

In this week's *Parashah*, Moshe Rabbeinu begins to take his farewell from *Bnei Yisrael* and to recount the major events of their 40 years in the desert. One of those events was the appointment of judges to serve alongside Moshe. Moshe relates (1:16), "I instructed your judges at that time, saying, 'Listen among your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother or regarding his property'."

R' Nosson Lewin z"l (1857-1926; rabbi of Rzeszów, Poland) writes: The Torah's civil laws and courts have a unique purpose. In most of the world, the goal of civil laws and the courts that enforce those laws is to resolve disputes so that commerce can proceed efficiently. The Torah's laws are meant to do all of that, but also to accomplish higher goals: to reinstate peace and friendship among litigants and to search for and address the root causes of the dispute. For this reason, judges are encouraged to engage in "*Bitzu'a*"--in effect, negotiating win-win results (see *Sanhedrin* 6b). This idea is based on the verse (*Zechariah* 8:16), "Truth, justice, and peace you shall judge at your gates."

R' Lewin continues: To the same end, the Torah prohibits many practices in interpersonal relationships that other legal systems do not prohibit. For example, not only does the Torah prohibit lying (even when it does not cause someone a financial loss), the Torah prohibits all forms of *Ona'at Devarim* / oppressive speech. Moreover, the Torah instructs people to keep their word, even in situations where there was not a legally enforceable promise. (*Petach Ha'bayit* to *She'eilot U'teshuvot Bet Yitzchak: Choshen Mishpat*)

Shabbat

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 118b) teaches: If only the Jewish People would observe two *Shabbatot* in accordance with law, they would be redeemed immediately, as it is written (*Yeshayah* 56:4, 7-8--in the *Haftarah* for Fast Day afternoons), "For so says *Hashem* to the barren ones who observe My Sabbaths, . . . 'I shall bring them to My holy mountain, and I shall gladden them in My house of prayer . . . ' The words of *Hashem Elokim*, Who gathers in the dispersed of *Yisrael* . . ." [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Eliyahu E. Dessler *shlita* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak; not to be confused with his cousin and namesake, the *Michtav M'Eliyahu*) writes: This *Gemara* is teaching something wondrous! We know from various sources that *Hashem* has determined the time of the Redemption based on multiple factors. Moreover, we are cautioned not to try to rush the Redemption by praying for it excessively (see *Ketubot* 111a and *Rashi z"l* there). Even so, if only we would observe two *Shabbatot*, that would override all other considerations, and the Redemption would occur.

R' Dessler notes: R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz z"l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) observes in his work *Ya'arot Devash* (Vol. II No. 2) that even the wicked Queen Vashti knew, and believed in, this key to the Redemption. This is why she forced a Jewish maidservant to serve her every *Shabbat* (see *Megillah* 12b).

R' Dessler continues: The *Yetzer Ha'ra* might say to a person, "Can you possibly cause all Jews to observe *Shabbat*? The *Gemara's* promise is wishful thinking!" - **Continued in box inside** -

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“Enough of your *Sov* / circling this mountain; turn yourselves *Tzafonah* / northward.” (2:3)

Midrash Rabbah teaches that *Bnei Yisrael* were not allowed to provoke Edom, as stated in the verses that follow, because its ancestor (Esav) honored his father (Yitzchak). R' Yoel z"l (17th century or earlier) writes: The word “*Sov*” / “circle” alludes to this because it is similar to “*Saba*” / “grandfather” or “old man”--alluding to Yitzchak. In addition, the *Gematria* of “*Sov*” (בס), with the addition of one to represent the word itself, equals the *Gematria* of “*Saba*” (אבס). Furthermore, the letter “*Samech*” of “*Sov*” is written in the Torah with a crown, thus highlighting it. Notably, the *Gematria* of the letter “*Samech*” is 60--the age Yitzchak was when Esav was born, causing Yitzchak to become a father.

R' Yoel continues: “Turn yourselves *Tzafonah*” means, “Wait until the arrival of *Mashiach*, who is ‘*Tzafun*’ / hidden.” Then, you will fulfill the verse (*Ovadia* 1:21), “Then redeemers will ascend Mount Zion to judge Esav’s mountain, and the kingdom will be *Hashem*’s.” The word “*Lachem*” / “yourselves” as the same letters as “*Melech*” / king [alluding to *Hashem*’s or *Mashiach*’s future reign over the lands of Esav].

(*Sefer Ha'remazim Le'Rabbeinu Yoel*)

From the same work

“Food *Tashbireini* / you shall supply me for money . . .” (2:28)

R' Yoel writes: The word “*Tashbireini*” can also be read “*Teshab'reini*” / “you will break me.” The Torah hints that not only would Sichon not sell food to *Bnei Yisrael*, if he could, he would break them.

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Firstly, writes R' Dessler, even if the *Yetzer Ha'ra*’s argument were correct regarding the National Redemption, it still is true that an individual who strengthens his *Shabbat* observance prepares himself for the Redemption. Is that not a worthwhile endeavor?

Secondly, when a person is prepared to be redeemed, even if he does not live to see the ultimate National Redemption, he lives on a higher plane--he lives in a spiritual world where, in some sense, the Redemption already has occurred. In this vein, the *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 30b) states: “If one mourns for Yerushalayim, he merits and sees its consolation.” Should the *Gemara* not have said, “He will merit and will see its consolation”? No, R' Dessler explains. If one mourns for Yerushalayim, that gives him a connection to it in the present, which is itself a form of consolation and redemption.

(*Sha'arei Ha'zmanim: Shabbat I p.105*)

“May *Hashem*, the *Elokim* of your forefathers, add to you a thousand times yourselves . . .” (1:11)

We read (*Tehilim* 105:8), “The Word He commanded to a thousand generations.” Our Sages interpret: “to the thousandth generation”--*i.e.*, that the Torah was meant to be given 1,000 generations after Creation. However, our Sages say, *Hashem* speeded up the process and did not create the first 974 of those 1,000 generations. Thus, the Torah was given after only 26 generations had passed since Creation. (The deeper meaning of this *Midrash* is beyond the scope of this space.)

Based on the above, R' Shalom Mordechai Schwadron z"l (1835-1911; a leading *Halachic* authority in Galicia, known by the acronym “*Maharsham*”) writes: Sometimes, the Jewish People merit to receive *Hashem*’s goodness because of their inherit qualities. At other times, the Jewish People merit to receive *Hashem*’s goodness only because they compare favorably to the other nations. At still other times, when the Jewish People do not compare favorably to other nations, they merit to receive *Hashem*’s goodness because He compares the Jewish People, who accepted the Torah, to the 1,000 generations before the Torah was given. This was Moshe’s blessing in our verse: May *Hashem* always do good for you because you compare favorably to those “pre-Torah” generations.

Maharsham continues: We read (*Eichah* 1:8), “Yerushalayim sinned greatly; therefore, she has become a wanderer. All who once respected her disparage her, for they have seen her disgrace. She herself sighs and turns back.” When Lot and his family were sent away from S’dom, they were told not to look back. *Rashi* z"l (to *Bereishit* 19:17) explains: “You sinned with them, but you are being saved in Avraham’s merit. Therefore, it is not fitting for you to witness their doom.” Applying that logic, the nations that witnessed the destruction of the *Bet Hamikdash* reasoned that they must be righteous; otherwise, they would not have been allowed to witness Yerushalayim’s disgrace. Therefore, “She herself sighs and turns back.” Yerushalayim could only look “back,” *i.e.*, look back in history to the generations before the Torah was given, in order to preserve her self-respect.

(*Techeilet Mordechai*)

“How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels?” (1:12)

R' Meir Simcha Hakohen (1843-1926; rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia) writes: Moshe Rabbeinu was not complaining. Rather, this is like a father who is blessed with many children, a large household staff, and the like, saying: “I bless you that you should have the same noise in your house and other ‘problems’ that I have.”

(*Meshech Chochmah*)