

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Shlach

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This week's issue is dedicated by Tova and Allan Gutentberg
to commemorate the yahrzeits of Tova's parents, Rabbi Joseph and Mrs. Ruth Kelman z"l
הרב חיים יוסף בן הרב צבי יהודה ז"ל ורחל בת חיים ז"ל

What Does Hashem Want From Me?

Rabbi Jared Anstandig

The central story of Parashat Shelach is the story of the spies' exploration of Eretz Canaan and their prediction of certain failure in conquering it. The aftermath of their report, once the people receive their forty year punishment, tends to be discussed much less. After hearing that they will not be allowed to enter the Land of Canaan, a group of Bnei Yisrael, acting without Divine authorization, attempts to take the land by force. Their invasion is immediately crushed by the Canaanites and Amalekites living in the area.

This second story, known as the story of the "*Ma'apilim*" (from the verb used to describe their actions in Bamidbar 14:44) raises the eyebrows of several commentators. What happened that caused a group of Bnei Yisrael to suddenly change their minds to believe that they could (and should attempt to) conquer the Canaanites? Where was this zeal when the spies first delivered their report?

Don Isaac Abarbanel suggests that this shift was brought about by the death of the spies. Once Bnei Yisrael see Hashem's punishment meted out against sinners, they realize that they are in the wrong. Nonetheless, he explains, they ultimately failed in their attempt because they didn't perform complete teshuvah. Their sin of believing the spies was the result of their disbelief in Hashem's ability to help them conquer Eretz Canaan. Had they repented from this erroneous belief, they would have sought out Divine sanction before their campaign, an avenue that the Torah states explicitly

they did not pursue. We see from here that despite the miracles they had experienced until now, the nation still struggled with complete faith in Hashem.

A related approach is taken by the *Or HaChaim*. He writes (Devarim 1:43) that Bnei Yisrael's actions are consistent with what they were before. In both scenarios they chose to rebel against Hashem. When Hashem told them that they **could** conquer the land, they refused to believe it. And, now that Hashem had decreed that they may **not** enter the land, they attempted to do so anyway. According to the *Or HaChaim*, the people still consistently pushed back and rebelled against the Divine.

The Netziv (*Haamek Davar*) offers a startlingly different perspective. He suggests that the people took Moshe's words seriously. They understood that Hashem did not want them to attempt to invade Eretz Canaan. And, they internalized the message that they would almost definitely die in their invasion. Nonetheless, they continued their ill-fated attack so that if they died, they would die in the service of Hashem (literally, so that it would be "*mesirut nefesh be'emet*"). For the Netziv, Bnei Yisrael were acting with the noblest of intentions.

Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin offers a similar explanation. In *Tzidkat HaTzaddik*, section 46, he alludes to a concept found in Chazal (Pesachim 86b), "One should do whatever the master of the house says, except leave." Rav Tzadok understands this as saying that even if Hashem Himself tells us to leave

Eretz Yisrael, we disobey Him. The *Ma'apilim* believed, according to Rav Tzadok, that Hashem really *wanted* them to enter the land. Their only mistake, Rav Tzadok elaborates, was their timing; the era of redemption had not yet (and still has not yet) come. Comparable to the Netziv's understanding, the people were operating according to what they believed was in fact Hashem's will for them.

Taking these approaches together paints a mixed message. On the one hand, we see a group of people refusing to fully submit to Hashem's will. On the other hand, we see elements of subverting Hashem's will so as to fulfill its deeper meaning. While we cannot resolve this disagreement, there is a lesson to be learned about meditating on Hashem's will. No matter what they say about the *Ma'apilim*, all agree that our role is to take the time to ask the question – What does Hashem want from me now? It's not always easy to hear the answer, but if we're able to ask the question, we're already in a better place than where we started.

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OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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Summary

In this chapter, the prophet Yeshayahu conveys Hashem’s message to the Jewish people, urging them to repent.

He emphasizes that their exile is not due to divorce from Hashem, and they have not been sold to pay off their financial debt. Rather, it is a consequence of their sins. Hashem assures them that upon their sincere repentance, He will bring them back. The prophet questions why they hesitate to repent, reminding them of Hashem’s ability to redeem them, as He has done in the past. (50:1-3)

Yeshayahu reflects on his life as a prophet and the challenges he has faced in fulfilling his role. He acknowledges his gift of clear speech, enabling him to convey the words of Hashem. Despite enduring beatings and humiliation, he remains devoted to serving Hashem. He firmly declares the authenticity of Hashem’s word and invites anyone who wishes to challenge him, confident that with Hashem’s support, he will prevail. (50:4-9)

The prophet reassures those who suffer and dwell in darkness that they can rely on Hashem for deliverance. However, those who refuse to repent and heed the

prophet’s message are destined for a sorrowful and gloomy existence. (50:10-11)

Insight

In the 12th century, Rabbi Elazar of Worms wrote about a minhag (custom) observed on Shavuot, in which children are brought to the synagogue. A verse from this chapter (50:4) is written on a cake, which is then consumed. The verse states, “My sovereign G-d gave me a skilled tongue, to know how to speak timely words to the weary. Morning by morning, [G-d] rouses me, rousing my ear To give heed like disciples. (JPS)” Rabbi Elazar of Worms highlights the significance of maintaining this minhag, and any other minhag in general.

Today, this minhag is prevalent when a child is introduced to *cheder*, symbolically encouraging the child to recognize their ability to learn and transmit timeless teachings through the medium of Torah study.

Some halachic authorities have questioned this minhag, since consuming the cake may cause the name of Hashem to be erased. Therefore, it is recommended to write the verse without the four-letter Name of Hashem, and

use an alternative sign to represent the Divine name. (Beit Yitzchak 2:107)

Additionally, the act of eating the cake on Yom Tov raises concerns regarding the prohibition of erasing on Shabbat, as mentioned by the Rama (Orach Chaim 340). However, this is permitted when performed by a young child, as noted in the Mishneh Berurah (340:14). Further, many authorities permit when one eats the letters, as opposed to cutting them. (Mishneh Berurah 340:17, and see Chazon Ish Moed 61:1)

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Siddur Insights: A Desirable, Good, Spacious Land?

In Devarim 8:10, Moshe instructs the Jews, “And you shall eat, and you shall be full, and you shall bless Hashem your Lord for the good land He has given you.” Because we are supposed to bless Hashem for the land, the second blessing of Birkat haMazon ends by thanking Hashem “for the land and for the food.” The text of this blessing identifies the land of Israel as a “desirable, good and spacious land”; this praise of the land is so integral to the blessing that one who omits it must repeat Birkat haMazon. (Berachot 48b, Mishneh Berurah 187:6)

Of course, we could have envisioned thanking Hashem for Israel without those specific praises for the land. Rabbeinu Yonah explains that we use these particular words because they are used in Tanach for that purpose. Hashem’s initial address to Moshe described Israel as “a *good* and *spacious* land.” (Shemot 3:8) Yirmiyahu called Israel *desirable*, describing the land that Hashem will grant to the re-unified Jewish nation in a Messianic time. (Yirmiyahu 3:19)

It is easy to understand why we would describe Israel as desirable and good; in our parshah, Yehoshua and Kalev emphasized these aspects of the land. (Bamidbar 14:7-8) But in what sense is Israel spacious? It was broad enough for the initial nation of Jews who entered from the wilderness, but is it truly spacious enough for all of us?

We might suggest three answers:

- Hashem’s initial promise to Avraham in Bereishit 15:18-21 was for more than the land outlined in Bamidbar 34. The original borders extended from the Nile to the Euphrates; this is the “spacious land” that Hashem gave us. We may

add the idea that in the future Israel will also extend westward, including islands found in the Mediterranean. (Tosafot Gittin 8a *Rabbi Yehudah*)

- In the same sentence in which Yirmiyahu describes Israel as spacious, he calls Israel *nachalat tzvi*. The word *tzvi* can mean “desire”, and so the simple meaning of those words is “desirable portion.” (Radak to Yirmiyahu 3:19) But the Sages noted that the word *tzvi* can also refer to a deer, and so they commented that Israel is like a deer. Just as the hide of a deer shrivels when it is removed from the flesh, so too the land of Israel seemed to shrivel when the Jews were exiled. When we return to the land, it will expand to meet the needs of all of the inhabitants. (Gittin 57a)
- Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (*S’fat Emet*, Bo 5664) contends that the praise of Israel as “spacious” is meant on a spiritual level, describing the land as a place in which our potential to grow as Jews is unfettered. This contrasts Israel with Egypt (*Mitzrayim*), the land of spiritual boundaries (*metzarim*), where the king and the land enslaved us. In Israel, we are able to expand spiritually like nowhere else, and for this opportunity we thank Hashem in Birkat haMazon.

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Biography

Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet

Rabbi Adam Frieberg

Born in 1235 in Barcelona, Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet (Rashba) was one of the primary students of both Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) and Rabbeinu Yonah. In his younger years, Rashba was a merchant, but he ultimately left business for the rabbinate. As Rabbi of the main synagogue in Barcelona, Rashba led Spanish Jewry for more than 50 years. Rashba was well versed in Roman law, Spanish common law, and economics; this enabled him to lead the Jewish communities of the Spanish provinces and to serve as their representative to the greater Spanish community. As a prominent leader of the Jewish people, Rashba successfully defended the community in the theological debates with Christians (Shu"t HaRashba 4:187).

Rashba wrote prolifically; more than 3000 of his teshuvot are still extant. He received requests for halachic guidance from all over the Jewish world. This is likely due in part to the geographic centrality of Barcelona, relative to major Jewish centres of the time - Portugal, France, Germany, Turkey, North Africa, Italy, and Israel. Also, Barcelona was itself a prominent Jewish community.

Rashba also wrote halachic tracts; two of his most famous are *Torat haBayit* and *Avodat HaKodesh*. *Torat haBayit* has been preserved in two versions, one long and the other short, both of which are usually printed together.

The turn of the Jewish millennium in 5000 (1240) created much messianic fervor in the Jewish community. Rashba ensured the unity of the Jewish community by combating false messiahs, most prominently Nissim ben Avraham and Avraham Abulafia when they appeared in the latter half of the 13th century (ibid. 1:548).

Rashba vigorously defended Rambam against his detractors, but he disagreed with Rambam's approach to general philosophy and the philosophy of Judaism. Indeed, Rashba, as part of the Beit Din in Barcelona, forbade those under thirty from learning secular philosophy and the sciences.

Rashba passed away at the age of 75, in 1310. Among Rashba's works are his novellae on the Talmud, *Torat HaBayit*, *Avodat HaKodesh* and *Sha'ar HaMayim*. His most renowned students were Rabbi Aharon haLevi (Ra'ah), Rabbi Yom Tov al-Asvilli (Ritva) and Rabbeinu Bechayye.

Weekly Halachah

Drinking While Sitting, in General and for Havdalah

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Customs differ regarding sitting or standing for Havdalah.

- Tosafot rule that both the person reciting Havdalah and those hearing it should sit so that they are considered "settled". The Shulchan Aruch accepts this position.
- The Rama records that Ashkenazi practice is to stand. Some explain that this is to show honour as we escort the Shabbat Queen out.

The Mishneh Berurah rules that even if one stands for the recitation of Havdalah, he should sit to drink the wine. This is based on a statement found in Derech Eretz Zuta, that a Talmid Chacham should not eat standing up.

Some contend that the preference for sitting when eating applies specifically to Torah scholars, assuming that it is part of the higher standards we expect of them. Others seem to extend this expectation to all people; three reasons are cited for this:

- 1) One is *derech erez*, the civil ways in which we comport ourselves.
- 2) A second concern relates to health, assuming that eating while standing is less healthy.
- 3) The Arizal was said to be very concerned about this issue for Kabbalistic reasons.

Authorities note that most people do not insist on sitting when eating, and the Steipler Gaon was said to have drunk water or coffee standing. Many therefore suggest that this may not be a matter of strict law. In the 19th century, Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad suggested that if the issue is based on health concerns, perhaps nature has changed. Nevertheless, as seen in the case of Havdalah, some authorities do treat it as a matter of law.

Some suggest that specifically when travelling there is more room to be lenient.

(Gittin 70a; Derech Eretz Zuta 5; Tosafot Berachot 43a s.v. *ho'il*; Shulchan Aruch OC 296:6; Magen Avraham ibid. 4; Mishneh Berurah ibid. 6 and 27; Shulchan Aruch HaRav ibid. 15; Elya Rabbah ibid. 14 and OC 170:23; Ketzot HaShulchan 39:3; Be'er Heiteiv OC 170:16; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Deiot 4:3; Maaseh Rav #150; Rokeach 329; Shu"t Rav Pa'alim 2:45; Ben Ish Chai Bereishit 2:29; Orchof Rabbeinu 3:222; Shilhi Dekayta 49 citing Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky; <https://tinyurl.com/yvryh68u>)

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Sefer haChinuch #31:

Kiddush and Havdalah, Part 1

By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

In the Torah's first presentation of the *aseret hadibrot* (ten commandments), Shemot 20:8 commands, "Call to mind the day of Shabbat, to sanctify it," requiring verbal invocation of the day's sanctity: *kiddush*. Sefer haChinuch codifies this as the Torah's 31st mitzvah. In the second presentation of the *aseret hadibrot*, Devarim 5:12, commands, "Guard the day of Shabbat, to sanctify it," prohibiting *melachah*. The Talmud links the two, teaching that as women are obligated in the prohibition against *melachah*, they are also obligated in the mitzvah of *kiddush*, even though they are often exempt from time-bound commandments. (Berachot 20b)

This obligation of women in *kiddush* may actually extend to all of the mitzvot of Shabbat. Rabbi Moshe Goldberg zt"l quoted Rabbeinu Nisim (Shabbat 44a *b'dapei haRif*): "Rabbeinu Tam wrote that women are obligated to eat three meals on Shabbat and to use two loaves of bread because they were involved in the miracle of the manna, but there is no need [for that explanation]. For all of the deeds of Shabbat, men and women are equal, as we learn from the linkage of 'Call to mind' and 'Guard' that whoever is obligated to guard Shabbat is obligated to call it to mind. This includes all of the duties of Shabbat." [See, too, Shu"t Rabbi Akiva Eiger III 80.]

Rabbi Goldberg used Rabbeinu Nisim's application to all of the laws of Shabbat to explain why Sefer haChinuch did not explicitly note women's obligation each time he presented a mitzvah of Shabbat; he understood this obligation as a global, overarching principle. (Ha'Emek 13, pp. 29-30)

To be continued...

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Some of our classes are now on summer hiatus, but many opportunities remain!

Shabbat June 16-17

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Milevsky Bais Medrash) (men)

After minchah, Idan Rakovsky, Halachah in the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

Sun. June 18

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver, Clanton Park (men): Hilchot Seudah

8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, The Sanhedrin: The Audacious Attempt to Reawaken the Assembly,
Week 2 of 2 For location email janstandig@torontotorah.com

Mon. June 19

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Jewish Zoo, Week 3, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>

7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Ethics: Compelling Medical Treatment
CME-approved, Laypeople welcome

ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>, Register: <https://torontotorah.com/cme>

8:00 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah, Shomrai Shabbos (men)

Tues. June 20

8:00 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Sefer Emunah uBitachon, Village Shul

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Wisdom of King Solomon: Kohelet, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park (women)

Wed. June 21

8:00 PM R' Steven Gotlib, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Differences, The Village Shul

8:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Shir haShirim, Shaarei Tefillah

1 hour before minchah R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Thurs. June 22

8:00 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Jewish Mysticism, Village Shul

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah (advanced), for location: ymannt@torontotorah.com

COMING UP!

SHABBAT JUNE 23-24

MACHLOKET: A SHABBATON OF THOUGHT AND INSPIRATION AT SHAAREI SHOMAYIM

FEATURING:

MODERN MACHLOKET MARATHON: A PARADE OF DISPUTES
A SERIES OF BRIEF PRESENTATIONS ON HISTORIC JEWISH DISAGREEMENTS
7:00 PM IN THE SHARP SANCTUARY

REFORM AND ORTHODOXY, RABBI STEVEN GOTLIB

FUNDING KOLLEL STUDY, RABBI YEHUDA MANN

GERMAN REPARATIONS FOR THE HOLOCAUST, REBBETZIN EMMA TAYLOR

DISOBEYING ORDERS IN THE IDF, RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

THE RETURN OF TECHELET, RABBI JARED ANSTANDIG

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