

Our *Parashah* opens with Moshe retelling how he pleaded to be allowed to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 14a) asks: Why did Moshe desire to enter *Eretz Yisrael*--did he long to eat its fruit or satiate himself from its goodness? The *Gemara* answers: So said Moshe, "*Bnei Yisrael* were commanded many *Mitzvot* that can only be performed in *Eretz Yisrael*. Let me enter the Land so that they will be performed through me." [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Azariah Figo *z"l* (1579-1647; Italy) asks: Why does the *Gemara* wonder why Moshe wanted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*? Is the answer not obvious--he wanted to enter it because it is the Holy Land, which the Patriarchs and other holy Jews throughout history have longed to dwell in! Nevertheless, explains R' Figo, the *Gemara* asks this question because of the wording of Moshe's plea (3:25), "Let me now cross and see the good Land . . ." Moshe did not ask to dwell in the Land, only to see it. That is what led the *Gemara* to ask why Moshe wanted to enter the Land.

What, then, is the *Gemara's* answer? R' Figo explains: Notably, Moshe did not say, "Let me enter the Land so that I can perform its special *Mitzvot*." Rather, he said, "Let me enter the Land so that the *Mitzvot* will be performed through me." Moshe meant: Let me enter the Land so that I can encourage *Bnei Yisrael* to perform the agricultural *Mitzvot* and other commandments unique to the Land properly. It turns out that Moshe was not thinking at all of himself--only how to ensure that *Bnei Yisrael* continue to serve *Hashem* in the best possible way. (*Binah La'ittim: Drush Heh Le'Shavuot*)

## Shabbat

**"And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, took you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, has commanded you to make the *Shabbat* day." (5:15)**

Based on this verse, we say in *Kiddush* that *Shabbat* is: "A remembrance of the Exodus." How is *Shabbat* connected with the Exodus?

In *Parashat Emor* (*Vayikra* ch.23) the Torah's discussion of the Festivals is introduced by a command to keep *Shabbat*. *Rashi z"l* comments: "He who desecrates the festivals is regarded as though he had desecrated *Shabbat*, while he who keeps the festivals is regarded as though he had kept *Shabbat*." [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Moshe Feinstein *z"l* (1895-1986; rabbi in Lyuban, Russia and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York; leading *Halachic* authority) explains: Observing *Shabbat* affirms our belief that *Hashem* created the world. Thus, one who willfully desecrates *Shabbat* is considered to have denied the truth of Creation. The Festivals, in contrast, affirm that *Hashem* actively runs the world and overturns the laws of nature for the benefit of the Jewish People. This is attested to by miracles such as taking us out of Egypt (*Pesach*), protecting us for 40 years in the desert within the Clouds of Glory (*Sukkot*), and giving us the Torah (*Shavuot*), among others.

R' Feinstein continues: By juxtaposing *Shabbat*, which affirms that *Hashem* created the world, with the Festivals, which affirm that *Hashem* runs the world, the Torah is teaching us that believing half-way--for example, believing that *Hashem* created the world, but not believing that He is actively involved in running it--is, effectively, not believing at all. The reason is that such faith is useless, for what reason is there to keep the Torah if one does not believe that *Hashem* is involved in the world and responds to one's *Mitzvot* and sins?! It follows that belief in the Exodus is a necessary complement to *Shabbat*. (*Darash Moshe, Vayikra* 23:2)

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**“These words Hashem spoke to your entire congregation on the mountain, from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick cloud--a great voice, *Ve'lo yasaf* / never to be repeated--and He inscribed them on two stone Tablets and gave them to me.” (5:19)**

*Rashi z"l* writes: “*Ve'lo yasaf*” can be interpreted as, “And He did not cease.” Human beings are unable to utter all their words in one breath, so they must pause, but that is not true of *Hashem*. He did not pause, and since He did not pause, He did not need to resume. Another explanation of “*Ve'lo yasaf*” is that He never again revealed Himself with such publicity. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Levi ben Gershon z"l (“*Ralbag*”; 1288–1344) writes: “*Ve'lo yasaf*” means that *Hashem* did not speak, pause, and speak again. Rather, *Hashem* spoke continuously without interruption. Indeed, the Heavenly Voice did not cease even after *Hashem* had spoken the *Aseret Ha'dibrot*. However, *Bnei Yisrael* distanced themselves so that they never heard the Voice again. [*Ralbag* is alluding to the verse (*Shmot* 20:15), “The people saw and trembled and stood from afar.”] The verse is teaching that the *Bnei Yisrael* could have heard the entire Torah directly from *Hashem* had they not been afraid.

Alternatively, writes *Ralbag*, the verse is teaching that *Hashem* never again appeared in this fashion, and certainly not to any other nation.

*Ralbag* concludes: The first explanation appears to be a better fit, though both interpretations are good. (*Perushei Ha'Torah*)



**“It shall be that when Hashem, your Elokim, brings you to the Land that Hashem swore to your Avot / forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov ...” (6:10)**

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the *Reisher Rav*; killed in the Holocaust) writes: I have long wondered how we can say in the *Mi She'beirach* / prayer for the ill, “He who blessed our Avot, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, David, and Shlomo ...,” when the *Gemara* states (*Berachot* 16b), “We do not use the term ‘Avot’ except with reference to three people,” i.e., Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov! How can we refer to Moshe, Aharon, David, and Shlomo as “Avot.”

He answers: It would appear that the conjunction (the letter “Vav” / “and”) before Yaakov’s name breaks the list into two parts: the three Avot--Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov--and a second group of righteous people--Moshe, Aharon, David, and Shlomo. There are editions of the *Siddur* that do not have that “Vav,” but they are in error, R' Lewin writes.

(*Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun*)

**“For which is a great nation that has an Elokim Kerovim / Who is close to it, as is Hashem, our Elokim, whenever we call to Him?” (4:7)**

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Berachot* 9:1) relates that heretics asked the sage Rabbi Simlai why this verse uses the plural adjective “*Kerovim*,” instead of the singular adjective “*Karov*”; does this not indicate that there is more than one god? R' Simlai answered them, “Does it say, ‘As is *Hashem*, our *Elokim*, whenever we call to Them’? No! It says, ‘Whenever we call to Him!’”

When the heretics had departed, R' Simlai’s students observed that their teacher had not answered the question: Why is a plural adjective used? R' Simlai answered them, “*Hashem* is close to us with many types of closeness.” [Until here from the *Talmud Yerushalmi*]

R' Avraham Chaim Schor z"l (Poland; 1550-1632) explains: There are many types of relationships--those based on one’s birth, e.g., a father and mother; those based on marriage; and those based on someone’s undertaking an obligation--e.g., the relationship of a king to his subjects or a shepherd to his flock. *Hashem* relates to us and is close to us in all of these ways. It is up to us to properly invoke each type of relationship through prayer, as the verse says, “whenever we call to Him.”

(*Torat Chaim to Sanhedrin* 38b)

**“U'vikashtem / From there you will seek Hashem, your Elokim, and you will find Him, if Tidreshenu / you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.” (4:29)**

R' David Chai Abuchatzzeira *shlita* (former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Nahariyah, Israel; now a *Chassidic rebbe* in that city) asks: Why does the second half of the verse use a different verb (“*Tidreshenu*,” from the root “דרש”) than the first half (“*U'vikashtem*,” from the root “בקש”)? What is the difference in meaning between them?

He explains: The verb used in the first half of the verse (בקש) refers to seeking a gift, something to which the person has no entitlement. In contrast, the verb used in the second half of the verse (דרש) refers to searching for something that belongs to a person or to which he is entitled. Thus, for example, the latter verb is used when referring to a lost object (*Devarim* 22:2): “It shall remain with you until your brother inquires (*Drosh*) after it . . .”

In this light, continues R' Abuchatzzeira, our verse may be understood as follows: If we seek *Hashem* and ask Him to shine His countenance on us despite the fact that we are not deserving, then He will draw us closer and hold us close to Him as if we are deserving--like one who holds on tightly to an object that he lost and then found.

(*Sha'arei Tefilah* p.2)