

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TAVO · 18 ELUL 5774 - SEP. 13, 2014 · VOL. 21 NO. 51

PARSHA INSIGHTS

CAN YOU PLEASE LOWER YOUR VOICE? I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

"Then you will call out and say before the L-rd, your G-d..." (13-17).

An old friend of mine, a veteran actor from New York, once commented about public speaking, "Loud is good. Fast is bedda. Best of all is both tegedda."

Of course, it's not really true. Any public speaker will tell you that monotony, be it in tone, rhythm, or volume, is an instant sedative to an audience.

Sometimes the best way to be heard is to lower your voice rather than raising it.

Rashi explains that the word "*Ve'anita*" is an expression of "raising the voice" (Sota 32b). Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen Rabinovich (d. 1866) in his commentary on the Torah, *Tiferet Shlomo*, however, describes "*Ve'anita*" as an idiom of self-effacement. He references Parshat Bo (Shemot 10:3),

when Moshe and Aharon say to Pharaoh, "Until when will you refuse to be *humbled* before me?" He comments that when a person seeks to address G-d, he must first humble himself and reflect on his lack of worth and on his lowliness. In other words, he interprets the verse thus: "When you humble yourself, *then* you can say before the L-rd, your G-d..."

This seems in direct contradiction to the Talmud's interpretation that Rashi cites above, "raising the voice".

Maybe that's exactly the point:

The best way to be heard by G-d is by humbling yourself, for that "raises your voice" so the Almighty will listen to your request.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

When *Bnei Yisrael* dwell in the Land of Israel, the first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the *kohen* in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is G-d who guides Jewish history throughout all ages. (This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder.) On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year *shemita* cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this *mitzvah*, Moshe concludes the commandments that G-d has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in G-d's ways because they are set aside as a treasured people to G-d. When *Bnei Yisrael* cross the Jordan River they are to make a

new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, and they are to be covered with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim and half on Mount Eval, and the *levi'im* will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the *levi'im* will recite 12 commandments and all the people will say "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon *Bnei Yisrael*. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. But if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

CHAGIGA 6-12

“One who learns Torah and reviews it 100 times cannot be compared to one who reviews it 101 times.”

This is the lesson that the Sage Hillel taught the Sage Bar Hai Hai to explain the verse in Malachi (3:18), “See the difference between one who is righteous and one who is wicked, between one who serves G-d and one who does not serve Him.” Hillel states that both learners are completely righteous, but the one who reviews his studies an extra time is described as “a servant of G-d” whereas the person who studies one time less is termed as “not serving Him.” Rashi explains this to mean that the difference is that the one who studies more times serves G-d more.

The Maharsha, however, based on the parable of the donkey-drivers in the *gemara*, explains that the difference between these two people is not merely an algebraic progression of more-or-less, but actually a “quantum leap” of superiority. That one extra review can evoke an entirely new level of serving G-d.

• Chagiga 9b

“Oy to those who see, but do not know what they see, and who stand, but do not know upon what they stand....”

Rabbi Yossi teaches this as the opening of a much longer *beraita* on our *daf*. The *beraita* continues that the world stands on a number of “pillars”. The Maharsha spells out that people need to realize that they are in this world to exercise their gift of free-will — to freely choose between right and wrong — and thereby “strengthen” the pillars of the world’s existence, as taught in *mishnayot* in Pirkei Avot (1:2 & 1:18): Torah, Service of G-d, Acts of Loving-Kindness, Justice, Truth and Peace.” Only if a person realizes that this is his purpose in this world is he really considered as “seeing the world” and “standing in the world”.

• Chagiga 12b

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Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt”l • Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor and Talmud Tips: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. When historically did the obligation to bring *bikkurim* begin?
2. *Bikkurim* are from which crops?
3. How does one designate *bikkurim*?
4. Who shakes the basket containing the *bikkurim*?
5. What does “*v’anita v’amarta*” mean?
6. Which Arami “tried to destroy my father?”
7. When during the year may *bikkurim* be brought? Until when are the special verses recited?
8. Someone declaring that he separated *terumah* and *ma’aser* says: “And I didn’t forget.” What didn’t he forget?
9. What were the Jewish People to do with the 12 stones on Mt. Eval?
10. Six tribes stood on Mt. Eval and six on Mt. Gerizim. Who and what were in the middle?
11. Who “causes the blind to go astray”?
12. How does one “strike another secretly”?
13. Eleven curses were spoken on Mt. Eval. What is the significance of this number?
14. Why are sheep called “*ashterot*”?
15. How is the manner of expressing the curses in *Parshat Bechukotai* more severe than in this week’s *parsha*?
16. What is meant by “the Jewish People will become a proverb”?
17. Why did all the curses expressed in 48:16-44 befall the Jewish People?
18. “In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were (last) evening’ and in the evening you will say, ‘If only it were (this) morning.’” Why?
19. To which tribe did Moshe give the Torah first?
20. How long does it take to understand the depth of one’s teacher’s wisdom?

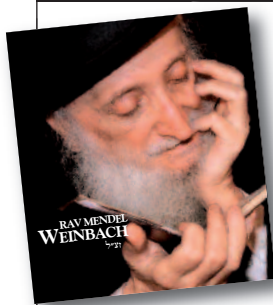
PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week’s Questions!

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

1. 26:1 - After the Land was conquered and divided.
2. 26:2 - The seven species for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, olives, figs, dates, and pomegranates.
3. 26:2 - When he sees the first fruit ripen on a tree, he binds a piece of straw around it to mark it as *bikkurim*.
4. 26:4 - The *kohen* places his hands under the hands of the one bringing it, and they wave the basket together.
5. 26:5 - Speak loudly.
6. 26:5 - Lavan.
7. 26:11 - *Bikkurim* are brought from Shavuot until Chanukah. The verses are recited only until Succot.
8. 26:13 - To bless G-d.
9. 10. 27:2 - Build an altar.
10. 27:12 - *Kohanim, levi'im* and the Holy Ark.
11. 27:18 - Any person who intentionally gives bad advice.
12. 27:24 - By slandering him.
13. 27:24 - Each curse corresponds to one of the tribes, except for the tribe of Shimon. Since Moshe didn’t intend to bless the tribe of Shimon before his death, he did not want to curse them either.
14. 28:4 - Because they “enrich” (*m’ashiro*) their owners.
15. 28:23 - In *Bechukotai* the Torah speaks in the plural, whereas in this week’s *Parsha* the curses are mentioned in the singular.
16. 28:37 - Whenever someone wants to express the idea of extraordinary suffering, they will use the Jewish People as an example.
17. 28:47 - Because they did not serve G-d with gladness when everything was abundant.
18. 28:67 - Because the curse of each hour will be greater than that of the previous hour.
19. 29:3 - To the Tribe of Levi.
20. 29:8 - 40 years.

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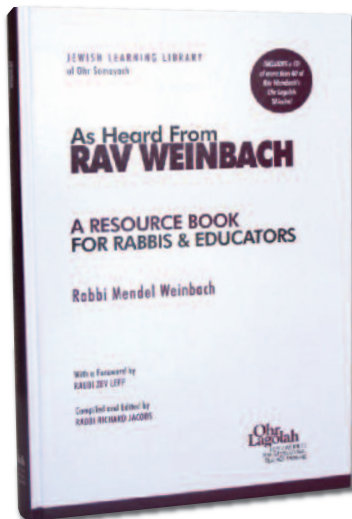
Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT KI TAVO

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In Devarim, chapter 27, Moshe tells the people to set up large stones immediately after having crossed the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. When other nations, such as the Romans, conquered foreign territory they established physical signs of their presence such as monuments, and renamed streets and cities to glorify their power and domination. The Jewish People, on the other hand, are instructed to erect a monument to the glory and honor of G-d who gave them the Land. Moshe tells them not to make a simple list of the *mitzvot* on the stones, but rather to inscribe a recounting of how G-d took them out of Egypt and how G-d sustained them in the wilderness and defeated their enemies in order to bring them into the Land of Israel. The people would have naturally erected such a monument; Moshe is simply instructing them to emphasize the true meaning of their conquest.

Moshe then instructs the people to bring the stones to Mount Eval. They were to use them to build an altar for sacrificial offerings. The altar was then to be dismantled and given a new inscription. Some commentators say that the entire Torah was to be inscribed, while others say only the Book of Devarim was inscribed. In any case, by setting up the stones immediately upon crossing the Jordan River, using them for an altar, and finally setting them up as a permanent monument, these stones are a physical testimony to the entire purpose of the conquest of the Land of Israel. In his grammatical analysis of these few verses, Abarbanel emphasizes a concept that occurs many times in the Torah's narratives. Moshe took the natural inclinations of the people to commemorate their conquest and steered them into focusing on their relationship with G-d and the importance of the Land of Israel.



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STEP-RELATIONS

From: Steven

Dear Rabbi,

I have several questions about step-relations.

Is one halachically allowed to attend the marriage between a parent and step-parent to be? I've heard it's forbidden for the children to attend the wedding; is there any basis for this?

May a Bar Mitzvah be called to the Torah as the son of his step-father or must he be called as the son of his real father's name?

Is it halachically permissible for step-siblings to marry each other?

Dear Steven

In the past, these questions were usually raised as a result of a spouse/parent passing away which is fortunately less common nowadays, but given the increase in divorce rate, they are unfortunately very much *in-step* with the times.

Regarding not attending a parent's re-marriage, the widespread custom is that children do not attend a parent's second marriage. One logical explanation is that the children's presence is a reminder of the previous spouse, and could thus mar the joy of the occasion for either of the newlyweds.

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, *zatza*l, gave the following explanation: Children have an obligation to respect their parents even after the parents have passed away. Attending the marriage of a surviving parent would be disrespectful to the deceased parent.

It seems to me that this reasoning would certainly apply when the other parent is still alive. And in such a case (except for extreme circumstances) precedence should be

given to the parent who objects that the child participate over the one who is getting married and wants him to be there. This is because in the one case he'd be causing anguish while in the other he's only detracting from joy.

However, in cases where, for whatever reason, one could estimate that attending the wedding would not upset the other parent (living or deceased) or the step-parent to be, it would probably be halachically permitted.

Regarding calling a step-son by the name of his step-father, generally this should not be done, even if the father is no longer alive and died when the son was very young. For one, biologically, it's not true. In addition, there's also a consideration of honor for the natural father even after his death. And even though a person must honor his step-parent, this doesn't exempt him from the Divine decree to honor his real father.

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, *shlita*, cited a responsa of the Yaavitz that in a case where the father is still alive, but there is absolutely no contact between the child and his father, then it is permissible to call the child to the Torah using his step-father's name. However, he qualified that if there is even the most minimal contact between the father and his son, then the son should use his biological father's name.

Marriage between a step-brother and a step-sister is permitted, and this is the accepted practice. For example, the Chafetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, married his mother's husband's daughter.

According to the *tzava'at* Rabbi Yehuda Hechasid, step-siblings should not marry. However, this ruling seems not to have been accepted even by those who generally adhere to the other rulings of *tzava'at* Rabbi Yehuda Hechasid.

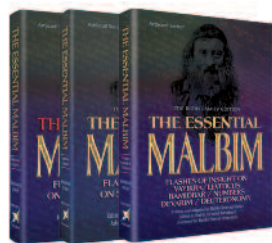
Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 240:9 & Rema
- Shulchan Aruch Even Ha'ezer 15:11
- Sefer Shmirat Haguf v'Hanefesh 178

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THE SHEMONEH ESREI: THE FIFTH BLESSING (TESHUVA) - PART I

“Bring us back, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us near our King to your service.”

The blessing for repentance (*teshuva*) immediately follows the request for knowledge and understanding. The reason for this is that with understanding comes the responsibility to discern between right and wrong. Thus, when looking back to the past, one will see more clearly the mistakes that caused him to become distanced from G-d. In addition, with the ability to discern between right and wrong one becomes more responsible for his future actions.

Regarding the above ideas King David writes, “My sins are always before me,” meaning that he was constantly doing *teshuva* for his past sins based on his new and more profound awareness of G-d.

Our Father — Our King

We call out to G-d, referring to Him first as our father, and only afterwards do we refer to Him as our King. Since a father loves his son without condition, he will always accept him back when he repents. This is not so when dealing with a king, who may deal with a sinner harshly, even when attempting to repent. Thus, the Zohar explains that the right hand of G-d draws close, while His left hand pushes away. Once, however, we arouse G-d’s love for us as a Father, we can apply the verse, “Your (right) hand is spread out to receive those who repent.” G-d’s right, so to speak,

relates to loving-kindness, and can therefore be connected to G-d as a loving Father.

Torah — Avoda (service)

The relationship of a father to a son entails mainly the responsibility for the father to teach his son the proper way of life. Regarding a king, however, the essential element that unites him to his subjects is the obligation of the people to do the bidding of their king.

Accordingly, it is understood why when referring to G-d as our Father we mention learning His Torah, while, when referring to G-d as our King, we mention serving Him. The Torah represents the “way of life.” G-d, through the Torah, acts as a father, teaching us the proper way to conduct ourselves in the world. Regarding the obligation to serve G-d through the performance of the commands, we relate to G-d more as a King, just as one is obligated to follow the commands of a king.

Body and Soul

In yet a deeper sense we can say that when referring to G-d as a father, it is the soul — which is likened to a son — that is speaking. However, when the body speaks to G-d, it calls Him King. Since it is the body that needs the commandments in order to achieve a higher degree of self-purification, its main connection to G-d is likened to one that serves his King.

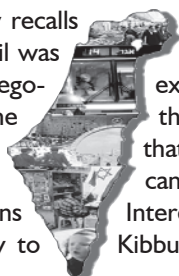
LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

BEROR CHAYIL — THE SECRET SIGNAL

The name of a kibbutz in the northern Negev recalls two milestones in Jewish history. Beror Chayil was the seat of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai who negotiated with the Romans for the survival of the Sanhedrin in Yavneh at the time of the destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash.

It was there too where Jews, banned by the Romans from circumcising their sons, came up with a way to



secretly publicize a *brit mila* feast. They would light some candles in their windows during the day or an excessive amount at night, to let their neighbors know of the celebration. It thus became common knowledge that if there is “Ohr Haneir b’Beror Chayil” (the light of a candle in Beror Chayil), there is going to be a feast there! Interestingly enough, right next to Kibbutz Beror Chayil is Kibbutz Ohr Haneir.