

OH RNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Freedom of Kosher Speech

"Remember what the Lrd, your G-d, did to Miriam on the way, when you were leaving Egypt." (24:9)

When Miriam criticized her brother Moshe unfairly, Hashem punished her with *tzara'at*, a serious leprous-like skin affliction that covered her body.

The Torah, for some reason, connects Miriam's punishment with leaving Egypt. What does one thing have to do with the other?

The captivity of the Jewish People in Egypt was more than physical bondage. On a deeper level Egypt represented the enslavement of the power of speech. Egypt not only enslaved the bodies of the Jewish People, but it put in chains the major weapon of the Jewish People – speech. Thus, the Torah writes that the Jewish People "cried out" to Hashem. It never writes that they "prayed." For in Egypt, speech itself was bound.

The Exodus from Egypt was the beginning of the rebuilding of the power of speech.

Man's pre-eminence derives from his power of speech. He has the ability to direct himself according to his will. When the Jewish People left Egypt, they went straight into the desert. In Hebrew, the word desert is *midbar* which is from the root *mi'dibur* –

"from speech" – because the desert is the place that is separated and removed from speech. Since the desert is the maximum place of non-speech, of non-direction, it is the ideal place to rebuild the power of speech from the ground up.

When the Jewish People left Egypt they were like a newborn baby. When a child begins to speak, his father is obligated to start to teach him Torah. In this formative stage, then, it was essential that the Jewish People should guard their mouths and their tongues with great care. Something is most vulnerable during its construction. To protect the reconstruction of speech, they were given Torah, and to protect their mouths, they were given the manna.

The gravity of Miriam's error was not just *what* she said, but *when* she said it. To use the power of speech incorrectly at the very time of its reconstruction required a serious punishment. Thus, the Torah connects her mistake to the departure from Egypt.

It is Miriam's eternal privilege, though, that every generation has a positive commandment to remember what Hashem did to her, to teach us that death and life are in the power of the tongue.

- Sources: *Sfat Emet, Ramban*

Q & A

Questions

1. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
2. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother, b) two brothers?
3. What will become of a *ben sorer u'moreh* if his parents don't bring him to court?
4. Why is it a degradation to G-d to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
5. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
6. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
7. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of sending away the mother-bird with the mitzvah of making a railing on the roof of your house?
8. When is it permitted to wear wool and linen?
9. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?
10. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
11. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
12. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
13. What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
14. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
15. What type of object may one not take as collateral?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

1. 21:13 - So her captor will find her unattractive.
2. 21:17 - a) 2/3 b) 1/2
3. 21:22 - He will eventually rob and kill to support his physical indulgences.
4. 21:23 - Because humans are made in G-d's image; and because the Jewish People are G-d's children.
5. 22:2 - Sell it and save the money for the owner.
6. 22:5 - It leads to immorality.
7. 22:8 - To teach that one mitzvah leads to another, and to prosperity.
8. 22:12 - Wool *tzitzit* on a linen garment.
9. 22:18 - He receives lashes, pays a fine of 100 silver *selah*, and may never divorce her against her will.
10. 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine.
11. 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come.
12. 23:21 - Three: two negative commandments and a positive commandment.
13. 24:5 - To gladden her.
14. 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.
15. 24:6 - Utensils used to prepare food.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Trusting and Relying on G-d

In his classical work *Chovot HaLevavot*, Rabbeinu Bachaya Ibn Pakuda (1050-1120) concludes his section on *Bitachon* ("trust" in G-d) by noting that the ten synonyms for *bitachon* represent ten levels of trust in G-d. In this essay we will seek out the slight nuances between the detonations and connotations of these ten words. The tens words in question are *bitachon* (Isa. 26:4, Jer. 17:7), *machseh* (Ps. 71:1), *tikvah* (Ps. 27:14), *tochelet* (Ps. 38:16), *chikui* (Isa. 30:18, 64:3), *semichah* (Ps. 3:6, 71:6), *mishan* (Ps. 18:19), *saad* (Ps. 18:36, 20:3, 41:4), *sever* (Ps. 145:15, 146:5), and *kesel* (Prov. 3:26).

Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (1809-1879), better known as the Malbim, explains that *betach*/*bitachon* refers to an emotional state wherein one is confident about a successful future, and thus lives at peace with himself. The Malbim further explains that this term refers specifically to the inner serenity one has in the face of a tumultuous situation. He notes that *betach*/*bitachon* always has a positive connotation, as it is the opposite of a harried or confused state of insecurity. According to this, the word *betach* denotes a feeling of confidence in one's heart, but says nothing about the actions taken as a result of this security. In Malbim's estimation, the term *machseh* denotes one who actively lives with his *bitachon* in mind.

The Vilna Gaon (*Biur HaGra* to Prov. 14:26) offers another take on the difference between *bitachon* and *machseh*. Like the Malbim, the Vilna Gaon also understands that both terms refer to confidence about the future, but, unlike the Malbim, the Vilna Gaon differentiates between the "whats" that contribute to that confidence. When one trusts in G-d to bring about what He promised to do, this is

called *bitachon* because it is a confidence that is bolstered by an assurance on G-d's part. However, when one trusts in Him even if He did not specifically promise something, this is called *machseh*. The Vilna Gaon adds that G-d is so trustworthy and reliable that it is better to trust Him to bring about something that He did not explicitly guarantee than to trust a human patron about something that he explicitly promised to do. About this, the Psalmist says, "It is better to trust (*lachasot*) in G-d than to trust (*betach*) in (human) donors" (Ps. 118:9).

Interestingly, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) explains that the root of *machseh* is CHET-SAMECH. Like the word *chas* in the phrase *chas v'shalom*, this root refers to "caring" about something to the point that one tries to preserve and save it from destruction. When G-d is viewed as a *machseh*, this means that one relies on the fact that G-d cares about him and will do what is necessary to prevent his demise.

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) explains that the next three words *tikvah* (verb: *kaveh*, *mikaveh*), *tochelet* (verb: *yachel*, *miyachel*), and *chikui* (verb: *chakeh*, *michakeh*) all mean "waiting." The variations in their exact connotations reflect the differing degrees of certainty about the arrival of that for which one is waiting. He explains that *tochelet* connotes "waiting" for something in the sense that one relies on it to come, but not whole-heartedly. He still has some doubts that he will actually attain what he expects. For example, Ps. 130:7 uses the phrase *yachel Yisrael* to denote the Jews' trusting in G-d, because there is sometimes reason to doubt the certainty of our salvation, for we are ever-cognizant of the possibility that our sins might block what we are

waiting for. The term *tikvah* (commonly translated as “hope”) implies that one totally relies on the fulfillment of his expectation, even if he cannot say with 100% certainty that it will actually happen. The term *chikui* refers to a situation whereby one totally believes that whatever he is anticipating will happen, and he is just “waiting” for it to become a reality.

Rabbi Pappenheim traces the word *tikvah* to the biliteral root KUF-VAV – *kav* – which means “a straight line.” The most basic meaning of that root is a “rope” or plumb line used by builders to make sure they are building in a straight fashion. From that meaning, the word *tikvah* was borrowed to refer to any sort of “rope” (see Josh. 2:18). When waters are said to gather up into one place, they travel in a “straight line” towards their shared destination (see Gen. 1:9), so the resultant body of water can be called a *mikvah*. (see Gen. 1:10, Ex. 7:19, and Lev. 11:36). When a person has hope in the certainty of something, he sees a “straight line” that connects the current situation to the inevitable situation that he anticipates – such hope is thus appropriately called *tikvah*.

The word *somech* literally means “nearby” or “next to” but its cognates also refer to “leaning” (which can only be done onto somebody/something that is nearby). In a halachic context, *semichah* refers to the commandment of “leaning” on an animal before offering it as a ritual sacrifice. Regarding that law, the Talmud (*Chagigah* 16b) says that one offering a sacrifice must lean on the animal with the entire force of his weight. The Malbim argues, based on this, that *semichah* differs from *mishan* in that the former is done with all one’s might while the latter is only partial.

The word *mishan* is another term that means “leaning” or “relying.” Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *mishan* is derived from the two-letter root SHIN-AYIN, which refers to “enjoyment” and “pleasure.” Other words that come from this root include *sha’ashua* (“playful” or “delightful”), *yeshua* (“salvation”), and *shaavah* (“crying out” with the goal of bringing about salvation). *Mishan* thus refers to the state of enjoyment and satisfaction that one achieves when one is “supported” by another. Rabbi

Pappenheim explains that the word *mishenet* (“walking stick”) is also related to this root because when elderly people have trouble walking they receive much satisfaction from having something to lean on.

Rabbi Pappenheim differentiates between *mishan* and *somech* by explaining that the latter refers to any situation whereby one “leans” or “relies” on something else – even if he does so willingly and is not actually forced to do so. Case in point: When Moses leaned his hands on Joshua (Deut. 34:9), or when the Jews leaned their hands on the Levites (Num. 8:10), this does not mean that if they had not leaned they would have fallen. Rather, they leaned of their own volition. In contrast, the term *mishan* refers to somebody leaning on another for actual support because he is too weak or feeble to support himself.

This brings us to our next word: *saad*. The Malbim explains that *saad* primarily refers to “supporting” an inanimate object by making sure that it does not fall down. He explains that this word can be borrowed to refer to any situation whereby one’s patron supports his beneficiary without the latter’s knowledge. In such a case, it is as if said beneficiary is like an inanimate object that his benefactor makes sure does not fall. On the other hand, *mishan* refers to a beneficiary who willfully and knowingly relies on another, usually G-d (see Mic. 3:11), for his needs.

Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *saad* refers to offering support to one who requires *mishan*. In other words, *mishan* refers to a weakened or feeble entity that requires help, while *saad* refers to the act of helping the weak or feeble. When a tired or weak person eats food to replenish energy, this act is called *soed* (Gen. 18:5, Ps. 104:15), and the meal he eats is called a *seudah*. Those two words are cognates of *saad*.

Interestingly, Rabbi Moshe Tzuriel suggests that the word *saad* is better translated as “helps,” because the beneficiary himself also contributes to his own betterment, while the benefactor simply “helps” him along. In this way, the beneficiary does not totally rely on outside help, but rather takes matters into his own hands to some degree.

The *Peirush HaRokeach* relates the word *sever* (“hope”) to the orthographically-identical word *shever* (“food”). He accounts for this connection by explaining that people look towards G-d trustingly and hopefully, while He provides them with their food (see Ps. 145:15). Rabbi Wertheimer similarly writes that *sever* denotes the strong trust in G-d that stems from the recognition of His role in creating and maintaining all of existence.

Finally, we arrive at the word *kesel*. The word *kesel* in the sense of “confidence” or “reliance” seems to be a cognate of the word *kesil* (“fool” or “stupid person”), as both are derived from the triliteral root KAF-SAMECH-LAMMED. The Malbim explains that *intikvah*, one awaits something good to happen, while in *kesel*, one is sure, with almost foolish naivety that nothing bad will happen.

Rabbi Moshe Wolfson accounts for the *kesel-kesil* connection differently. He explains that when it comes to relying on G-d and putting all of one’s trust in Him, one must do so even to the extent that he appears to be acting illogically or foolishly. Interestingly, Rabbi Wolfson explains that even though, in general, the fool walks “in the dark” (Ecc. 2:14) — unaware of what is going on around him — when a person is considered a fool for following G-d, then he is a fool who walks in the light. Because of this, Rabbi Wolfson writes that it is especially befitting to work on attaining the level of *kesel* during the month of Kislev, when the light of Chanukah serves to illuminate the otherwise dark winter.

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rcklein@ohr.edu

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears a firstborn son, this son’s right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father’s desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women’s clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together, or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads *tzitzit* on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master. Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. The

Jewish People are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease *tzara’at* is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs it. Workers’ pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a mitzvah for a man to marry his brother’s widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The Torah portion concludes with the mitzvah to erase the name of Amalek, for, in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

A Rebel with a Cause

The law of the *ben sorer u'moreh* – the rebellious son who is put to death in his adolescence at the request of his parents – is unusual in many regards. Our Sages have taught that there never was such a disobedient and recalcitrant son in the past, and there will never be one in the future. Rather, it was and will remain only a theoretical “problem,” as the conditions stipulated by law can never actually be satisfied. It was written, then, not as practical law, but as a rich source of pedagogic truths, whose study is of great benefit for the educational work of parents.

Rav Hirsch’s masterful explication of the laws of the *ben sorer u'moreh* spans many pages, and distills several essential principles in education from the various details of the laws. We summarize here but a few.

The first aspect of the law that draws our attention is the age-span during which the death penalty is applicable – the first three months after a boy has reached the age of puberty, usually upon completion of his thirteenth year. We see that this period is regarded as a crucial phase in the formation of a child’s character. While this period is marked by an awakening of the latent sensual impulses and appetites, it can, and should, also be marked by the awakening of the moral strength that will guide the child away from vice and base passion. That latter awakening is characterized by the joy of discovering the truth and is fueled by the desire to adopt great and noble values – the discovery of a higher-self. Precisely when the struggle is born, the wherewithal to succeed is also born, and must be carefully cultivated as the child “comes of age.” This is when a child becomes a *bar mitzvah*, literally a “son of the commandment,” and acquires the discipline and striving necessary to overcome temptation and commit to the law.

If, at the time when he is supposed to be developing seriousness and maturity, he displays such defiant conduct – *zollel v'soveh*, out-and-out gluttony and

drunkenness – then we can be certain that any further effort at character training will only end in failure. The glutton’s desire for good food takes precedence over any moral considerations, such that he pilfers from his own parents. In addition, to be liable, not only must he have used the stolen money for his revelry, but he must have consumed it in the company of good-for-nothings.

To summarize: the *ben sorer u'moreh* must have displayed willful, perverse disobedience in general, excessive predilection for good food and alcoholic drinks, pilfering at home and keeping bad company. These sad criteria – which as defined have never and will never be met – should each engage our attention as parents and educators.

One of these traits in particular – gluttony – is one we sometimes unwittingly encourage. When cuisine is given high importance in the home – where the assortment of sushi or the price of wines and scotch is the gauge of the happiness at a joyous occasion – we communicate base pleasure over refinement. Rav Hirsch encourages teaching and modeling moderate eating, including occasional finer cuisine, to help children discover on their own the limits of the happiness that a good steak or good wine can bring. When those limits are realized, an appetite can be developed for the finer joys of life.

Another requirement of the *ben sorer u'moreh* holds the key to child-rearing. This son can be liable only if his parents were of the same voice and heart. They must come to the judges declaring, *our child* does not listen to *our voice*. If this unity and consistency is lacking, then we fault the parents and not the child. To be successful parents, they must be equals, completely in agreement, of one heart and mind in their education and influence over their child.

- Sources: Commentary, Devarim 21:18; Collected Writings VII, p.333 ff.