

In this week's *Parashah*, the Torah recounts the Giving of the Torah. R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes: *Bnei Yisrael* did not believe in Moshe because of the wonders that he performed, for one who believes because of wonders can have doubts, thinking that those wonders could have been acts of magic. Rather, Moshe performed wonders only to accomplish specific goals, not to prove the legitimacy of his prophecy. Why did *Bnei Yisrael* believe in Moshe? Because they saw and heard the Giving of the Torah with their own eyes and ears; they saw the fire and the thunder, and they heard *Hashem* calling to Moshe! [Until here from *Rambam*]

R' Yehuda Halevi z"l (Spain and *Eretz Yisrael*; approx. 1075-1141) would seem to disagree. He writes that when the king of the Khazars asked a Jewish scholar about his faith, the Jew replied: "We believe in the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Who took *Bnei Yisrael* out of Egypt with signs and wonders, Who sustained them in desert, Who gave them the Land of Canaan, Who sent Moshe with His Torah, and, after him, thousands of prophets to reinforce the Torah . . ."

R' Mordechai Neugroschl *shlita* writes that a careful reading of these two sages' words shows that they do not disagree. *Rambam* is explaining why the Generation of the Exodus believed in *Hashem* and in Moshe: it was not because of the Plagues or other wonders, which might have been magic or sleight of hand; rather, it was because of the Revelation at *Har Sinai*. Once that Revelation occurred, however, we know in retrospect that Moshe was not a magician, but rather a true prophet. Thus, our own belief can be based on the wonders Moshe performed. (*Ha'kuzari Im Beur Mi'darchei Ha'lev Ha'yehudi* p.17)

Shabbat Nachamu & Tu B'Av

R' Yaakov Halevi Moelin z"l (Rhineland; 1365-1427; known as "*Maharil*"; many Ashkenazic *Tefilah* and *Shul* customs are based on his practices) writes: "*Shabbat Nachamu*" is the *Shabbat* immediately after *Tisha B'Av*. On that day, we should rejoice and demonstrate our trust in the consolation that will come with the arrival of *Mashiach*. [*Maharil* then lists the *Piyutim* / liturgical poems that are recited on that day.]

He continues: On the 15th of *Av* ("*Tu B'Av*"), most communities do not recite *Tachanun* in the morning. There is a reason for this [--perhaps referring to what is written below.] Also, on that day, the Tribes were allowed to intermarry with each other, *i.e.*, a woman who inherited her father's property could now marry outside her own Tribe. In the generation that entered *Eretz Yisrael*, such a woman could not marry outside her own Tribe. Another reason for celebrating on *Tu B'Av* is that collecting wood for the *Mizbai'ach* was completed on that day each year. (*Maharil: Minhagim* 27-28)

R' Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli z"l ("*Ritva*"; Spain; 1260-1320) writes: The joy on *Tu B'Av* is because, on that day, *Bnei Yisrael* knew that all who were destined to die in the desert had already died. [*Midrash Eichah Rabbah* explains that, on every *Tisha B'Av* while *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert, 15,000 of *Bnei Yisrael* would pass away (so that over the 40 years, all adult males who had left Egypt would die, as *Hashem* had vowed). But, in the final year, no one died. *Bnei Yisrael* thought at first that they had miscalculated the date. But, when they saw the full moon on the 15th, they understood that no one else would die.] Therefore, there is a custom to make a *Seudah* on the *Shabbat* after *Tisha B'Av*. (Commentary to *Taanit* 30b)

R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv z"l (Spain; early 14th century) writes similarly: It is customary to treat this *Shabbat* after *Tisha B'Av* as a "*Yom Tov*," and it is a great *Mitzvah*, for it is a day of consolation. Even though it is not actually a *Yom Tov*, they made it a holy day in honor of *Shabbat* and of *Tu B'Av*, which sometimes falls on this *Shabbat*.

Regarding the fact that the Generation of the Desert ceased to die, R' Shuiv explains that *Hashem* did not change His mind. Rather, *Bnei Yisrael* were unsure whether those who were exactly 20 years old at the time of the decree were included in it. Now, they understood that they were not included.

(*Derashot R"Y Ibn Shuiv: Va'etchanan*)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.

“But you who cling to Hashem, your Elokim -- you are all alive today.” (4:4)

R' Yaakov Meir Spielman z"l (1813-1888; rabbi of Bucharest, Romania) writes: Philosophers have four views about the possibility of man “clinging” to G-d. Some say that it is impossible, for man is a lowly physical being and G-d is so lofty. Such people deny the possibility of prophecy, as well, and they are heretics. The second group acknowledges that man can cling to G-d after death, if his deeds warrant it. The third group believes in the possibility of prophecy, but believe that only one person in a generation can attain that level. The fourth group believes that not only prophets, but also philosophers can attain the ultimate connection to G-d, if they afflict their physical bodies for a long time.

R' Spielman continues: In our verse, Moshe Rabbeinu nullifies all of these opinions. (1) “But you who cling to Hashem, your Elokim” -- it is possible to cling to G-d; (2) “you are . . . alive” -- it is not necessary to wait until after one dies to cling to Him; (3) “all” -- not just the elite; and (4) “today” -- it does not have to take a long time.

(Nachalat Yaakov: Introduction)



“You shall love Hashem, your Elokim, with all ‘Levavcha’ / your heart . . .” (6:5)

Noting the Torah’s use of “Levavcha” (“לבבך”), instead of the simpler “Libcha” (“לבך”), the Mishnah (Berachot 9:4) interprets: “With both your inclinations -- the Yetzer Ha’tov / good inclination and Yetzer Ha’ra / evil inclination.”

R' Zvi Binyamin Auerbach z"l (1808-1872; rabbi of Halberstadt, Germany) explains: Rambam z"l notes in his work *Shemoneh Perakim* (ch.6) that there is a debate amongst philosophers whether it is preferable to have no temptation to sin in the first place or to be tempted, but to toil to overcome that temptation. The Torah’s viewpoint, Rambam concludes, is that it depends on the type of sin. If something is inherently wrong--for example, murder, stealing, or cheating--it is preferable to have no temptation. But, if something is wrong only because the Torah prohibits it--for example, eating pork or wearing *Sha’atnez*--the proper attitude is: “I would love to do it, but what can I do? G-d said no!”

This, writes R' Auerbach, is alluded to in our verse: Love Hashem with your good inclination--i.e., when right versus wrong is obvious, serve Hashem because it is “right.” And, love Hashem with your evil inclination--i.e., by subduing the Yetzer Ha’ra when the only reason for doing so is because of G-d’s command. (Cheil Ha’tzava)

“Va’etchanan / I implored Hashem at that time, saying . . .” (3:23)

R' Yoel Sirkes z"l (Poland; 1561-1640; known as the “Bach” after the initials of his *Halachic* work *Bayit Chadash*) writes: “Va’etchanan” is related to “Chinam” / “free,” and it means that Moshe asked Hashem to give him something (entering *Eretz Yisrael*) for nothing. This is a kindness that Hashem does for the righteous: He gives them this world “for nothing” rather than deducting from their reward in the World-to-Come. This is what Bo’az meant when he blessed Ruth (*Ruth* 2:12), “May Hashem reward your actions, and may your payment be full from Hashem” -- may Hashem reward you in This World, but may your payment remain complete for the World-to-Come. (Meishiv Nefesh Al Megillat Ruth)

“Let me now cross and see the good Land that is on the other side of the Jordan, this good mountain and the Lebanon.” (3:25)

The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 14a) asks rhetorically: Was Moshe Rabbeinu interested in entering *Eretz Yisrael* in order to eat its fruit? Rather, he wanted a chance to perform the *Mitzvot* associated with the produce of *Eretz Yisrael*. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav; author of *Enayim La’mishpat*) writes: In the “*Al Ha’michyah*” blessing, we pray to be able to eat the fruits of *Eretz Yisrael* (“*V’nochal Mi’piryah* / “And we will eat of its fruit . . .”). One reason may be that the fruits of *Eretz Yisrael* give the Land’s inhabitants the physical strength to serve Hashem; thus, eating them is itself a spiritual activity for which we must be thankful. Yet, asks R' Arieli, the quoted *Gemara* seems to imply that asking to eat *Eretz Yisrael*’s produce is not something praiseworthy!

Moreover, R' Arieli asks, how could the *Gemara* even entertain the idea that Moshe Rabbeinu’s motivation for wanting to enter the Land was to eat its fruit? It could only be because the fruit also has spiritual qualities! Why, then, does the *Gemara* state that Moshe Rabbeinu did not need the fruits of the Land (except as a tool for performing *Mitzvot*)?

R' Arieli explains: When *Bnei Yisrael* reached *Eretz Yisrael*, the *Mahn* stopped falling. Apparently, the fruits of the Holy Land can provide the same physical and spiritual nourishment that the *Mahn* provided. Regarding the *Mahn*, the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 76a) comments on the verse (*Tehilim* 78:25), “The food of angels a man ate,”--this is Yehoshua (Moshe’s successor). Why not Moshe himself? This teaches that Moshe did not need even the spiritual benefits that the *Mahn* provided. It follows that he also did not need the spiritual benefits that the fruit of *Eretz Yisrael* provide; therefore, the *Gemara* asks why he wanted to enter the Land. We, however, do need those benefits, so we do pray to eat of *Eretz Yisrael*’s fruit.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach Shirat Ha’geulah p.93-94)