

דברים

Our *Parashah* opens: "These are the *Devarim* / words that Moshe spoke to all of *Yisrael*, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan and Chazerot and Di-Zahav." *Rashi* z"l writes: These are words of rebuke and Moshe is enumerating all the places where they provoked G-d to anger, but out of regard for their honor, he does not mention their specific sins; instead, he refers to the sins only through allusions contained in these place names. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Shimshon Chaim Nachmani z"l (Italy; 1706-1779) asks: What is the point of these subtle hints, when later in the book of *Devarim* Moshe spells out their sins in great detail? (For example, later in this chapter he speaks about the Spies, and in *Parashat Eikev* he speaks at length about the Golden Calf.)

R' Nachmani answers: *Midrash Rabbah* notes that we might have expected rebuke to be spoken by Bil'am and blessings by Moshe Rabbeinu, rather than the other way around. Had that happened, however, *Bnei Yisrael* would have said, "Who cares about rebuke delivered by our enemy?" while the gentile nations would have said, "What do you expect? Someone who loves them blessed them!" [Until here from the *Midrash*]

Because, in fact, the rebuke came from someone who loved *Bnei Yisrael*, writes R' Nachmani, it seemed to them like it consisted merely of veiled hints, though it really was a full rebuke. Alternatively, Moshe used hints here to say, "Even when I rebuke you fully later, you should feel my love, as if I were only using gentle hints." (*Zera Shimshon*)

Shabbat

Ashkenazim do not eat meat from *Rosh Chodesh Av* until after *Tisha B'Av*--the period known as the "Nine Days"--while *Sephardim* observe this restriction only during the week in which *Tisha B'Av* falls. May one eat meat left over from *Shabbat* for *Melaveh Malkah* during the Nine Days?

R' Eliyahu Elcharar *shlita* (Chief Rabbi of Modi'in-Macabim-Re'ut, Israel) summarizes a number of opinions on the subject. (This brief summary should not be relied upon for practical application.)

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l (1895-1986; rabbi in Lyuban, Russia and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York; leading *Halachic* authority) writes: Ideally, one should eat meat at *Melaveh Malkah* every week. Nevertheless, for some reason, even G-d-fearing people who are meticulous about *Mitzvah*-observance generally do not eat meat at that meal, and this has been the case for many generations. As such, eating meat at *Melaveh Malkah* is now in the category of showing "extra honor" to *Shabbat* and does not rise to the level of a requirement that supersedes the universal custom of not eating meat during the Nine Days. This is true even if one is careful to eat meat at *Melaveh Malkah* every other week, R' Feinstein writes. (See *Igrot Moshe: O.C.*, IV 21)

In contrast, R' Moshe Sternbuch *shlita* (formerly rabbi in Johannesburg, South Africa; now *Rosh Av Bet Din* of the *Eidah Ha'charedit* of Yerushalayim) writes in the name of R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (Belarus; 1749-1821) that one may eat meat at *Melaveh Malkah* because that meal is a *Se'udat Mitzvah* / a *Mitzvah* meal just like the meal at a *Brit Milah*, where everyone agrees that eating meat is permitted during the Nine Days. (See *Teshuvot Ve'hanhagot* II 166)

Others agree that meat may be eaten at *Melaveh Malkah*, but for a different reason. Specifically, *Kabbalists* teach that some of the holiness of *Shabbat* lingers for four hours after *Shabbat* has ended.

(*Sefer Melaveh Malkah: Divrei Eliyahu* p.55)

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"Her adversaries have become the head . . . for Hashem has aggrieved her for her abundant transgressions." (Eichah 1:5)

Midrash Rabbah states: I might think it was for no reason; therefore the verse says, "For Hashem has aggrieved her for her abundant transgressions." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Meir Popperos Katz z"l (1624-1662; Poland and Eretz Yisrael; arranger of the *Arizal's* teachings and a prolific author in his own right) asks: What does the *Midrash* mean? Would we have thought that Hashem acts without justification?!

He answers: The verse is referring to the *Gemara* (*Gittin* 56b), which teaches, "Whomever persecutes *Yisrael* rises to the top" For example, Nevuchadnezar, who destroyed the Temple, ruled over most of the known world. The *Midrash* says: I might think that he rises to the top for no reason--i.e., that he requires no merit. No! Nevuchadnezar had merit (see *Sanhedrin* 96a). In contrast, *Yisrael* had "abundant transgressions." Likewise, whenever someone rises to a position in which he can persecute the Jewish People, the latter's own transgressions are partly to blame. (*Tal Orot*)

"Hashem rejected His altar, He abolished His Sanctuary; He handed over to the enemy the walls of her citadels. They raised a clamor in the House of Hashem as though it were a festival." (Eichah 2:7)

R' Shlomo Algazi z"l (1610-1683; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Turkey and Yerushalayim) writes: The *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 5a) teaches that Hashem took an oath, "I will not enter Yerushalayim in Heaven until I re-enter Yerushalayim on earth." This, writes R' Algazi, is alluded to in the first part of our verse, "Hashem rejected His altar" on earth, "He abolished His Sanctuary" in Heaven.

One might ask, however: Who is to stop Hashem from "re-entering" Yerushalayim whenever He wants? Our verse answers: "He handed over to the enemy the walls of her citadels." Until it is time for the redemption, "the enemy" will remain in control of the Temple Mount, even keeping Hashem out, so-to-speak.

The verse continues, "They raised a clamor." To whom does this refer? Presumably it does not refer to "the enemy" mentioned in the previous phrase, for then the verse should have said, "'He' or 'It' raised a clamor." R' Algazi answers:

The *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 5b) relates that at the time of the *Churban* / destruction of the *Bet Hamikdash*, even the angels cried. Which angels cried, and why? R' Algazi explains that one of the services in the *Bet Hamikdash* on the *Sukkot* festival was "*Nisuch Ha'mayim*" / the water libation, in the merit of which Hashem provided the world with water. About the hydrologic cycle (evaporation, rain, etc.), the verse says (*Tehilim* 42:8), "The depths call to the depths," meaning that the guardian angel of the depths calls to the depths to give up their water to evaporation so that rains can fall. Rain, in turn, is watched over by the guardian angel of the rain. These two angels, writes R' Algazi, are the ones who cried when the *Nisuch Ha'mayim* service was disrupted by the *Churban*, and it is they who "raise a clamor" as though it is the *Sukkot* "festival" and they are awaiting *Nisuch Ha'mayim*. These angels who served in the *Bet Hamikdash* Above are waiting for Hashem to re-enter the *Bet Hamikdash* below. (*Ahavat Olam: Drush* 23)

"Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads." (1:13)

Why did the judges need to be "well known to [the] tribes"? R' Menachem Ben-Zion Sacks z"l (1896-1987; rabbi, *Rosh Yeshiva*, and pioneering educator in Chicago) answers based on a personal experience.

In his early years in America, R' Sacks found himself in a southern town that had 300 Jewish families and one Orthodox *Shul*. He noticed that the membership had a very disdainful attitude towards rabbis, and he inquired as to the reason. The *Shul* president explained that the community's long-time rabbi had passed away not so long before, and the community had advertised in New York's Jewish newspapers for a successor. One day, a handsome, rabbinic-looking young man arrived in town bearing *Semichah* / ordination certificates and letters of recommendation from some of the most distinguished rabbis in America. On the spot, the community members agreed unanimously to hire him. The new rabbi told them that he had a family in New York, but that he would wait until he was settled to move them south. In any event, he said, he did not want to disrupt his children's education in the middle of the school year.

All went well for four months. However, when *Purim* arrived, the new rabbi failed to show up for *Megillah* reading. Concerned that something had happened to him, they called his hotel room. No answer! They called the manager of the hotel where the rabbi was living, only to be told that the rabbi had packed up and left town, ostensibly to visit his family. The *Shul* members screamed bloody murder, as most of them had lent the "rabbi" substantial sums of money to help him buy a house and for other expenses. Pretty soon, they were referring to him as the "rabbi-thief," which then developed into a general disdain for all "rabbis-thieves."

R' Sacks requested permission to address the community. The president agreed reluctantly, reminding Rabbi Sacks that he was himself one of the hated "rabbis-thieves." R' Sacks ascended the *Bima* and told the congregants that they were wrong to see their recent employee as a rabbi who was a thief. Rather, he was a thief who posed as a rabbi. Moreover, they were themselves at fault for hiring a "rabbi" who responded to a newspaper advertisement (with apparently forged credentials). The correct way to hire a rabbi is to approach reputable *Yeshivot* and rabbinic figures and seek recommendations.

This, concludes R' Sacks, is the meaning of our verse. When selecting rabbinic judges, it is not enough that they appear to be "wise" and "understanding." They also must be "well known to your tribes." Only then can one be sure that they are not, in the words of *Yirmiyah* (4:22), "Wise at doing evil, but they do not know how to do good." (*Menachem Tziyon*)