

תשע"ז

כי תצא

Our *Parashah* begins: "When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your Elokim, will deliver them into your hand . . ." The preceding verse, the final verse in last week's *Parashah*, concludes: "When you do what is upright in the eyes of Hashem." How are these verses related?

We read (*Tehilim* 101:5), "He who slanders his neighbor in secret – him I will cut down." This, says the *Gemara* (*Sotah* 5a), refers to one who speaks *Lashon Ha'ra*. R' Mordechai Banet z"l (1753–1829; Chief Rabbi of Moravia) observes: The next verse (101:6) begins, "My eyes are upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me." This person stands in contrast to the person in the previous verse who speaks *Lashon Ha'ra*. The "faithful" person is under Hashem's "watchful eyes."

Midrash Rabbah teaches: The generation of King Shaul consisted of righteous people, yet they were defeated in battle because they habitually spoke *Lashon Ha'ra* (as is evident from the book of *Shmuel* I). The subjects of King Achav were idolators, yet they were victorious in battle, because they did not speak *Lashon Ha'ra*. This, writes R' Banet, explains the transition from last week's *Parashah* to this week's. *Tehilim* teaches that G-d's "eyes" are upon the faithful, i.e., those who do not speak *Lashon Ha'ra*. Says the Torah: When you do what is upright in the eyes of Hashem, i.e., not speak *Lashon Ha'ra*, then, when you go out to war against your enemies, Hashem will deliver them into your hand. (*Machshevet Mordechai*)

Teshuvah

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (1210-1263; Spain) identifies twenty components of complete *Teshuvah* / repentance. He writes: The thirteenth is that even "light" sins should be weighty in a person's eyes. There are four reasons for this, R' Yonah explains.

First, one should not focus on the smallness of the sin, but rather on the greatness of the One Who commanded us regarding that sin. [R' Aharon David Goldberg *shlita* (*Rosh Hayeshiva* of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland, Ohio) explains: We are taught that every *Mitzvah* and every sin includes two elements. One is the specific purpose for which that particular commandment was given, and the other is the fact that it is the King's command. In the former respect, some *Mitzvot* or sins may be more significant than others, but in the latter respect they are all equal, for they are all commands of the same King. (*Meshivat Nafesh* p.89)]

Second, continues R' Yonah, the *Yetzer Ha'ra* can more easily persuade a person to commit a small sin, and, because it is small in the person's eyes, he may commit it repeatedly. Together, these repeated small sins are equivalent to a big sin. That collection of sins may be compared, writes R' Yonah, to a cable made of many thin threads. While the individual threads have little strength, they are very strong when they are cabled together.

Third, when one repeats a sin, he begins to feel that it is no longer a sin, but rather a permitted activity. When this happens, he is considered an apostate--someone who has abandoned Judaism--vis-à-vis that sin.

Fourth, if the *Yetzer Ha'ra* has defeated a person today in a small way, it will defeat him tomorrow in a bigger way. Thus the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 105b) teaches: One who breaks something in anger is viewed as someone who committed idolatry, for such is the way of the *Yetzer Ha'ra*: Today it says, "Do this [smaller sin]," and tomorrow it says, "Go worship idols." [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R' Yonah adds: This is the meaning of Hashem's warning to Kayin (*Bereishit* 4:7), "Surely, if you improve yourself, you will be forgiven. But if you do not improve yourself, sin crouches at the door." The *Yetzer Ha'ra* is always crouching at the door, waiting for an opening to attack. If one does not improve himself after committing a small sin--in Kayin's case, jealousy that Hevel's sacrifice was accepted--the *Yetzer Ha'ra* will lead him to commit ever greater sins.

(*Sha'arei Teshuvah* I 38)

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“When you make a vow to Hashem, your Elokim, you shall not be late in paying it...” (23:22)

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (see back page) writes: This verse teaches that there is a punishment for delaying the fulfillment of one’s vows and pledges to *Tzedakah*, even if he does fulfill them eventually. If one pledge charity for the poor, he must give it immediately!

R’ Yonah continues: If a person merely forgets to fulfill a vow, he will be punished for that too. The reason is that forgetting is natural, so people should be taking extra precautions to ensure that they remember their vows and fulfill them. (Sha’arei Teshuvah III 74)

“Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way when you were leaving Egypt.” (25:17)

The final three verses of our *Parashah*, beginning with this verse, are read as “*Parashat Zachor*” on the *Shabbat* before *Purim*. R’ Eliyahu Baruch Finkel z”l (1947-2008; a *Rosh Yeshiva* in the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) related (in what turned out to be his last public address before his passing): It is said about R’ Yisrael Meir Kagan z”l (the *Chafetz Chaim*; died 1933) that his anger at Amalek on the *Shabbat* when we are required to remember what Amalek did to us was palpable, just as the feeling that he was taking part in the Exodus was visible to all on *Pesach*. So real were these events to the *Chafetz Chaim*, R’ Finkel related, that he was known to laugh out loud when he recalled the verse (*Shmot* 10:2), “So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I (*Hashem*) made a mockery of Egypt.”

(Quoted in *Divrei Shalom V’emet: Purim* p.3)

“Ki mei Noach / For like the waters of Noach shall this be to Me--as I have sworn never again to pass the waters of Noach over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wrathful with you or rebuke you.” (Yeshayah 54:9--from the Haftarah)

R’ David Kimchi z”l (“*Radak*”; 1160–1235; Narbonne, France) cites two traditions about how to parse the first words of this verse. The translation above reads “*Ki mei*” as two words--“like the waters [of Noach].” However, there is a second tradition that reads them as one word: “*Kimei*” / “Like the days [of Noach].”

R’ Avraham Rivlin *shlita* (former *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh, Israel) writes: Perhaps these two traditions represent the two sides in the famous disagreement (*Sanhedrin* 108a) about whether Noach was objectively a *Tzaddik* or only in comparison to his contemporaries. According to the latter opinion, which holds that Noach himself was lacking, the flood waters can be attributed to Noach: “*Ki mei Noach / For like the waters of Noach.*” According to the opinion that expresses a higher opinion of Noach, the Flood was merely in the “days” of Noach, but it cannot be his Flood.

(*M’invei Ha’kerem: Bereishit* p.76)

“If a man will have a Ben sorer u’moreh / wayward and rebellious son...” (21:18)

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 71a) teaches that the requirements that must be satisfied in order for a boy to be adjudged a *Ben sorer u’moreh* are so many and so subtle that such a thing never has happened and never will. Why then is it mentioned? So that we will study it and receive reward! [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Avraham Chaim Schor z”l (Poland; 1550-1632) asks: Since the ultimate purpose of the Torah is to teach us how to live, of what use is it to study something that will never be practiced? He answers: In reality, the question is not as strong as it appears to be, for there is no letter, or even the tip of a letter, in the Torah that does not teach us secrets about *Hashem*’s essence. As such, whenever someone studies Torah, even if it is something that he cannot put into practice, he is occupying himself with *Hashem*’s Holiness and connecting his intellect to Him.

(*Torat Chaim*)

“A hanging person is a curse of Elokim.” (21:23)

R’ Moshe ben Maimon z”l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt) writes (*Hil. Teshuvah* 9:2): The reason all of *Yisrael*, their prophets and their wise men, look forward to the days of *Mashiach* is only so that they will get relief from the nations that oppress them and do not allow them to study Torah and perform *Mitzvot* properly--then they will find calm and will increase their wisdom, so that they will merit life in *Olam Ha’ba*/ the World-to-Come. [Until here from *Rambam*]

R’ Avigdor Miller z”l (1908-2001; rabbi, *Mashgiach Ruchani*, and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Brooklyn, N.Y.) asks: Why didn’t *Rambam* write that prophets and wise men hope for the days of *Mashiach* because *Hashem*’s *Shechinah*/ the revelation of His Divine Presence, which is obscured in our world, will be fully revealed and the entire world will recognize Him when *Mashiach* comes? It must be, R’ Miller answers, that that is exactly what *Rambam* means, for there is no greater sanctification of *Hashem*’s Name then when mankind is able to serve Him fully with no distractions or disruptions.

R’ Miller adds: Our verse teaches that the fact that a person could commit a capital crime and require execution by a *Bet Din* is a desecration of G-d’s Name (even though the Torah itself ordains this result). Conversely, we read (*Tehilim* 149:1), “His praise is in the congregation of the devout.” When devout people congregate to serve Him, that brings honor to *Hashem*. (Lev Avigdor p.4-5)

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem... because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt...” (23:4-5)

R’ Yehonatan Eybeschutz z”l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) writes: Someone who possesses the trait of *Gemilut Chessed* / practicing acts of kindness is worthy of being drawn close, while one who does not should be distanced. The failure to practice *Chessed* is particularly glaring in the case of Ammon and Moav, for they were descendants of Lot, who learned from Avraham to practice *Chessed* and who displayed that trait toward the angels who visited Sdom. (Tiferet Yehonatan)