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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Ekev

Wealth and Poverty

"See! I am putting in front of you today a blessing and a curse." (11:26)

Wealth and poverty do not always have the same effect on people.

There are those whose wealth influences them for the good, and through the blessing of their wealth they come to a greater appreciation of Hashem. However, had they been poor, they would have been so occupied trying to find food that they would have forgotten their Creator. This was the case in Egypt, where the *Bnei Yisrael* were so exhausted by the hard labor that they did not listen to Moshe.

On the other hand, there are those whom wealth removes from the path of righteousness. We have seen too often in our history that the Jewish People become successful and self-satisfied and forget Who gave them what they have. However, when a person is poor and "broken," Hashem never ignores his supplications.

That is what the verse is saying here: "See! I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse" — and don't think that the blessing is wealth and the curse is poverty. Rather, everything depends on how a person deals with his riches or poverty. And whether he is rich or poor, if he turns his focus to the Torah and mitzvahs, then whatever his status is in life — he receives the blessing.

Re'eh

In G-d We Trust

"You shall open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your destitute in your Land." (15:11)

Sign seen hanging in a store: "In G-d we trust, everyone else pays cash."

A philosopher once said to Rabban Gamliel, "Your Torah commands you over and over again to give charity, and to not be afraid of its affecting your financial security. Isn't such a fear natural? How can a person give away his money without worrying that perhaps he should have saved it for a 'rainy day'?"

Rabban Gamliel asked him, "If someone asked you for a loan, would you agree?"

"Depends on who that someone is," replied the philosopher. "If it's someone I didn't know, then yes, I would be afraid of losing my money."

"What if he had guarantors?" asked Rabban Gamliel.

"Well, if I knew I could rely on them, I would agree."

"How about if the guarantor was the President, how would you feel about that?"

"Well, of course, in those circumstances I would have total confidence that I'd get my money back."

"When someone gives charity," said Rabban Gamliel, "he's actually extending a loan to the 'President' of the Universe. It says in the Book of Mishlei (Proverbs), '*One who gives graciously to the poor, extends, as it were, a loan to G-d, Who will pay back all that is due.*'"

G-d pays us back in this world by making sure we get back what we loaned Him. And, in the next world, we get the full reward for our loan.

No one is as trustworthy as G-d. If He guarantees to return our money, why should anyone have the slightest hesitation about giving charity?

- Source: based on the Midrash

Shoftim

The Cause of Pain

"Who is the man who has built a new house and has not yet inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he will die in the war and another man will inaugurate it." (20:5)

Rashi: *"and this thing will pain him."*

Rashi's comment on the above verse cannot mean that the thought of someone else inaugurating his new home will be extremely painful to him. For, in the painful thoughts department, nothing is more painful than the thought of death itself.

The Midrash teaches that when the Romans executed Rabbi Chananya for teaching Torah in public, they wrapped him in his Sefer Torah and set it alight. To prolong his agony, they packed water-soaked wool around his chest. Rabbi Chananya said, "The parchment is consumed, but the letters fly up in the air." The Roman executioner was deeply moved by Rabbi Chananya's holiness and asked, "If I remove the wool from around your heart, will I have a share in the World to Come?" Rabbi Chananya promised him that he would. The Roman then removed the wool, added wood to the fire to curtail Rabbi Chananya's agony, and jumped into the flames and died. A Heavenly voice proclaimed, "Rabbi Chananya and the executioner are about to enter the World to Come." One thought of *teshuva* (repentance) can undo a lifetime of sin.

And one thought of sin can undo a lifetime of *teshuva*.

Arguably, the most important moment in a person's life is his last moment. At that moment he has the potential to fix a lifetime's wrongdoing. What a waste to spend that last moment immersed in the cares of this world, rather than one's gaze on eternity!

This is what Rashi means when he says, *"and this thing will pain him."* How great will this man's pain be if he spends his last moments thinking about his real estate rather than preparing himself to enter the World of Truth!

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shabbat 149 - Eruvin 15

Poor and Rich Animals

Rav Papa said, "None is poorer than the dog and none is richer than the pig."

This statement is made in our *sugya* in the context of the eating and the digestive nature of certain animals. Rashi here explains regarding the "wealth" of the pig, "All food is fit for it, and it finds what to eat, and, also, people feed it a lot." It follows, that the opposite is true for the dog: not all food is fit for it, it doesn't find (easily) what to eat, and people do not generally feed it very much. (This obviously refers to non-domesticated dogs, unlike the pets that are commonly "adopted as part of the family" by many in our times.)

The Gaon from Vilna views this statement as commentary on the observance of certain mitzvahs. The dog, with its barking and troubling noise, is a metaphor for the prohibition against speaking *lashon hara* (negative speech and slander). Rav Papa teaches that there is no prohibition "poor" – i.e. neglected – more than *lashon hara*. On the other extreme is the pig, a metaphor for the mitzvah to fulfill the laws of keeping kosher. "None is richer than the pig" alludes to the fact that the Jewish People are most careful when it comes to fulfilling the mitzvah to keep kosher. Although both mitzvahs are equally important, and are done with the mouth, one is poor and neglected while the other is rich and faithfully observed. (Hopefully, the "poor mitzvah" has or will soon become extremely "wealthy" with the study and awareness of observing the laws of kosher speech.)

- *Shabbat 155b*

The Lukewarm Kettle

As people say, "A kettle of two partners is not hot and not cold."

This bit of wisdom is used to explain a halachic ruling in our *sugya* that distinguishes between a private *succah* and a public *eruv* for a *mavoi* (alley). Both a *succah* and the beam across the top of the alley may not be at a height above twenty amahs. A ruling is taught in our *gemara* that if the *schach* is partially above and partially below twenty, it is kosher. However, if the beam is part above and part below, it is not permitted to carry in that *mavoi* on Shabbat. In both cases, there exists a potential concern that the bottom part may come off from the top part, leaving only the invalid top part, which is above twenty amahs.

Rava from Parzakia invokes an aspect of human nature to explain the difference in rulings in the two cases. In the case of a *succah*, the mitzvah is incumbent on the individual, and each person will therefore pay attention to make sure his *schach* is in good condition and correctly positioned. Not to worry. But the beam of the alley is used for a mitzvah that involves many people (all residents of that alley) and no single person may feel it is his responsibility to keep an eye on the condition of the "highish" beam. Rather, each person assumes that someone else will be responsible. Like the partners' kettle, with each partner thinking the other partner will keep the fire burning. Therefore, a ruling is made not to allow a beam that is part below and part above the permitted height to permit residents to carry in the communal area.

- *Eruvin 3a*

A Heavenly Profession

"Be extremely careful in your work, my son," said Rabbi Yishmael, "because yours is a Heavenly profession. If you delete even one letter from the Sefer Torah you write, or add one letter, you destroy the world."

This is the sagely advice that Rabbi Yishmael gave Rabbi Meir when Rabbi Meir came to Rabbi Yishmael to learn Torah and said that he was a scribe by profession.

The advice includes a problem with either adding or deleting a single letter. Rashi cites examples of how this addition or deletion might lead to a heretical or blasphemous reading of the Torah. However, in Tosefot we find only examples of addition, but not subtraction. Why does Tosefot omit mention of subtraction?

The Maharsha explains that only in regard to adding a letter is there a need to stress the danger of creating a heretical text. Deleting a letter, however, is an obvious danger even if the meaning of the word is not affected. Why? Our tradition teaches that the letters of the Torah form the sacred Names of Hashem as they appeared before the creation of the world, as black fire on white fire. These exact letters were used by Hashem when creating His world and it is through them that He continuously sustains it. Therefore, deletion of even one letter of this sustaining force threatens the existence of the world.

- *Eruvin 13a*

Q & A

Ekev

Questions

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the:
 - a) wonders
 - b) strong hand
 - c) outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by Hashem?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving Hashem with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to Hashem"?

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

Answers

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 -
 - a) Plagues;
 - b) Pestilence;
 - c) Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 - Since they served in the Temple, thus they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

Re'eh

Questions

1. What were the sites designated for the "blessings and the curses" to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will *Bnei Yisrael* receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of *kedusha* (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of Hashem and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, "to Him (Hashem) you shall cleave." How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the "source" of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What *mitzvah* recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem's "special protection"?

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

Answers

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought *ma'arat hamachpelah*, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it. His descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The *kedusha* is inherited from the *avot*.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the *korban pesach* and the *matzah* on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A *levi*, convert, orphan, and widow.

Q & A

Shoftim

Questions

1. What is the role of *shoftim*? What is the role of *shotrim*?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept "seek out a good *beit din*"?
5. Although the *avot* built *matzevot*, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. "You will come to...the judge who will be in those days." It's impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn't amass much gold, doesn't raise many horses and doesn't marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of "*chazeh, shok, and keiva*." Which ones?
11. Families of *kohanim* served in the *Beit Hamikdash* on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to "prepare the way" to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word *eid* (witness)?
15. "Through the mouth of two witnesses...." What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four "scare-tactics" the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf's neck was broken?

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

Answers

1. 16:18 - *Shoftim* are judges who pronounce judgment. *Shotrim* are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - "*Tzedek tzedek tirdof....*"
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - *Chayot* (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn't hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying "refuge" at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don't understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 -
 - a) Changing their shields
 - b) Making their horses stomp and whinny
 - c) Shouting
 - d) Blowing horns.
19. 19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 20. 21:9- He is tried and, if guilty, executed.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Peace and Quiet

The pursuit of peace and quiet has been at the forefront of man's endeavors since time immemorial. The Romans famously achieved this objective in what historians call the *pax Romana*. *Pax* is the Latin progenitor of the English word *peace*, and may also be an ancestor of the Mishnaic Hebrew *piyus*, "appeasement." The Jewish People, on the other hand, achieved their *pax Judaica* under the rule of King Solomon – *Shlomo HaMelech* – whose very name is a cognate of the Hebrew word for "peace," *Shalom*. In this essay we will consider the etymology of the Hebrew word *shalom*, as well as its counterparts and ostensible synonyms *shalvah*, *sheket*, *shaanan* and *shalanan*.

King David told his son Solomon about a prophecy that foretells of *shalom* and *sheket* under Solomon's reign (I Chron. 22:9). In explaining that passage, Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (1230-1300) writes that *sheket* implies something greater than *shalom*. He explains that *shalom* is the opposite of "war," but *sheket* is the opposite of "movement." In other words, he explains, *shalom* simply represents the cessation of all hostilities, while *sheket* implies the complete cessation of any hurriedness or toiling that force people to be constantly moving about. In other words, *shalom* means "peace" and *sheket* means "stillness." Rabbi Bedersi ranks the degree of peace/rest implied by *shalvah* as on par with that of *shalom*, and explains that *sheket* implies an even more intense form of peace than those words imply.

Without citing Rabbi Bedersi's explanation, Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) disagrees on his ranking *sheket* as connoting a higher form of "peace" than *shalom/shalvah*. Instead, Rabbi Wertheimer explains that *sheket* denotes a situation in which there is no outward conflict or discord – but there may be disagreements in the background. *Shalom/shalvah*, on the other hand, denotes total peace and harmony. A ceasefire that brings a temporary respite to actual fighting can be characterized as *sheket*, even as "true peace" (*shalom*) remains elusive.

Why do both Rabbi Bedersi and Rabbi Wertheimer group *shalom* and *shalvah* together?

The answer may lie in their shared etymological roots. Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) traces the roots of both *shalom* and *shalvah* to the biliteral SHIN-LAMMED. He explains that this root primarily means "removed" or "taken away." This meaning is best illustrated by the verse in which G-d tells Moshe at the Burning Bush, "Remove (*shal*) your shoes from upon your feet" (Ex. 3:5). Among the various derivatives of this root, Rabbi Pappenheim lists *sheol* ("grave") – because in death one is "taken away" from the realm of the living – and *shallal* ("booty"), which refers to property that looters "took away" from their rightful owners.

In a more positive sense, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *shalvah* in the sense of "peace" also derives from the SHIN-LAMMED root, because it denotes a state in which all disturbances or troubles have been "removed" or "taken away." As a corollary to this import, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *moshel* ("ruler") and *memshalah* ("government") are those officials responsible for maintaining a state of *shalvah*.

As mentioned above, Rabbi Pappenheim also traces the word *shalom* to the two-letter SHIN-LAMMED root, but takes a slightly different approach in explaining the connection. He explains that the word *shalem* ("complete," "finished," or, in a financial context, "paid") refers to a state in which everything that had been "removed" from it or "taken away" from it has already been returned, so that nothing is lacking. Something described as *shalem* is totally complete, and thus requires nothing else to achieve completion. In Rabbi Pappenheim's estimation, the word *shalom* too denotes receiving all types of "good" that are required for prosperity, such that nothing extra is lacking.

Elsewhere, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *shalom* denotes a lack of friction or dissonance among multiple parties. When all parties live in harmony and agreement, this is called *Shalom*. G-d is called *Adon HaShalom* (“Master of the Peace”, *Maariv* on Shabbat) and *Melech SheHaShalom Shelo* (“the King that Peace is His,” *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 3:14) because He is not comprised of multiple conflicting parts, but always remains in total unity and agreement with Himself. In other words, He is “at peace” with Himself.

At first, Rabbi Pappenheim entertains the possibility that despite their slightly different etymologies, *shalom* and *shalvah* are actually synonymous. However, he then concludes that *shalom* denotes a more all-encompassing state of peace that can be manifest in all sorts of harmonious relationships, while *shalvah* denotes a specific peaceful relationship within a greater context of discord. Similarly, Malbim explains that *shalvah* refers to “inner peace,” while *shalom* denotes coming to terms with something external to oneself (although, he admits that *shalom* can also refer to “inner peace” in a borrowed sense).

Interestingly, the word *shalu* can sometimes refer to a state of *shalvah* (see Rashi and Ibn Ezra to Lam. 1:5), and sometimes refers to committing a sin by mistake (see II Kings 4:28, II Sam. 6:7, II Chron. 29:11). In fact, the Targumim typically translate the Hebrew *shogeg* as *shaluta* (see also Dan. 6:5, as well as Rashi to Ruth 2:16 and Ramban to Gen. 38:5). How can these two very different meanings converge in one word?

Rabbi Bedersi explains that the complacency of *shalvah* easily breeds indolence, which causes one not to be careful or mindful enough to avoid sin. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 8:1, Lev. 5:4) similarly explains that the dual meanings of *shalvah/shalu* allude to the possible negative aspects of “tranquility.” A person can sometimes become content with his current spiritual stature, such that he no longer strives for greater and greater perfection; instead, he smugly continues in his tried and tested ways. This leads to a lack of spiritual awareness, which can, in turn, lead one down the slippery slope towards sin.

Let’s go back to the word *sheket* for a moment. This word is often translated as “quiet,” but Rabbi Pappenheim explains that it refers more to the virtues of patience and forbearance. When a person is in a state of *sheket*, no outside stimulus can get him worked up into a frenzy. He remains calm and serene. Ibn Janach and Radak seem to

define *sheket* as “abeyance” and “calming down” after having been in a more turbulent state.

In a similar sense, Malbim writes that the word *shaanan* – which typically means “quiet” and “tranquility” (Jer. 30:10, 48:11, Prov. 1:33) – is related to the word *shaon* (“boisterous din”), but means its exact opposite: “quiet” in that the noisy *shaon* has been eliminated.

Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *shaanan* derives from the two-letter root SHIN-ALEPH (or possibly even the monoliteral root SHIN), which means “something uniform/level in which no differences between its various components are apparent.” Words that come from this root can have negative or positive connotations. For example, the words *shoah* and *shayit* refer to complete and utter “destruction,” while *shaanan* refers to complete and utter “tranquility.”

Rabbi Bedersi posits that *shaanan* implies an even more complete form of peace/rest than *sheket* does. Rabbi Pappenheim seems to echo this sentiment by explaining that *shaanan* differs from *shalom* and *shalvah* in that it really refers to “calmness” and “serenity” as opposed to “peace.” He explains that one can be in a state of complete *shalom*, but still be busy or harried with having to tend to the products of one’s prosperity. The term *shaanan* precludes that type of busyness; it denotes a form of “peace” whereby not only are there no disagreements with others, but one need not even interact with others whatsoever.

Finally, we arrive at the word *shalanan*, which appears only once in the entire Bible (Iyov 21:23), making it a *hapax legomenon*. Ibn Janach writes that *shalanan* means the exact same thing as *shaanan*, despite the extra LAMMED. However, Radak and Rabbi Pappenheim explain that *shalanan* is a composite word comprised of *shalvah* and *shaanan*.

Besides the words *shalom*, *shalvah*, *sheket*, *shaanan*, and *shalanan*, there is another word associated with “peace” that begins with the letter SHIN: Shabbat. Shabbat represents the epitome of rest and quiet in This World, and is a microcosm of the final peace that awaits us in the World to Come. This is why in the afternoon prayers on the Sabbath, we refer to the rest on that holy day as a rest of *shalom*, *shalvah*, *hashket* (*sheket*), and *betach*. Although, interestingly, many versions of the *Siddur* omit the word *shalvah* from this prayer, the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 10:9) actually teaches that by resting on the Sabbath, G-d

created *shaanan*, *nachat* (a cognate of *menucha*, “rest”), *shalvah*, and *hashket* (*sheket*). Rashi in *Sefer HaPardes* finds an allusion to this in Isa. 32:18, which uses various forms of all those words.

Now that’s something to look forward to.

When we return, G-d willing, with new essays in Elul, we will discuss the word *betach/bitachon* and its nine synonyms.

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

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

BLESSING TEN : YOU’VE GOT IT ALL

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has provided me my every need.”

The significance of the tenth blessing should not be underestimated. The blessing is not just an enormously compelling testament of our trust in G-d. It is also a powerful lesson in our belief that G-d is intimately involved in every aspect of our personal lives as well. “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has provided me my every need.” The blessing introduces us to an innovative and exhilarating concept. Not only did G-d place us here in this physical world, but He has given each of us the wherewithal to be able to persevere and to flourish spiritually while we are here.

The blessing heralds the beginning of a process which teaches us that there is an unfathomable difference between our *needs* and our *wants*. Our blessing is not suggesting that there is anything remiss with desiring things that we presently do not have. Judaism does not advocate that there is something wrong with wanting things that G-d has not (yet) given us. Rather, our Sages want us to reach the point where we are able to recognize and acknowledge that we have been given everything that we *need* – even if there is plenty more that we *want*. Only if we first accept that G-d has given us what we need, is it then possible to honestly stand in front of G-d and ask for whatever our hearts’ desire. Because, even if it doesn’t always feel that way, we now understand that whether we are given what we want or not is irrelevant to the matter of whether *we have what we need right now*.

The tenth blessing is instilling within us the acceptance that we may not get everything that we want. And, it is also instilling the ability to recognize that whatever we

may *need* at any one given moment in time has been given to us. Quite a thought-provoking notion!

In furtherance to this concept, there is a fascinating detail contained within the blessing, which helps define it. This is the only blessing in the entire series of the fifteen Morning Blessings that uses the word “*li*” – “*me*” in Hebrew – as a separate word. The blessings tend to speak in the third person plural, as they are mostly applicable to everyone. And, yet, here, our Sages chose to express themselves in the singular. What is fundamentally different between this blessing and the majority of the other blessings? With this word – “*me*” – our Sages are conveying a principle that is of paramount consequence. Only *I* can assert that I have everything that I need. No one else can make that declaration in my place. And, in exactly the same way, I cannot make that declaration for anyone else. The terminology used in the blessing is a lesson that the great nineteenth century ethicist, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, would repeat to his students constantly: One should worry about one’s *own spiritual needs* and worry about the *physical needs of others* – not the other way around.

Now, after recognizing that G-d sustains and oversees the running of the world, we are ready to accept that the only person who is spiritually and emotionally capable of making such a grandiose declaration that G-d “has provided *me* my every need” is me alone. And, on reciting the blessing I am attaining both the loftiest spiritual levels of connection to G-d and the most basic physical levels as well – through feeling a sense of complete dependency on Him.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Ekev

Rupture and Repair

As part of the preparation to enter the Land of Israel, Moshe continues his review of the people's sins, admonishing them to "remember and not forget" the instances of their disobedience. The sin of the golden calf – due to the nature of the sin (idol-worship), the public display it involved, and the timing immediately following the revelation at Sinai – was most prominent.

After reviewing his efforts to secure restoration of the special relationship that was lost, Moshe describes G-d's command to him to prepare a second set of Tablets. This time, he was instructed to construct a wooden ark already in advance of the Tablets being delivered – an indication they would not be broken again, implying a Divine assurance: Despite the people's imperfection, Israel's calling would remain in effect and Israel would ultimately be the bearers of G-d's Torah.

The remnants of the first Tablets would be stored in the same wooden ark as the new Tablets, which contained the same words that were on the first Tablets. This has profound significance. First, it expresses that G-d will not alter his Torah to accommodate the lapses of the people. The Torah doesn't change – a 'rewritten' Torah contains the same words as the original Torah. There is no reform of Torah, only reform of the people to meet its standards.

Second, the placement of the broken Tablets alongside the intact ones serves as a constant memorial of the sin of our betrayal. A generation can stand tall only if that reminder is present and if restoration to former glory is achieved – the restoration being the return to the same exact Torah, etched on the second Tablets.

Moshe's entire speech to the people reminding them of their misdeeds was intended to achieve this purpose: repair is possible only when the rupture is held somewhere in the consciousness. As King David writes in Psalms (51:5): *My sin is always before me*. This, in addition to the knowledge that restoration is possible – but only on the same terms of the original relationship – was to guide the people as they began nationhood in the Land.

- Source: Commentary, Devarim 10:1

Re'eh

Give to your Poor

The Torah recognizes that there will never be a cure for poverty – *the needy will not cease from the earth*. But through the Jewish institution of charity, and the various directives of the Torah regarding charity, the Torah expresses the hope that within the Jewish community, every poor man will have an address – *I command you... open your hand to your brother, to your poor and your needy in your land*.

In the natural order of human events there will be extreme economic differences. Poverty and wealth will co-exist. Men are endowed with unequal abilities and unequal resources. And even if two brothers were to have similar abilities and identical inherited resources, one may have a large family and the other only one child, thus creating substantial disparity in their economic situation. Illness and misfortune further contribute to the disparities. These situations will arise all over the earth – *the needy will not cease*.

However, the Jew is instructed not to permit them to persist in *his* land – it is "your" land, and in that land, you must take care of "your brother" and "your poor." Every poor man is "yours" – the community's. When this attitude is adopted, poverty and misery should be only a passing phase, which is to be transformed, with Divine assistance, into a happy, dignified existence.

Jewish law sees to it that help and support are assured to every poor man who is in need of assistance, without shame. However, the same law attaches great value to the preservation of independence. A person should be prepared to restrict himself to the barest necessities of life and accept any work – even that considered most menial in the eyes of the world – in order to avoid having to accept charity. Some of our greatest Sages in the Talmud eked out their livelihood as woodcutters, blacksmiths, cobblers, porters and water carriers – with pride.

With this dichotomy – the affluent taking responsibility for his poor, and the poor striving to earn his independent living – the economic disparities, with G-d's assistance, will be leveled in the Torah society.

- Source: Commentary, Devarim 15:11

Shoftim Jewish Kingship

The commandment to appoint a king has a very interesting condition precedent. It is operative only after the people conquer the land, take possession of it and dwell in it. Then, when the people will say, "I will set a king forever over me, like all the other nations around me," the people shall appoint a king.

We might have thought that the purpose of a king is to aid in the conquest and division of the land, in the establishment of the initial law and order. But the language here indicates that the king is to be appointed only after this phase. Equally perplexing is the language of Israel's request for a king – motivated by the desire to be "like all the other nations around me." This language is all the more enigmatic in light of the events which occurred during the time of Samuel, when the people *did* ask for a king *just like the nations around them*, but were sternly rebuked for doing so.

Clearly, the task of a Jewish king – *unlike* the other nations – is not conquest. Only G-d gives the Land to Israel, and only with G-d's help can Israel conquer the land and dwell safely in it under His protection. This help, protection, and blessing are promised to Israel again and again in the Torah, and to merit them, the Jewish People have to do but one thing – be loyal Jews. The internal victory will lead to the victory against the external enemies.

Only after this milestone is achieved, and only after the need for the appointment arises, is there a mitzvah to appoint a king. Only then will the people properly appreciate a king and not regard it as a loss of independence. This need, as envisioned by the Torah, would arise only when the people sought to ensure the

sole factor on which G-d's protection rests – loyalty to Torah.

When the people saw fit to safeguard the people's loyalty, the people would then ask for a king "like all the other nations." All nations seek to unify their resources for the good of the nation and enlist a governing figure to enable the subordination required for that end. So too, Israel will feel the necessity for national unity in order to obtain the greatest possible good – the complete fulfillment of Torah. The function of the Jewish king, then, was, by personal example and other means, to engender greater allegiance to the Torah.

Although the people in Samuel's time seemed to follow the verbal formula, by asking for a king like the other nations, their intent was to elect a king to protect them from external enemies. The time for a king had not yet come, since the conquest was not complete. They ignored the fact that protection comes from G-d, and that the king's mission was to assist in nurturing the allegiance to Torah required to merit that blessing. Thus, the people at the time of Samuel were faulted for requesting a king to lead them in defense of the country. This, warned Samuel, is the province of the Almighty King.

What then is the purpose of a Jewish king? The Torah instructs us to appoint a king "over us." But if his role is not military, and the judicial and executive infrastructure already functions without a king, what does it mean for a king to be "over" his subjects? Unlike the ruling bodies of other nations, the Jewish crown does not represent the sum total of the national will. Instead, the king is to ensure that the will of the nation bends to the law of Torah. His task is to be a Jew *par excellence*. In this way, he will be "over" the people – by leading the nation to constant awareness of, and steadfast commitment to, the Torah.

- Source: Commentary, Devarim 17:14

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

Ekev

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those "minor" mitzvahs that are usually "trampled" underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations on earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little – so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance.

Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor. Rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael's* righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites, for the road from Mount Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe.

Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon's passing from this world is recorded, as is the elevation of the *Levi'im* to be Hashem's ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvahs and the curses that result from non-observance.

Re'eh

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the

nation enters Eretz Yisrael, they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there – not to a private altar.

Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be *shechted* anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of foods that may be eaten only in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying the ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added to or subtracted from it. If a so-called prophet tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot.

Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted; then Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee Year. This Torah portion concludes with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

Shoftim

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an

insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may have possessions and symbols of power only as commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *sifrei* Torah – one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty. Neither the *Kohanim* nor the *Levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel. Rather, they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes.

All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how

a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to frame a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill the nation's trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

SEASONS THEN AND NOW

Harmony of a Nation – Overcoming Baseless Hatred (*part 6 and series finale*)

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

Preventing Baseless Hatred by Avoiding *Lashon Hara* and *Rechilus*

Lashon hara and *rechilus* are two transgressions that are very closely related to *sinat chinam*. Often speaking or hearing *lashon hara* and *rechilus* (see below for definitions) leads to *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred) and, similarly, often *sinat chinam* leads one to speak or hear *lashon hara* and *rechilus*. In fact, the Chafetz Chaim explains that when the Gemara says the second Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of *sinat chinam*, it was really referring to the combination of *sinat chinam* and *lashon hara* (see Introduction of Chafetz Chaim). Therefore, one way to eliminate *sinat chinam* and atone for the transgressions that caused the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash is by avoiding these two transgressions.

Lashon hara is speaking (or writing or any other way of conveying) or hearing (or reading or any other way of being conveyed to) a negative report about someone.

Similarly any report that can cause harm or loss to someone else is also forbidden under the transgression of relating *lashon hara* (Chafetz Chaim, *Lashon Hara* 3:4). *Rechilus* is the act of speaking or hearing any kind of speech that will cause one to dislike someone else (Chafetz Chaim, *Lashon Hara* 1:1 and Be'er Mayim Chaim 4). Both *lashon hara* and *rechilus* are prohibited even if what is being said is true, and even if one did not have intention to harm (*Lashon Hara* 1:1, 3:3, *Rechilus* 1:3, 1:4).

While there are many examples and intricate *halachot* regarding *lashon hara* and *rechilus*, let us look at some often overlooked cases that directly stem from and/or contribute to *sinat chinam*.

Even If There Is No Intrinsic Defect Mentioned in the Speech

Rechilut is a prohibition one can transgress even if he didn't say anything negative about his fellow. As long as one caused hatred between two people, he transgressed *rechilut*. Let's look at a few examples.

Reuven goes to a store and selects merchandise to buy. He and the storeowner agree on a price, and Reuven asks the storeowner to set aside the merchandise for him until he goes home and brings the money. The storeowner, however, goes back on his word and sells the merchandise to Shimon without letting Shimon know that he had already set it aside for Reuven. It would be prohibited, at this point, for the storeowner to tell Reuven, when he returns, that he sold it to Shimon, even if the storeowner explains that Shimon had no idea that it was saved for someone else. Many people in Reuven's shoes would feel hatred toward Shimon – even though Shimon did not actually do anything wrong. Therefore, by revealing Shimon's identity to Reuven, the storeowner would actually be causing Reuven to hate him, which is *rechilut* (Chafetz Chaim, *Rechilut* 9:15, see also Chafetz Chaim, *Rechilut* 8:4 and Be'er Mayim Chaim there).

Before looking at the next case, it is important to point out that it is also prohibited to speak negatively about a store's merchandise even though they are inanimate objects. Since the objects belong to someone, the negative words may cause the storeowner a business loss, and thus would be *lashon hara* (Chafetz Chaim, *lashon hara* 5:7, Chut Shani, *lashon hara* p. 356). However, if there is a constructive purpose in mentioning the flaws in a store's merchandise, and if one follows the appropriate conditions that are mentioned in Sefer Chafetz Chaim (*Lashon Hara*, *klal* 10 and *Rechilut*, *klal* 9) – speaking negatively is permitted.

With this background, let's look at a case where Reuven was interested in buying merchandise from Levi, and therefore asked Shimon about the quality of the merchandise that Levi sells. Shimon followed all the appropriate conditions necessary when there is a constructive purpose before speaking negatively about Levi's merchandise, and told Reuven that Levi's merchandise is not good quality. Even though Shimon did nothing wrong, it would be prohibited for Reuven to tell Levi that Shimon spoke negatively about his merchandise because it will cause Levi to hate Shimon, and would therefore be *rechilut*.

Even If He Already Knows

Let's take a case where Reuven mistreated Shimon to his face. Levi, who was present when this happened, went over to Shimon and told him how horribly Reuven treated him. Levi told Shimon that he shouldn't take it so

lightly and that he should stand up for himself. In this case, even though Shimon knew exactly what Reuven had done, Levi was nevertheless guilty of *rechilut* (and possibly *lashon hara* in a case where he spoke about defects in Reuven's character traits) because he caused Shimon to build up hatred towards Reuven (see Chafetz Chaim, *rechilut* 4:1).

This idea goes even further. Take a case where Reuven and Shimon had a bitter argument many years ago, which resulted in many ill feelings between them. If Levi would bring up the argument in order to restart the argument, he would be guilty of *rechilut* – because bringing it up again may reawaken feelings of hatred between Reuven and Shimon (see Chafetz Chaim, *rechilut* 1:10, 4:2).

Even If No Name Is Mentioned

Often, people are careful to hide the name of the one they are speaking about. However, this does not always solve the problem of *lashon hara*. It would be forbidden to speak negatively without mentioning someone's name if it is clear from the storyline who is being spoken about, or if the listener may find out who was spoken about (see Chafetz Chaim, *Lashon Hara* 3:4). This happens very often, especially in cases where the one being spoken about lives in the neighborhood or if they have common friends, etc.

Another common case is where Reuven comes home from a hard day and describes to his wife how someone had wronged him, hiding the name of the one who wronged him to avoid *lashon hara*. His wife, wanting to validate her husband's feelings, adds further reasons why Reuven's friend acted horribly and how insensitive and irresponsible he must have been. Even though both parties did not mention the name of the person being spoken about, and even though Reuven's wife doesn't know the identity of the person who wronged Reuven, she is guilty of *rechilut* because she is causing Reuven to hate the other person. Even if Reuven already hated Shimon before his wife began to speak, it is still considered *rechilut* since the negative speech causes his hatred to increase (Chafetz Chaim, *Rechilut* 1:4). In our case, since she added more defects to Reuven's character traits, it is also *lashon hara* because, even though she doesn't know who is being spoken about, her husband does.

For a Constructive Purpose

It is important to point out that there are instances where one is even obligated to relate things to one's fellow even if it involves something negative about his fellow, and

even if it will cause further arguments. These include cases where there is a constructive purpose to the speech, such as when one sees that someone wants to date or marry someone, or if one wants to go into a partnership with someone, and he knows something negative about them that may change their decision to get married or go into the partnership. Even some of the cases we mentioned above may fall under this category, depending on the given situation. However, even in these cases there are many conditions that one needs to meet before being allowed to relate the information. Also, even when one is allowed to relate the information, there are many laws about what one is allowed to say as is outlined in the Sefer Chafetz Chaim (Lashon Hara, *klal* 10, Rechilut, *klal* 9 and Tziyurim at the end of the *sefer*).

Rebuilding the Beit Hamikdash

The question now is: How can one work on staying away from *lashon hara* and *rechilut*? So much of what is considered today as normal communication is filled with *lashon hara* and should be avoided at all costs. However, abstaining from speech altogether is impractical, and, at times, impossible. Even if it were possible, it wouldn't help with regards to the sin of accepting *lashon hara*, and also wouldn't help in situations when according to halacha one is obliged to share information. The only real way to deal with this critical issue is to constantly learn and review the Sefer Chafetz Chaim, which contains the laws of *lashon hara* and *rechilut*, so that one may know exactly what is and what is not allowed. This is the only way we can sensitize ourselves to an area in halacha that is unfortunately often overlooked. May we all merit making the right effort in this area, and help rebuild the Beit Hamikdash speedily in our days.

**Questions and comments can be sent to the author at chaviwdanesh@gmail.com*

We wish all our Ohrnet Magazine's readers and friends a healthy and successful summer!