

In this week's *Parashah*, we read, among other matters, about the death of Moshe Rabbeinu's brother, Aharon *Ha'kohen*. The Torah relates (20:29), "The entire assembly saw that Aharon had died, and they wept for Aharon for thirty days--all of the House of *Yisrael*." In contrast, about Moshe's death, the Torah says only (*Devarim* 34:8), "*Bnei Yisrael* cried for Moshe"; it does not say that all of *Bnei Yisrael* cried. *Rashi z"l* explains what was unique about Aharon: "All"--both men and women cried, because Aharon used to pursue peace and promote love between parties to a dispute and between man and wife. [Until here from *Rashi*] We read likewise in *Pirkei Avot* that Aharon was a "lover of peace and pursuer of peace, a lover of people, and he brought them closer to the Torah."

R' Eliyahu Klatzkin z"l (1852-1932; rabbi of Lublin, Poland) asks: Is it possible that the great Moshe Rabbeinu, the "master" of all prophets, did not love and pursue peace as Aharon did? He answers: We find mentioned many times in the *Talmud* that particular sages took upon themselves to specialize in, or practice extra care regarding, specific *Mitzvot*. Why? Because they examined their souls and personalities and saw that they were challenged in particular areas; therefore, they chose to focus their service of *Hashem* in ways that would counteract those negative tendencies. (Of course, they kept all of the laws of the *Shulchan Aruch*; the discussion here is merely about placing additional emphasis on certain areas.)

- Continued in box inside -

## Shabbat

"Moshe will rejoice in the gift of his portion . . ."

(From the *Shabbat* morning "*Shemoneh Esrei*")

Why is Moshe Rabbeinu singled out in the *Shabbat* morning prayers, and why should he rejoice?

R' Yissachar Ber Katz z"l (Poland and *Eretz Yisrael*; 16<sup>th</sup> century) explains: We read (*Shmot* 2:11), "It happened in those days that Moshe grew up and went out to his brethren and observed their burdens." *Midrash Rabbah* relates that, upon seeing *Bnei Yisrael's* suffering, Moshe went to Pharaoh and said, "If one's slave does not rest one day a week, he will die, and if you do not allow your slaves to rest one day a week, they will die."

Pharaoh replied: "Go do for them as you wish." Moshe went and established *Shabbat* as a day of rest. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

This, writes R' Katz, is why we say "Moshe will rejoice." When *Hashem* commanded *Bnei Yisrael* to observe *Shabbat*, Moshe was happy that the day he had chosen as the day of rest was the same day that *Hashem* chose.

(*Matnot Kehunah*)

R' Moshe Alsheich z"l (1508-1593; Tzefat, *Eretz Yisrael*) adds: We read (*Shmot* 31:13), "You shall speak to *Bnei Yisrael*, saying, 'However, you must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am *Hashem*, Who makes you holy.'" Why, asks R' Alsheich, does it say, "You shall speak"? Who but Moshe ever transmitted *Hashem's* commandments to *Bnei Yisrael*?

Perhaps, answers R' Alsheich, *Hashem* was saying: You, Moshe, who already established *Shabbat* on your own, go and tell them that it is My command as well.

(*Torat Moshe*)

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Harav Yechiel Shruga Feivish ben Yitzchak Halevi Tarshish a"h

**“How good are your tents, Yaakov, your dwelling places, Yisrael.” (24:5)**

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav; author of *Enayim La'mishpat*) writes: From the evil Bil'am's blessings, we know what was in his heart--that the *Shechinah* should not reside in the midst of the Jewish People.

“Yaakov” refers to the Jewish People when we are in a lowly state, while “Yisrael” refers to the Jewish People when we are in an elevated state. Based on this R' Arieli continues: Bil'am equated *Shuls* and *Batei Medrash* with “Your tents, Yaakov”--temporary dwellings--because these structures are the temporary homes of the *Shechinah* in exile. In contrast, “Your dwelling places, Yisrael” refers to the *Batei Mikdash*.

R' Arieli adds: Our Sages say that all of Bil'am's blessings did turn to curses when *Bnei Yisrael* sinned, except for this verse. This, suggests R' Arieli, indicates that *Shuls* and *Batei Medrash* are the places where we can always find *Hashem*, for He is with us in our troubles.

(*Midrash Ariel*)

**“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Take all the leaders of the people. Hang them before Hashem opposite the sun--and the flaring wrath of Hashem will withdraw from Yisrael.’ (25:4)**

Why were the leaders of those who sinned with Midianite women hanged “opposite the sun”? R' Raphael Breuer z"l (1881-1932; grandson of R' S.R. Hirsch and rabbi in Aschaffenburg, Germany) explains:

Sun worship, which elevates the largest of the heavenly bodies to the level of divinity, held spellbinding sway in antiquity. Even the Jewish People did not escape its allure. Thus, some kings of Yehuda maintained horses in their stables dedicated to the sun, and they rode these horses in the morning toward that heavenly body (see *Melachim II* 23:11).

Worshiping the senses is but another form of sun worship, R' Breuer continues. The sun was worshiped originally as a symbol of G-d's creative power. The senses, likewise, tempt and lure human beings into alienation from G-d with the argument that: Are not sensual drives and pleasures also created by G-d? In response to this attitude, the leaders of those who sinned were hanged “opposite the sun.”

R' Breuer adds: We read (*Shir Ha'shirim* 1:6), “Do not view me with contempt despite my darkness, for the sun has tanned me.” The Jewish People are inherently holy, R' Breuer explains. If we appear otherwise, it is an aberration--only because the temptations offered by the natural world, including by our own senses, have led us off-course.

(*Commentary on Shir Ha'shirim*)

**“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Do not fear him, for into your hand have I given him, his entire people, and his land.’ (21:34)**

*Rashi* z"l explains: Moshe feared to wage battle against Og, out of fear that the merit of Avraham would protect him, for it is written (*Bereishit* 14:13) “And the refuge came and told Avraham” that Lot had been taken prisoner. Our Sages say that this refuge was Og. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) writes: This is awe-inspiring! *Rashi* comments on the cited verse in *Bereishit* that Og's intention was for Avraham to be killed in battle so he (Og) could marry Sarah. Nevertheless, since Avraham did benefit from Og's report, Og's merit was sufficient for Moshe to fear him. (*Mei Marom V*)

**- Continued from front page -**

R' Klatzkin continues: We read (*Mishlei* 20:18), “Wage war with strategies.” *Midrashim* explain that King Shlomo is teaching us the above point: When you fight the *Yetzer Ha'ra*, develop strategies to address those areas of your behavior or character that need special attention.

R' Klatzkin concludes: The *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 70b) states, “If you see a *Kohen* who is brazen, do not challenge his lineage, for we read (*Hoshea* 4:4), ‘Your people are quarrelsome like a *Kohen*.’” *Kohanim* are argumentative by nature (see also *Bava Batra* 160b). And, even a *Tzaddik* like Aharon has a *Yetzer Ha'ra*, notes R' Klatzkin, citing the *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 52a). Therefore, he must devise strategies to address his particular weakness. Specifically, to counteract his quarrelsome nature, Aharon chose to focus on the trait of loving and pursuing peace. Moshe also loved peace but, not having the same nature as Aharon, he did not need to focus his service of *Hashem* on pursuing peace.

(*Even Pinah* ch.2)

R' Shimon Herman *shlita* (Yerushalayim) suggests another answer to R' Klatzkin's question: Pursuing peace sometimes requires deviating from the literal truth. For example, *Midrashim* say that when Aharon saw two people fighting, he would approach each one privately and tell him how sorry the other person was--even though the other person had never expressed such feelings to Aharon. Moshe Rabbeinu, as the transmitter of the Torah to all future generations, could not afford to risk his credibility. Thus, he could not permit himself to pursue peace, which might require him to deviate slightly from the literal truth, even though it would have been for the best of reasons.

(*Yesha Yemino: Hagahot Al Even Pinah* p.14)