

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



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.

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

> MAZAL TOV TO

To Cheski Bassous & Rivka Ben-David
on their engagement

” THE WEEKLY QUOTE
"I can't change
the direction of the wind but I can
adjust my sails to always reach my
destination."



DVAR TORAH

Where's My Reward?

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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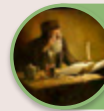


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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

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! ■

RABBI ADAM MATHER - KEHILLAS MI'KAMCHO

DVAR
TORAH



"WOE TO US ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT; WOE TO US ON THE DAY OF REBUKE!"

There are many things in life that are easy to give but difficult to accept and likewise there are those that are difficult to give but easy to accept. There are also things that are both difficult to give and to accept and it is one of these that plays a key part not only in this week's Parasha but throughout the entirety of Sefer Devarim; this is tocheha, admonishment.

While we are all most likely comfortable with the concept of accepting rebuke being difficult; you may ask what is so difficult about giving rebuke, surely nothing could be easier than pointing out the faults in others? The difficulty in giving rebuke lies in admonishing the person in the right way.

As Jews we do not accept the modern concepts of 'agreeing to disagree', 'live and let live' and the belief that everyone has a 'human right' to do whatever they wish or believe to be right. We firmly believe that we Jews are

not only responsible for our own actions but also for those of our fellow Jews and this gives us an obligation to admonish our fellow Jews when they do something wrong and help them back to the correct path. Indeed, the Gemara in Masechet Shabbat (55a) informs us that not only do tzadikim have the obligation to admonish wrongdoers but they themselves will be held to account for the sins of those whom they fail to rebuke. Our rabbis extend this concept beyond the realms of the tzadikim and apply it to every Jew who is in a position to admonish another and fails to do so.

The difficulty for the one doing the rebuking is that in order for it to be considered a mitzvah, the admonishment must be delivered in the correct way. The opening verse of Sefer Devarim provides us with the names of the places where Moshe Rabbenu admonished the Jewish people for their varied wrongdoings. The difficulty in understanding this verse is that the places listed in it do not exist. The Medrash enlightens us by stating that these place names serve as reminders of the major sins that the Jewish people committed after leaving Egypt. The name Di Zahav ("plentiful gold"), for example, is a hint to the sin of the golden calf and Lavan ("white") is an allusion to the Jewish people's complaints about the manna they received in the desert which was white in colour.

The lesson that we must take from this is not that we have an obligation to admonish a fellow Jew but how to do it. Moshe Rabbenu,

when discussing the most grievous of sins did not speak to them directly but did it by hinting and alluding so that the Jewish people would get the hint, understand the rebuke but at the same time not be embarrassed. Throughout our lives we will be faced with many instances where the correct course of action is to rebuke a fellow Jew for his poor choice of actions, words and thoughts and it cannot be emphasised enough that it is a mitzvah to do so and failure to act will have dire consequences for all involved. However, this does not give us a carte blanche to embarrass, shame, insult or humiliate one another. In fulfilling this important mitzvah we must take our cue from Moshe Rabbenu and do it only in a respectful, constructive and caring way.

It is also worth to keep in mind that it is the way in which we treat others that determines the way Hashem deals with us. Each and every one of us will one day stand in judgement before the heavenly court and be admonished for all of the wrong that we have done. It is the way in which we have admonished others that will determine the way in which we are rebuked by the heavenly court. ■

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI SHLOMO BEN YITZHAK – RASHI

Born in the town of Troyes, France in 4800 (1040), Rabbi Shlomo ben Itzhak, better known as Rashi, stemmed from a prestigious line of rabbis that included the Tanna Rabbi Yochanan HaSandler, himself a descendant of King David. After having studied in the yeshivas founded by the disciples of Rabbeinu Gershon (the “Light of the Diaspora”), Rashi went to Mayenne, Germany to the yeshiva of Rabbi Yaakov ben Yakar. Following the death of the latter, Rashi traveled to the yeshiva of Rabbi Yitzhak ben Eleazar Halevi in Worms. There he continued to study, after his marriage, in conditions of extreme poverty.

Rashi, widely recognized as the leader of Jewry at the time, never accepted the post of rabbi. He preferred to gain his livelihood as a wine merchant. He returned to Troyes and founded a yeshiva that attracted students from France and Germany. Among his students, three would end up becoming his son-in-law: Rabbi Yehuda ben Nathan (who completed the commentary on the Talmudic Tractate Makot, which Rashi had been working on when he died); Rabbi Meir ben Shemuel (who married his second daughter and fathered three illustrious Torah commentators: Rabbi Meir [the Rashbam], Rabbi Yaakov [Rabbeinu Tam] and Rabbi Yitzhak ben Meir [the Rivam]); and Rabbi Ephraim (who married his third daughter).

Rashi commented on the written Bible (the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings), as well as on the Oral Law (which is to say, on the Talmud). Thanks to his writings, Jewish children acquire a good understanding of the Biblical text at the beginning of their education, an understanding according to the perspective of the oral tradition, just as it has been transmitted without interruption from generation to generation from the time of Moses our Teacher.

In our days, the study of the Talmud without Rashi’s explanations would be absolutely unthinkable, to the extent that Rabbi Yitzhak bar Sheshet (the Rivash) and Rabbi Betzael Ashkenazi (the Shitah Mekubetzet) have affirmed that without Rashi, the Talmud would be a “sealed book”.

Rashi died on Tammuz 29, 4865 (1105), yet because of the fact that Jews the world over learn and comment on his work day and night, we may say that “his lips move in the grave” (Yebamot 97a), on which Rashi simply remarked: “It’s as if he’s alive.” Rashi’s work remains alive in the mouths, the hearts, and the minds of students, which is the reason why the name Rashi also means Rabban Shel Israel (the teacher of the Jewish people).

In Calabria in southern Italy, Rashi’s commentary on the Torah was the first Jewish book to be printed in Hebrew. The year was 1475. Owing to its simple and precise language, this commentary can be understood by a five-year-old who just beginning to study Torah. Jewish tradition acknowledges that Rashi’s commentary was written with Divine inspiration (Ruach Hakodesh). Every expression, every word carries an importance of its own. Concerning Rashi the Chida wrote: “Rashi fasted 613 fasts [according to the number of Torah commandments] before beginning his work.” He also asserted that once this commentary was completed, Moses our Teacher appeared to Rashi in a dream and told him, “Rejoice, for your commentary has been approved by G-d Himself!” Moreover, Rashi wrote in his commentary on the book of Ezekiel, “As for me, I had neither Rav nor any help for this entire undertaking. Rather, I only wrote what was shown to me by Heaven.” ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

TYING KNOTS ON SHABBAT-BASIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF RESTRICTIONS AND PERMISSIONS

One of the 39 prohibited Melachot (activities) on Shabbat is “Kosher”-tying knots. Maran discusses these Halachot in Siman 317. There are three categories of knots. Some knots are prohibited from the Torah, some are prohibited M’drabanan (Rabbinically), while others are permitted altogether. In order to be prohibited from the Torah, a knot must have two qualities. First it must be “Ma’aseh Uman”- a professional knot requiring special skill to tie. Second, it must be “Keshet Shel Kayama”- a permanent knot. While there are different opinions as to how long the knot has to last, the opinion of Rambam is a minimum of seven days. A knot which has only one of these qualities-either “Uman” or “Kayama”- is prohibited M’drabanan. If the knot is neither, i.e. it is not a professional knot and is not designed to last more than seven days, it is permitted to tie on Shabbat.

Maran also rules that a simple but permanent knot, which is generally prohibited M’drabanan, is permitted for the sake of a Misva. One application of this leniency is when Ashkenazim tie the Sefer Torah with a scarf. They use a simple knot that may last for more than a week, e.g. when tying the Sefer of Rosh Hodesh.

The question was asked whether this leniency applies to tying the Lulav on Succot, if one forgot to do so before Yom Tob. Generally one ties the lulav with a simple knot, which may indeed last more than a week. So it would seem that it should be permitted to tie it for the sake of Misva. The only problem with this logic is that tying the Lulav is not considered a Misva. The Halacha is not in accordance with Rabbi Yehuda in the Mishna who holds that it is a bona fide Misva to tie the Lulav; it is only an enhancement.

Another approach to permitting tying a Lulav could be based on the Rambam who holds that any items edible to humans or animals are exempt from the prohibition of tying. Since the leaves of the Lulav are edible to animals, it would be permitted to tie it on Yom Tob. The only problem with this is that Maran does not cite this leniency of the Rambam. Moreover, the Rif and the Rosh argue with the Rambam on this point. Since Maran generally rules in accordance with the majority ruling of the Rif, Rambam and Rosh, it seems that he disagrees with the Rambam’s leniency.

Thus, Hacham Ovadia (Hazon Ovadia Vol. 5) and Menuhat Ahaba (Vol. 3) conclude that the prohibition of tying applies also to edible items. Therefore, one may tie his Lulav on Yom Tob with a simple knot only if he intends to untie it during Hol Hamoed. That way, he has both lenient factors in his favor; it’s simple and non-permanent. It should be mentioned that Yalkut Yosef (Moadim) states that one may rely on the Rambam’s opinion. Nevertheless, Hacham Ovadia, clearly disagreed.

Based on this, one should also be careful not to tie knots in string licorice, and the like, and then store them.

SUMMARY : One may tie a simple, non-permanent knot on Shabbat. It is permitted to tie a simple permanent knot for the sake of a Misva. The prohibition of tying knots applies to food, as well. A Lulav may be tied on Yom Tob with a simple knot, only if the intent is to untie it on Hol Hamoed. ■



- ❶ How do we see from the beginning of Parshat Devarim that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honour?
- ❷ How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
- ❸ Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
- ❹ Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
- ❺ What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?

Answer

❶ 1:1 - Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves. ❷ 1:2 - 40 days. ❸ 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death. ❹ 1:4 - So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?" ❺ 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the mishkan and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.

KIDS STORY

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 your help, I will become a man of words.

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

Amen.