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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
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WHERE'S MY REWARD?

The Midrash Tehillim says that the Giants Og and Sichon were more formidable adversaries than Pharaoh and his army. Moshe had battled Sichon and won. Now he faced a war against the mighty Og.

Yet before this war, Moshe seems to be worried. Hashem has to reassure him – Al Tirah Otoh (3:2) – do not fear him, for I (Hashem) will place him and his people in your hand.

What was bothering Moshe? Surely a man of the spiritual status of Moshe should not fear Og?

Og was not a normal adversary. He was a Giant with a formidable history.

Og was called "Hapalit", the escapee. He escaped from the Mabul (Targum Yonatan), from the war of the four kings against the five kings (Rashi), and from the war waged by the Ammoni nation against his people (Rashbam). What was the secret of his longevity?

Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that Moshe was concerned because Og had a special merit for doing a kindness to Avraham hundreds of years earlier. At that time, Avraham's nephew Lot was taken captive. Og ran to Avraham to relate to him the news. Og had intended that Avraham should go to battle against the Four mightiest Kings, where he would be killed,

opening the way for Og to take Sarah (Avraham's wife) for himself. Nevertheless this relating of news caused Avraham to save Lot's life and bring about a Kidush Hashem in the world.

Hashem rewarded Og with an additional 500 years because of this merit!

Now Moshe faced this formidable foe, and was worried, perhaps this merits reward was still standing in Og's favour.

Let us focus a moment on what is happening here. Og the despicable giant, has a bad intention, yet nevertheless is rewarded for his good actions? Has he not been rewarded enough? The Pesikta DeRabi Elazar brings down that he was rewarded by becoming the King of Bashan. How much reward does a man like this really deserve for a seemingly small and unintentional good deed? And surely Moshe the greatest prophet that ever lived, the True Servant of Hashem should not fear such a giant?

Before we answer let us turn for a moment to our current exile.

Chazal tell us that we find ourselves in the Galut Edom – the exile of Eisav. This exile has lasted for two thousand years. It is the longest exile of our people. But when will this exile end? The prophet Zechariya tells us exactly when! (2:12) Achar Kavod Shelachani. Rashi explains that the time will come only once the merit of Eisav has been removed. Which merit are we talking about? Eisav was well known to honour his father Yitzchak. He would be exemplary when it came to Kibud av Va Em. The Zohar (1:146b) states that it is that Kavod showed to his father, that gave him the merit to rule over us for thousands of years! Hence Zecharia states only after the Kavod has ended; only after that merit has ended will Hashem defeat the wicked. ►

8th AV 5779

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DVAR TORAH

Where's my reward?

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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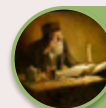


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We see that the ramifications of a good deed are long lasting.

Have you ever heard of Nebuchadnezzar? He was the mightiest Leader Babylon ever saw. The Gemara relates that in his early days Nebuchadnezzar served as a secretary and scribe for a previous Babylonian monarch. Once, when Nebuchadnezzar was absent from work, other royal secretaries of the king drafted a letter to be sent to the Jewish king of Judah, Chizkiah. The letter began: "Greetings to King Chizkiah! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to the great G-d!"

When Nebuchadnezzar returned to work and discovered how the letter was written, he was furious. "You call Him 'the Great G-d,' Nebuchadnezzar protested, "and you mention Him last?!"

In an isolated moment of moral conduct, Nebuchadnezzar insisted that the letter be redone, and written as follows: "Greetings to the

Great G-d! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to king Chizkiah!"

The problem was that the messenger had already been dispatched to Jerusalem with the first version of the letter in his hand. So Nebuchadnezzar ran out to call the messenger back and redo the letter. How far did he need to run? Merely three steps before he caught the messenger to give him a second version of the letter.

Our sages see this episode as the ultimate cause for Nebuchadnezzar's royal success. In the merit of his taking three steps to honour G-d, Nebuchadnezzar received the crown of royalty for three generations!

This world is a physical world. Our sages note that Behay Alma – in this world there is no reward – no payment for good deeds done. The real payment is infinite and in the next world. Yet Hashem chooses to "reward" the wicked in this world in order to finish from them in the next.

Moshe understood that there is an eternal payment for acts of good; he was worried that Og's merit still warranted him being alive. Therefore Hashem had to tell him, do not worry, his time has come, he has enjoyed enough reward for his actions.

The reward granted to these wicked people for their good actions in this world seems massive. Og the giant gets long life, lives as a mighty ruler; Nebuchadnezzar receives the monarchy for generations. Wow all that for such a small action. Yes! Even small actions count. Yet we must note that the real reward for our deeds is in the next world. We must realise that Hashem guards each and every mitzvah we do, every Amen we say, every Shabbat we keep, every act of kindness, it is all there in front of Hashem.

From the reward these wicked people received for their seemingly small acts of good, we can fathom the reward that we will receive for every Mitzvah – Ah how lucky we are!

■ Shabbat Shalom

RABBI ALAN GARBER - SHENLEY UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITY



THE FAST OF AV – A TIME OF MEETING

The Fast of Av - the day of Jewish national mourning starts at sunset this Saturday evening just before Shabbat ends (London 8.33pm). We commemorate some of the darkest events in our history and express our feelings of genuine loss at the destruction of our Temple in Jerusalem.

It is somewhat strange that Tisha B'Av is called a moed. This is the same Hebrew term used to describe the Jewish festive days of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot. Moed literally means a meeting. In what way can we understand that the sad day of Tisha B'Av is a time of meeting?

The following famous parable gives us an insight;

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with G-d. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only. This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when

I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to G-d,

"You promised me G-d, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

G-d replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

The name of the month "Av" means "father". At the time of our deepest distress and pain our Father is closest to us. Many of us may have experienced or know of people that at a time of personal loss, there is often a spiritual re-awakening. It is a time of contemplation and a time when we come to realise that only our Father can help us.

The Fast of Av is indeed a day of meeting, of coming closer to Hashem, through rebuilding our connection to our Father. This Shabbat - "Chazon" – the Shabbat of Vision, we visualise the positive days that lay ahead of us, when our connection to Hashem is fully restored with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. May these days come very speedily!

Events that occurred on 9th of Av:

· The Jewish people accepted the slanderous report of the 10 Spies, and the decree was issued forbidding them from entering the Land of Israel. (1312 BCE)

· The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar. 100,000 Jews were slaughtered and millions more exiled. (586 BCE)

· The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans, led by Titus. Some two million Jews died, and another one million were exiled. (70 CE)

· The Bar Kochba revolt was crushed by Roman Emperor Hadrian. The city of Betar -- the Jews' last stand against the Romans -- was captured and liquidated. Over 100,000 Jews were slaughtered. (135 CE)

· The Temple area and its surroundings were ploughed over by the Roman general Turnus Rufus. Jerusalem was rebuilt as a pagan city -- renamed Aelia Capitolina -- and access was forbidden to Jews.

· The Spanish Inquisition culminated with the expulsion of Jews from Spain on 9th of Av in 1492.

· World War One broke out on the eve of 9th of Av in 1914 when Germany declared war on Russia. German resentment from the war set the stage for the Holocaust.

· On the eve of 9th of Av 1942, the mass deportation began of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, on route to Treblinka.

■ Shabbat shalom

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI TZVI HIRSH RABINOWITZ

Among the great Torah personalities of Russia, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Rabinowitz (the Rav of Kovno) occupies a particularly honorable position. He was a pleasant man filled with great character traits, who shone not only in Halachah, but also in his way of living. He loved truth and peace, and he never flattered anyone. More than that, he knew how to give his truth an aspect of caring and love.

Other than the fact that he was brilliant in Torah and an expert in all its fields, he was also someone very skillful and sociable, a man who perfectly understood the ways of the world. The poor were always warmly welcomed at his home, and the wealthy supported and helped him in his heavy tasks for the Jewish community. He also had a noble and handsome countenance that awakened the respect and admiration of all those who came into contact with him.

Rabbi Hirshel, as people would call him, was born in 5608 (1848) in Nischwitz, a city where his father, Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan – the light of the exile – served as Rav.

He exhibited exceptional talents from early childhood, having a lively mind and great memory, and he was known as a child prodigy. His father apparently could not find a suitable tutor for him, so he himself taught the boy Torah. He enabled him to acquire a vast knowledge of the Talmud and the Poskim, and from an early age he was known as a Torah great.

At the age of 18 he married the daughter of a very wealthy man, Rabbi Meir Saltz of Slotznik, a small town near Vilna. For eight years he lived with his father-in-law, where he studied Torah day and night.

While still a young man, he was offered a position as Rav. However he was not inclined to use the Torah for personal gain, since by nature he had a delicate soul and a noble spirit, and he was very modest and fled from honor.

People say that as Rav of Kovno, he was once walking in the street and encountered a drawer of water who was carrying filled buckets on his shoulders. Rabbi Hirsh said to the person accompanying him, "Believe you me, I envy this man and his occupation, for he's free and independent."

In the meantime, his farther became the Rav of Kovno, and Rabbi Hirshel went to settle down and open up a factory there. Yet even when he was a hard working businessman, a period that lasted nine years, he devoted the majority of his time to Torah study. His office was constantly filled with rabbis and scholars who came to speak with him. In addition, he expended a great deal of money to support Torah scholars that were without means, and so it was not surprising that he was unsuccessful in his endeavors and that nothing remained of his business. The story goes that when Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan learned that his son had lost all his possessions, he was quite content and said, "Now I'm sure that my son will become a Rav."

His first position as Rav was in the city of Mittov, in the province of Kurland (in present day Latvia). During the

entire time that he stayed there, he maintained a steady correspondence with his father on subjects of Torah. There he was able to study in peace and tranquility, as he prepared himself to become one of the greatest Poskim of his generation.

In 5548 (1888), the leaders of the New York City Jewish community addressed themselves to Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh with an offer to be the Chief Rabbi of the city. However he refused, saying that he was capable of being a rabbi of a well-organized community that was built on ancient traditions, but not of a new community that lacked a religious tradition (brought by Rav M.S. Shapira, Talpiot Vol. 3, Nos. 1-2). Yet when Rabbi Yaakov Yosef became the Chief Rabbi of New York City, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh replaced him as the rector and head of the Vilna Beit Din. In little time, he conquered the hearts of his listeners as a speaker, teacher, and leader in every field of study, knowing how to respond to each one's individual personality.

After the death of his father Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan in 5656 (1896), Rabbi Hirsh became the Rav of Kovno. A new period of his life began there. During his time the city became the center of Russian Jewish life, and whenever a calamity occurred or an evil decree enacted, people came to him from all corners of the country. He became one of the greatest Poskim of his generation. From every stretch of Russia and Germany, people sent him all sorts of questions, and he replied to all of them.

On most Shabbats, the avrechim of the Kovno kollel gathered around him after the third meal, at which time he would expound on his commentaries and responsa. This gave his listeners tremendous pleasure, even though each one of them was great in Torah as well.

He worked extensively for the community, and he was chosen by Minister Dornova as the Chairman of the assembly of rabbis that took place in St. Petersburg, a meeting that brought together the most important rabbis and community leaders of Russia. He was extremely vigilant concerning the holiness of the Jewish people. When the Russian government decreed a law forcing Jewish teachers to be accredited in secular studies (which represented a danger to the Chadarim), Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh worked with all his might to have it annulled, a goal that he ended up achieving. In 5653 (1893), he greatly helped Dr. Demba in his famous fight against having Shechita banned by the Russian government.

In the beginning of the 1880's, there was a decree expelling all Lithuanian Jews living in Kurland, which represented a danger for thousands of people who had been living there for many years. Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh gave himself no respite before having gathered the signatures of Kurland high officials on a document expressing their view that this expulsion would have a tremendously negative impact the region's economy. He himself traveled to St. Petersburg, where he went to great lengths to get this decree annulled. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

LAWS AND CUSTOMS RELEVANT TO THE FINAL PORTION OF BIRKAT HA'MAZON

The text of many editions of Birkat Ha'mazon features a prayer in the "Ha'rahaman" section that reads, "Ha'rahaman Hu Yefarnesenu Be'chavod Ve'lo Be'bizui, Be'heter Ve'lo Be'issur, Be'nahat Ve'lo Be'sa'ar" – "The Merciful One shall sustain us honorably, and not disgracefully; permissibly, and not through prohibited means; easily, and not with distress."

The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in Parashat Hukat, writes that the phrase "Be'heter Ve'lo Be'issur" should be omitted from this passage. It is obvious that we want our livelihood to be given to us through permissible means, and that we should never feel the need to violate Hashem's wishes in the pursuit of our livelihood, and so there is no reason to make such a request.

Although we generally avoid making requests for our personal wellbeing on Shabbat, we nevertheless recite the "Ha'rahaman" section of Birkat Ha'mazon, which consists of such requests. Since this is part of the fixed text of Birkat Ha'mazon, it is permissible to recite these prayers on Shabbat.

The Ben Ish Hai writes that one should answer "Amen" to each of the prayers in the "Ha'rahaman" section that he hears, even if he is in the middle of learning Torah.

One should remain seated throughout the entire recitation of Birkat Ha'mazon, including the concluding "Ha'rahaman" section. One should especially ensure to remain seated until after reciting "Oseh Shalom Bi'mromav." The Ben Ish Hai notes that there are deep meanings embedded within the prayer of "Oseh Shalom Bi'mromav." For example, the first letters of the words "Oseh" and "Bi'mromav" are "Ayin" and "Bet," which allude to the special 72-letter Name of G-d. It is therefore especially important to remain seated and focused until concluding this prayer at the end of Birkat Ha'mazon. ■



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why does the Torah single out the names of the avot in connection with the giving of the Land?
- 2 What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
- 3 "Apikorsim" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
- 4 Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
- 5 Moshe told the judges, "the case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?

1:8 - Each of the avot possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land. 2:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal. 3:13 - They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having personal problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them. 4:15 - Men of understanding. 5:17 - When the daughters of Tzlofchad asked him a halachic question, the law was concealed from him.

Answer

STORY

A MAN OF WORDS

You look a little nervous, Chaim.

You are very perceptive, Avi. I am nervous.

Is everything okay?

Thank G-d, everything is fine. I have to give a Devar Torah today in front of the whole class.

Wow, that's wonderful. What are you going to speak about?

Each week someone speaks about the weekly Torah portion. This week it is my turn. The problem is that I am not a very good public speaker. The words do not come easily.

The words . . . the words . . . the words . . . These are the words.

What words?

These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel.

Those are the first words of the parsha, aren't they?

Yes, Chaim. Moshe Rabbeinu, our teacher Moses, spoke very eloquently to the Jewish people.

He must have been a phenomenal public speaker.

He was. He taught them the whole Torah. Do you remember what he said over forty years earlier, when G-d asked him to go to Paroh to free the Jewish people from slavery?

"I am not a man of words."

Right you are Chaim. You have a great memory. The Torah refers to Moshe Rabbeinu as having a "heavy mouth" and "heavy speech".

How did a person who had such a problem speaking manage to teach the whole Torah to the Jewish people?

Excellent question, Chaim. The Medrash relates a dialog between G-d and Moshe Rabbeinu that goes something like this:

"Go and I will send you to Paroh."

"But I am not a man of words. In Paroh's palace are people who can translate seventy languages, so that everyone can come to speak in his own language. I will come as a messenger of G-d, and I will not be able to speak to them. They will laugh at me and say, 'This is a messenger of the creator of the world?'"

"I taught Adam, the first man, how to speak seventy languages. Do you question that I can teach you how to speak well?"

And so it went Chaim. The same mouth, whose speech was heavy, taught the whole Torah to the Jewish people.

But how did he do it? How did he become such a good speaker?

The Medrash answers that question also, Chaim. The words of Torah heal the tongue. That is what Shlomo HaMelech, King Solomon, wrote in Proverbs "The tree of life (Torah) is a healing tongue." If you want to cure speech problems, either slowness of speech or loшон hora (slander), speak and learn words of Torah. This is what cured Moshe Rabbeinu. He learned and taught the whole Torah. This cured his speech problem.

I am feeling more confident already, Avi. Can I use this as my Devar Torah for the class today?

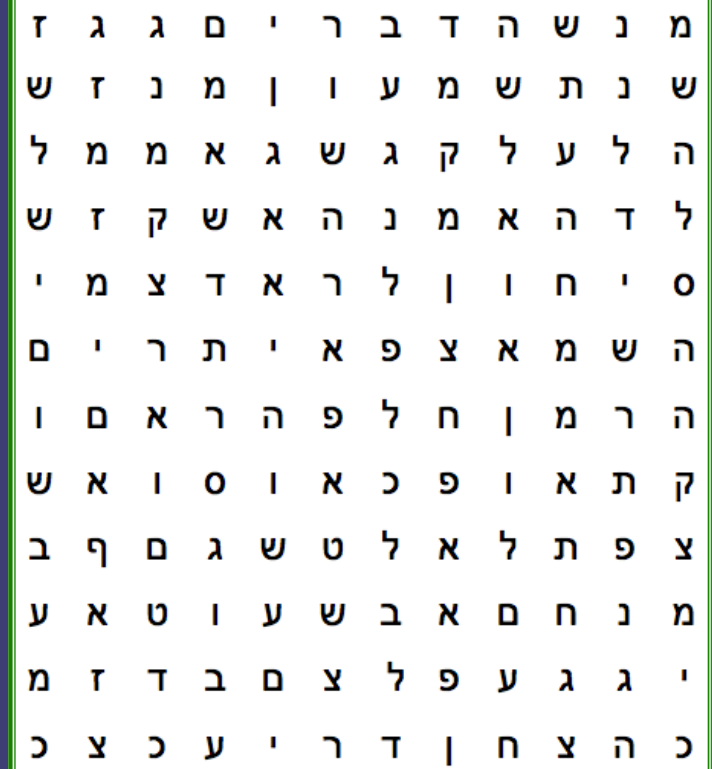
You certainly may, Chaim. Just go over it and learn it well. When you get up to speak, have confidence. You are teaching words of Torah. G-d will put the words into your mouth.

Avi, with you help, I will become a man of words.

With G-d's help and with the Torah's help.

Amen.

FIND THESE WORDS!



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מוראב	סיחון	כלב	יהושע
הרמן	תשמעון	אשדת	זמזמים