

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Bo

6 Shevat, 5780/February 1, 2020

Vol. 11 Num. 20 (#441)

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Did G-d Ask the Jews to Steal?

Rabbi Sammy Bergman

In Shemot 11:2, Hashem instructed Moshe to direct the Jewish people to obtain the Egyptians' gold and silver vessels. The Hebrew word used to describe obtaining is *v'yishalu*, from the root *sh-a-l*. In Shemot 22:13, as well as several places in Rabbinic literature (e.g. Mishnah Bava Metzia 8:1), this root means "to borrow". According to this definition, Hashem instructed the Jewish people to "borrow" gold and silver vessels from the Egyptians, but without any intention of returning them. How and why did Hashem command the Jews to steal?

Approach 1: Asking for a Gift

Many commentaries, including Rashbam (3:22, 11:2), Daat Zekeinim (3:22), Rosh (11:2), and Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (3:22), argue that the meaning of *v'yishalu* is that the Jews should request the vessels as permanent gifts, and not as a loan at all. To support their view, these commentaries note Psalms 2:8, where the root *sh-a-l* refers to making a lasting request from G-d, not to temporary borrowing. Rabbi Hirsch (ibid.) avers that the Biblical root *sh-a-l* generally connotes a request, and only refers to borrowing in one place, Shemot 22:13.

Although this approach avoids the moral dilemma of G-d commanding the Jews to commit theft, it raises a more pragmatic difficulty. Why would the Egyptians agree to give away their valuables to their former Jewish slaves?

Daat Zekeinim explains that the

Egyptians gave the Jews their valuables out of fear of further retribution. This approach fits well with Hashem's prediction (11:1) that the Egyptians would force the Jews out of Egypt in reaction to the plague of the firstborns. Anxious to make the Jews leave, the Egyptians acquiesced to their requests for gold and silver vessels.

However, the Torah says that G-d made the Jews favourable in the eyes of the Egyptians, which indicates that the Egyptians gave these gifts to the Jews willingly. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (12:36) suggests that the Egyptians admired the Jews because of their ethical behavior. After living in darkness for three days, the Egyptians were shocked to find that none of their belongings had been taken. In appreciation of Jewish self-control, the Egyptians gave the Jews even more than they asked for.

Approach 2: Borrowing

Other commentaries, such as Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (3:22), Don Isaac Abarbanel (ibid.), and Rabbeinu Nissim (*Derashot HaRan* 11), aver that Hashem did indeed instruct the Jews to "borrow" the Egyptians' property, even though they had no intention of returning them. This raises the moral question of how G-d could command the Jews to commit an immoral act.

Ibn Ezra (ibid.) rejects the assertion that it was immoral for G-d to command the Jews to steal. In his view, since Hashem created everything, and has true ownership of everything, He has the moral authority to give wealth to whomever He pleases. However, while

it's certainly true that G-d is morally justified in taking the Egyptians possessions, it's harder to explain why He commanded the Jews to do so in a dishonest way.

Other commentaries argue that the Jews had a financial right to the Egyptians' valuables. Abarbanel (ibid.; based on Talmud Sanhedrin 91a) asserts that the valuables served as compensation for the Jews' slave labour. Rabbi Yaakov Mecklenburg (*HaKtav V'haKabbalah* 3:22) argues further, that by ensuring the Egyptians paid the Jews for their arduous labor, the Jews even were helping the Egyptians act virtuously. However, Rabbeinu Nissim (*Derashot HaRan* ibid.) asks that if the Jews deserved reparations, why didn't they demand the vessels explicitly for this purpose?

Rabbeinu Nissim therefore adopts a different approach. He claims that the reason G-d instructed the Jews to "borrow" the vessels was to incite the Egyptians to chase the Jews into the Red Sea. Hashem wanted the Egyptians to receive punishment commensurate with the suffering they had inflicted upon the Jews by drowning their infant sons in the Nile.

This discussion highlights the complexity of maintaining moral behavior when pursuing justice. If we must consider honesty when demanding justice from a guilty and oppressive enemy, certainly we should always act with the utmost integrity.

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Summary

Following the mass gathering and coronation at Gilgal, Shaul sends most of the people home. He maintains a fighting force of three thousand soldiers. Two thousand stay with the king and another thousand head out with Yonatan, Shaul's son.

The Philistines had subjugated large parts of the Jewish people. They sent tax collectors to Jewish towns, and forbade the Jews from having practicing blacksmiths, severely limiting their ability to produce weapons. Jewish farmers were required to venture to the towns of the Philistines to sharpen their plows.

Yonatan kills the Philistine tax collector in Geva, and Shaul alerts the nation that they have rebelled against the Philistines. The Jews gather at Gilgal, and the Philistines set up a war camp opposite them, amassing a huge, well-equipped army. The sight of the Philistines breaks the resolve of many of the Jews, who go into hiding or flee over the Jordan River. Shemuel had told Shaul that there would come a time when he would have to wait seven days for Shemuel to arrive and offer

sacrifices. This was meant as part of the process of Shaul's coronation. The Jewish camp waits for Shemuel. At the beginning of the seventh day, the tension in the camp reaches a breaking point and many people desert. Fearing an imminent battle, Shaul offers the sacrifices himself in order to entreat G-d's help before the fighting starts. Shemuel appears just as the sacrifices are completed. He scolds Shaul for acting foolishly. Had Shaul waited, his dynasty would have lasted for generations. Instead, G-d will now choose another, more worthy, successor.

Only six hundred Jewish fighters remain by Shaul's side. The onslaught of the Philistines begins...

Analysis

This chapter highlights the tragic element of Shaul's reign. Even at this initial battle, something which is meant to be part of Shaul's confirmation as king, he is told that he has failed, and his dynasty will not continue. The punishment seems extremely harsh. After all, what difference does it make who brings the sacrifices, and whether they are

brought a few minutes earlier or later?

Rashi emphasizes the lack of care in carrying out G-d's commands. Shaul did not do exactly as he was told, and as a result he lost everything. But why such a harsh punishment for such a seemingly minor deviation?

Radak points not to what Shaul failed to do, but what it signals about his beliefs. The failure to listen to Shemuel is tantamount to blasphemy, a rejection of G-d's prophet and G-d Himself. When placed under pressure, Shaul showed that his concerns for the strategic elements of the battle (troops, victory) ultimately dictated his decisions. Through his behavior he abrogated the most important function of a Jewish king: to show that real kingship is G-d's alone. This is what resulted in his punishment.

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Holy Land Halachah: Raising Small Cattle in Israel**Rabbi Baruch Weintraub****Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, P'ninei Halachah, Kashrut 1, 13:15**

For more on this topic, see *Holy Land Halachah in Toronto Torah 11:15 (Miketz 5780)*.

A mishnah forbids raising small [domesticated] cattle (e.g. goats) in Eretz Yisrael, but permits raising them in Syria or in the wildernesses of the Eretz Yisrael. (Bava Kama 7:7) Is this prohibition applicable in modern Israel?

Early authorities provide two reasons for this prohibition – either for the sake of settling the Holy Land, as the animals severely impact grasslands (Rashi, Bava Kama 79b), or because of the severe damage these animals may cause when invading the property of other Jews. (Rambam, Laws of Damages 5:2) [Of course, one may not invade anyone's property, whether Jew or non-Jew. However, the step of not raising animals which *might* invade property is a precaution specifically regarding Jews.]

The reason for the law may determine its application. For example: if the reason is the holiness of Israel, then it may not apply in mainly Jewish lands outside Israel. (Bava Kama 80a) Also, if the reason is the harm to Jewish neighbours, then the law may not apply in Israel when the population is largely not Jewish. In the latter case, *Kaftor vaFerach* 10 rules that the prohibition still applies, in line with Rashi's approach, while the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 409:1) rules that the prohibition does not apply. As the Vilna Gaon explains, the Shulchan Aruch seems to side with the Rambam's explanation for the law. (Biur haGra ad loc.)

The obvious question is what should be the law now, as in G-d's mercy, we have returned to our land, and most of the fields now belong to Jews?

Contemporary authorities have debated this issue:

- Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (Igrot haRa"ayah 1:32), and Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (Yabia Omer III, Choshen Mishpat 3) prohibit raising small cattle in Israel today.
- Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog (Teshuvot u'P'sakim, Choshen Mishpat 104), Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli (Amud HaYemini 23), and Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (Tzitz Eliezer, 7:24-25) are lenient.

Rabbi Melamed mentions a few bases for permitting:

- 1) According to the Shulchan Aruch, the main reason for the prohibition is to avert potential damage. Today, landowners are willing to accept the risk as long as they will be paid for any damage that does happen.
- 2) In our times, small cattle can be raised without allowing them to graze on others' property.
- 3) Even according to Rashi's opinion, that the prohibition is related to the commandment to settle the land, it can still be argued that in our situation, shepherding small cattle is an important way to keep possession of Israeli lands. This very rationale should lead to allowing the raising of small cattle.

Rabbi Melamed concludes that the common practice seems to follow the more lenient opinion, according to the general rule preferring leniency in disputes relating to rabbinic prohibitions.

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Biography
Rabbi Dovid Zvi Hoffman
Rabbi Adam Friedmann

Rabbi Dovid Zvi Hoffman was born in the Slovakian town of Verbo in 1843. His father was a rabbinical judge in the town. The young Dovid Zvi studied in various yeshivot, including that of Rabbi Moshe Schick, one of the leading Hungarian rabbis at the time.

In 1851, he joined the yeshiva of Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer in Eisenstadt, Austria. Rabbi Hildesheimer sought to combine classic Torah study with the academic approach of the Western university. This experiment prompted strong opposition from both the traditionalist rabbinat in Hungary, and the progressive Neologue movement, both of which felt it was misguided. When Rabbi Hildesheimer fled these communal disputes for Germany, Dovid Zvi joined the yeshiva at Pressburg until 1865.

After completing his time in yeshiva, he studied in the universities of Vienna and Berlin and received a doctorate in 1871. The following year, Rabbi Hoffman was invited to serve as a teacher in Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's school in Frankfurt. He remained in this position for two years. Leaving Frankfurt, Rabbi Hoffman joined the teaching staff of Rabbi Hildesheimer's nascent Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin, which embodied the latter's goal of creating a school that combined classical yeshiva learning with university studies. Upon Rabbi Hildesheimer's death, Rabbi Hoffman was appointed the head of the institution. He also served as an important community rabbi in Berlin.

Rabbi Hoffman earned great esteem in the larger community, and received the title of "Professor" from the German government and University of Berlin upon celebrating his 75th birthday. Utilizing his knowledge of classic Torah sources and bible scholarship from the university, he wrote a Torah commentary which responded to contemporary academic claims about authorship and dating, including the Documentary Hypothesis. He was also recognized as one of the country's greatest halachic experts of the time. His three-volume set of responsa, *Melamed leHoil*, was published posthumously.

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Torah and Translation
Repetition in the Mitzvot of Pesach
Rabbi Dovid Zvi Hoffman, Introduction to Shemot 12-13
Translated by Ezer Diena

והנה קודמים לתיאור יציאת מצרים שתי פרשיות שעניינן הוא מצוות (יב: א-כ, כא-כח), ושתי פרשיות שעניינן הוא מצוות באות אחריו (יב: מג-נ, יג: א-כ). פרשת המצוות הראשונה (יב: א-כ) מורכבת משני חלקים – הראשון מכיל הוראות באשר לפסח שיש לעשות אותו בליל י"ד לחודש במצרים (יב: א-יג), ואלו בחלק השני נמסרות הוראות באשר לחג המצות, אותו יש לחגוג בעתיד מיום ט"ו לחודש עד יום כ"א בו (יב: יד-כ)...

בשל חשיבותן של מצוות אלה אין זה צריך להתמיה כלל שהן נמסרות פעמיים, פעם אחת כדבר ד' אל משה ופעם אחרת כאשר משה מצווה אותן לבני ישראל, ומה גם שבפעם השניה יש בה משום תוספת. פרשת המצווה הראשונה שאחרי תיאור יציאת מצרים (יב: מג-נ) משלימה מצוות הפסח, במיוחד באשר לפסח דורות. הפרשה השניה (שמות יג: א-טו) מכילה את מצוות קידוש הבכורות המיידית ואחר כך מצוות המצות ומצוות הבכורות לדורות, ועוד.

גם יש להעיר שבפרשה הראשונה (יב: א-כ) מצוה ד' למשה ולאחרן את ענייני הפסח והמצות בצורות שונות. עניין הפסח נמסר תחילה לשעתו – הוא צריך להיעשות מיד. מצוות המצות חלה על פי האמור שם (יב: טו) אצל הדורות הבאים. ואמנם אין להעלות על הדעת, שבני ישראל המתכוננים עתה לצאת למסע במדבר, יצטוו לחוג חג בן שבעה ימים בראשיתו של מסע זה. על כן אין משה מוסר בנאומו אל בני ישראל אלא את מצוות הפסח שיש לקיים כבר עתה (יב: כא-כג). אבל הוא מבהיר מיד (יב: כד-כז) שקרבן זה יידרש גם מן הדורות הבאים, ואולם עדיין אינו מזכיר דבר באשר למצות. רק מאוחר יותר, כאשר בני ישראל מגיעים לסוכות, מוסר משה לעם על מצוה זו, לקראת התנחלותם בארץ ישראל...

Before the description of the Egyptian Exodus are two sections whose topic is mitzvot (Shemot 12:1-20; 21-28), and two more sections whose topic is mitzvot come afterwards (12:43-50; 13:1-20). The first section of mitzvot (12:1-20) is composed of two parts – the first contains rules about Pesach that should be performed on the night of the 14th of the month in Egypt (12:1-13), but in the second section, it transmits rules to be performed on Chag HaMatzot, which is celebrated from the 15th to the 21st of the month (12:14-20)...

Due to the importance of these mitzvot, there is no need to wonder at all [why] they were given twice, once when Hashem spoke to Moshe and another time when Moshe commanded them to the Jewish People, especially since the second time there are additions. The first section containing mitzvot after the description of the exodus from Egypt (12:43-50) completes the mitzvot of Pesach, especially the laws of Pesach for future generations. The second section (13:1-16) contains the mitzvah of sanctifying the firstborn, [relevant] immediately, and afterwards, the mitzvot of matzot and the rules of the firstborn for future generations, and more.

It should also be noted that in the first section (12:1-20), Hashem commands Moshe and Aharon about Pesach and the matzot in different ways. The concept of Pesach is transmitted first for its time – it needs to be performed immediately. The mitzvah of matzot is relevant to what is said there about future generations. However, one should not have it arise in their mind that the Jewish People, planning now to leave for a journey into the desert, would be commanded to celebrate a holiday of seven days at the start of this journey! Therefore, Moshe, in his speech, only transmits the mitzvot of Pesach which should be fulfilled now. However, he clarifies immediately that this sacrifice will also be required of future generations, but he does not mention anything about matzot. Only later, when the Jewish People reach Sukkot, does Moshe transmit them this mitzvah, in anticipation of their settling in the Land of Israel...

Weekly Highlights: Feb. 1 – Feb. 7 / 6 Shevat – 12 Shevat

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Daily				
Mon-Thu 8:00 AM	Netanel Klein	Gemara Moed Katan	Clanton Park	Men
שבת Jan 31-Feb 1				
Fri. pre-minchah	Ezer Diena	When a Dog Chases You	BAYT	Parshah/Kugel-TFBM
10:30 AM	R' Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	After Hashkamah
Before minchah	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Feb. 2				
8:15 AM	R' Seth Grauer	Contemporary Halachah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
9:15 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Chagigah/Chasidut/Chevra	Shaarei Shomayim	Teens
9:15 AM	Netanel Klein	Waiting After Meat	Adas Israel	Hamilton
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	Ezer Diena Mrs. Lea N Minkowitz	Did Multiple Seas Split? Ding Dong, the Witch is Dead?	Midreshet Yom Rishon BAYT	Women Light Refreshments
Tue. Feb. 4				
10:00 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Humour or Humiliation?	Adath Israel	Women; there is a fee info@adathisrael.com
12:00 PM	Ezer Diena	G-d's Role in the Balance of Nature: Psalm 104	Lipa Green Bldg 4600 Bathurst	Women Emunah Canada
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah Chap. 29-30	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim Chap. 9-10	129 Theodore Pl.	Men
Wed. Feb. 5				
6:00 AM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Succah	BAYT	WW Room 2, Men
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Kosher Kops 1 of 4: The Role of Police	Beth Emeth	RSVP at torontotorah.com/police
7:30 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Stories from the Talmud	Shaarei Tefillah	
7:30 PM	R' Sammy Bergman	Ancient Texts, Modern Dilemmas	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Learn to Read Esther #8	BAYT Boardroom	12-part series
Thu. Feb. 6				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel, Chap. 15	49 Michael Ct.	Women
4:15 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Junior Beit Midrash	Netivot haTorah	
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
Fri. Feb. 7				
10:30 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Bava Metzia: Perek 6	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

10:00 AM Sunday, R' Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat

11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation: R' Mordechai Torczyner: Judaism & Psychology

8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Mishlei 8:30 AM Friday, R' Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah

For University Women

6:00-8:00 PM Sunday at Yeshivat Or Chaim, Ezer Diena, The "Nature" of the Makkot; pizza served

7:00-9:00 PM Tuesdays at BAYT, Open Beit Midrash

8:30 PM Thursdays at Shaarei Shomayim, R' Sammy Bergman, In-Depth Gemara: Laws of Shabbat

Seder Boker for Men with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

10:00 AM to Noon, Mon/Wed Masechet Taanit, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook, Pninei Halachah

10:00 AM to Noon, Tue/Thu Parshanut on the Parshah, Sefer Shoftim, Pninei Halachah