- these two observations shed light on each other. The missing "Samech" is precisely between the first group of societal laws and the first of the sexual prohibitions to teach us that there is to be no separation between the societal laws (how we treat widows, orphans, elders, how we act in business, etc.) and how we behave in terms of our personal moral conduct.

There are those who argue that Arayos is a "victimless crime". It has nothing to do with society. "Who cares how one acts in the privacy of one's own bedroom" (as we constantly hear the argument being made)? What does that have to do with the social morality?

The Torah teaches us otherwise. There is no distinction and no separation between societal morality and sexual morality. "Cursed be the one who lies with his father's wife, and with an animal, and with another male", etc., etc., all affect society. [If there is any doubt about this, open up a newspaper!]

If on the other hand some think Arayos and matters between Man and G-d are important, but how one acts in business is less important ("as long as I go to Daf Yomi, and drink Cholov Yisroel, and keep Taharas HaMishpacha, and am careful about Chadash, etc. who cares how I act in business?"). The Torah is teaching us that this too is a mistake. [Here too, the New York Times will prove this is not an uncommon phenomenon.]

Therefore, the Torah does not dichotomize, lumping separately societal laws and then sexual laws -- it is all the same Torah, it is all the same Kedusha which Klal Yisroel is duty-bound to uphold.

We've Lost the Simple Peshat of a Critical Pasuk

The pasuk tells us "And all the nations of the Earth will see that theName of G-d is called upon you, and they will fear you" [28:10]. TheGemara in Berachos says this verse refers to the Tefillin shel Rosh.

The Vilna Gaon points out that this is not the "simple" interpretation ofthe verse. The simple interpretation of the verse is that when a Gentilesees how a Jew acts, and talks, and behaves in business, and in thesuper-market, and on the highway... then they will recognize that the Nameof G-d is called upon you. He should be able to discern right away, byobserving a Jew, "this is a holy person". As a result of this, thereshould be awe, there should be reverence, there should be the phenomenonof "V'Yaru mi'mecha".

Unfortunately we have lost the simple interpretation of the verse! Peoplewhen they see Jews, do not in general, see the Name of G-d proclaimed uponthem, and they do not have the reaction of awe and reverence. The reasonfor this is that here has been a breakdown in the emphasis on mitzvos BeinAdam La'Chaveiro. These mitzvos have to be treated as importantly as themitzvos Bein Adam La'Makom. And if not, something will be lacking in the"form" of what a Jew is supposed to be about and something will be lackingin the "form" of what the Jewish people are supposed to be about.

Glossary

Mikrah Bikkurim--Reading of the portion relating to the First Fruits

Neshama--(Jewish) soul

Bein Adam LaMakom--(Ritual) commands affecting man to G-d relationship

Bein Adam LaChavero--(Societal) commands affecting man to man relations

Tefillin shel Rosh--Tefillin worn on head

Kedusha--Holiness

Klal Yisroel--People of Israel

Arayos--forbidden sexual relationships

Daf Yomi--daily study of a Talmud folio

Cholov Yisroel--Milk whose production was supervised by a Jew

Taharas HaMishpacha--Laws of Family Purity (Niddah/Menstrual Observance)

Personalities & Sources:

R. Moses ben Chaim Alshich (1521-1593) -- prominent Torah commentary (Toras Moshe) and authority on Jewish law; Safed.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch -- (1808-1888) prominent Torah commentary and spiritual leader of German Jewish community; Frankfort am Main.

Vilna Gaon -- Rabbi Eliahu ben Shlomo of Vilna (1720-1797). Greatest Torah scholar of the past two centuries, acronym G"RA.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#) Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#)

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#21). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: # 21, The "Ins and Outs" of Mezzuzah. other halachic portions for Parshas Ki Savo from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

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