



#187 • VAERA • 26 TEVET, 5778 • 1/13/18

DAF KESHER

SHAPPELL'S / YESHIVA DARCHE NOAM · MIDRESHET RACHEL V'CHAYA · JACK E. GINDI Z"L PATHWAYS ISRAEL & PATHWAYS PLUS

We mourn the tragic death of Rabbi Raziel Shevach, הר"ד, murdered in a terrorist attack this week.

DVAR TORAH SUFFERING AND SALT

Last week's Parshah ended with Moshe Rabbeinu expressing his doubts to Hashem about the progress of the redemption: "Ever since I came to Pharaoh he has harmed this People and you have not saved Your People" (Shemot 5:20). Hashem's response to Moshe includes: "I have also heard the cry of the Children of Israel about how Egypt is enslaving them, and I will remember **My covenant**" (Shemot 6:5). What covenant does this refer to? It is unlikely that it refers to the covenant with the forefathers, because in the previous verse Hashem already said "I kept My covenant with them (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov)."

Harav Mordechai Eliahu, זצ"ל (1929-2010, former Chief Rabbi of Israel, in his Divrei Mordechai on Shemot, pp. 57-58), makes a suggestion based on the following passage in the Talmud about yissurin, suffering. The Gemara (Berachot 5a) quotes two different sources which prove that suffering purifies a person of his sins. One source, cited by Rabbi Yochanan, is based on the halachah that a servant goes free if his master knocks out his tooth or eye (see Shemot 21:26-27). The Gemara applies "kal vachomer" logic: If the loss of one limb sets a person free, then certainly suffering, which affects an entire person, should free him of his sins. Reish Lakish cites a different source, using a "gezeirah shavah" mechanism. The word "ברית" – covenant" is used in conjunction with salt ("מֶלַח" – the salt of your G-d's covenant," Vayikra 2:13), and it is also used in conjunction with suffering ("אֵלֶּה דְבָרֵי הַבְּרִית" – these are the words of the covenant," Devarim 28:69, immediately following 54 verses about the sufferings Israel will encounter if do not live according to Hashem's mitzvot). Just as salt improves the taste of meat ("sweetens" it), so yissurin cleanse people.

He quotes commentators who suggest that there might be practical ramifications to this debate about which source teaches us that yissurin cleanse a person of sin. A slave only goes free if his own master knocks out his eye or tooth, not if anyone else does. But anyone's salt improves anyone's meat. If we plug that distinction in to the dispute between Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish, it turns out that they have two approaches about how yissurin work. According to the approach that the source for the efficacy of yissurin is derived from the slave going free if his master knocked out his eye or tooth, only if the sufferer appreciates that his Master, Hashem, struck him with yissurin will they be effective. On the other hand, if the source is that salt improves meat, yissurin are effective even if the person experiencing them does not acknowledge their Divine source.

This second approach, says Rav Mordechai Eliahu, is what Hashem tried to communicate to Moshe at the beginning of our Parshah. The People of Israel experienced the suffering and pain of Egyptian slavery. Even though they weren't then conscious of its Divine origin – that the Egyptian taskmasters were only Hashem's messengers and that Hashem wanted them to be purified and refined – those yissurin still accomplished their goal. Just as anyone's salt preserves meat, so even perceived Egyptian-sourced suffering will free the Jewish People. Hashem said to Moshe: Not only did I make a covenant with the forefathers, but Israel repented and is cleansed of their sins because "I will remember My covenant" of salt. Those years of suffering cleansed them.

He ends with a prayer for the final redemption, speedily in our days, just as in the time of the Exodus.

Also in this week's Daf Keshar: Source Guide – "Getting Used to Egypt" · "Replacing Pain," by Rabbi Yitzchak Hirshfeld

SOURCE GUIDE: GETTING USED TO EGYPT

Harav Shomo Yosef Zevin, זצ"ל (1888-1978), wrote an essay on Parshat Vaera (in לתורה ולמועדים pp. 80-81), whose springboard is a comment by the author of the Sfat Emet (by Harav Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, זצ"ל, the Gerrer Rebbe, 1847-1905). That essay focuses on the pros and cons of habitually done mitzvot and habitually done aveirot. This source guide is based on his essay.

A. Getting Used to Egypt

The fourth of the "four expressions of redemption" is the following verse:

<p>1. Shemot 6:7 I will take you for Me as a Nation and I will be for you a G-d, and you will know that I and Hashem your G-d who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.</p>	<p>שמות ו:ז וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֻלוֹת מִצְרָיִם.</p>
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The author of the Sfat Emet quotes his grandfather, the author of Chidushei Harim (Harav Yitzchak Meir Alter, זצ"ל, 1798–1866, the first Gerrer Rebbe), who introduces a new layer of meaning to the word סבלות:

<p>2. Sfat Emet – Parshat Vaera - 5631 "I will take you out ... of the burdens of Egypt." I heard from my grandfather, my master and teacher of blessed memory that the meaning of סבלות is that they will not be able to bear the impurity of Egypt. From this later came the redemption.</p>	<p>שפת אמת - פרשת וארא - שנת תרל"א "והוצאתי אתכם כו' סבלות מצרים כו'": שמעתי מאא"ז מו"ר זצלה"ה פי' סבלות שלא יוכלו לסבול עכ"פ טומאת מצרים. ומזה בא הגאולה אח"כ.</p>
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After decades and decades of living in Egypt, the Jews got used to its impurity. Only when they reached the level where they could no longer stand the impurity of Egypt were they ready for redemption.

B. Getting Used to Mitzvot and Aveirot

A person, through habit, can also get used to doing mitzvot. Mitzvot done out of habit are referred to with the expression מצות אנשים מלומדה, used in the following verse:

<p>3. Yishayah 29:13 Hashem said: Since this Nation approaches; with their mouth and lips they honor Me, but their heart is far from Me; and their fear of Me became a habitually learned command.</p>	<p>ישעיה כט:יג וַיֹּאמֶר ה' יַעַן כִּי נִגַּשׁ הָעָם הַזֶּה בְּפִי וּבִשְׂפָתָיו כְּבֹדוּנִי וְלִבּוֹ רִחַק מִמֶּנִּי וְתִהְיֶה יְרֵאָתָם אֵתִי מִצְוֹת אֲנָשִׁים מִלְּמֻדָּה.</p>
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The expression מצות אנשים מלומדה is usually used as a pejorative. It refers to mitzvot people were trained to perform, and continue to do by force of habit, without thinking, and certainly without enthusiasm and excitement. However, suggests Rav Zevin, aveirot done out of habit could also be referred to as עבירות אנשים מלומדה. A person can continue to sin out of momentum, unthinkingly continuing learned behavior.

B. Pros and Cons of Habitual Mitzvot and Habitual Aveirot

There are pros and cons of מצות אנשים מלומדה and עבירות אנשים מלומדה. The negative side of mitzvot done by habit is clear. Mitzvot are supposed to be done motivated by love and awe Hashem. They are to be done with excitement and zest. They are to be done with joy:

<p>4. Devarim 28:47 [The punishments will befall you] since you did not serve Hashem your G-d out of joy and good heartedness, from an abundance of good.</p>	<p>דברים כח:מז תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרֹב פֶּל.</p>
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On the other hand, there is still a positive side to מצות אנשים מלומדה, mitzvot done by force of habit. Even though the mitzvah is done without enthusiasm or deep intention, it still gets done:

<p>5. Yerushalmi Berachot 2:4 Rabbi Matanyah said: I am thankful to my head, for when I reach "Modim" it bows by itself.</p>	<p>ירושלמי ברכות ב:ד א"ר מתניה אנא מחזק טיבו לראשי דכד הוה מטי מודים הוא כרע מגרמיה.</p>
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Rabbi Matanyah described his problems having proper concentration during prayer (commentators point out that some of the sages had difficulty concentrating because they were so engrossed in Torah study – and they spoke frankly about their difficulties). However, because he had been praying for years and years, he kept praying as if on auto-pilot.

Perhaps in our morning prayers we relate to this issue in the following prayer:

<p>6. Siddur – Morning Blessings May it be the Will before You, Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers that you accustom us to Your Torah and have us cling to You through Your mitzvot.</p>	<p>סידור – ברכות השחר ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלֵינו ואלֵינו אבותינו שִׁתְּרֵנו בְּתוֹרַתְךָ וּבְקִנּוּ בְּמִצְוֹתֶיךָ ...</p>
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Though of course any sin is negative, the problematic side of עבירות אנשים מלומדה, sins done by force of habit, is tempered. The sinner doesn't do them out of any negativity towards Hashem, G-d forbid, and isn't even enticed by the evil inclination to do them. He simply does them, thoughtlessly.

On the other hand, one who became habituated to sin has a terribly difficult time breaking away:

<p>7. Kiddushin 40a Rav Huna said: When a person commits a sin and repeats it, it is permitted to him. Do you think it is permitted to him?! Rather, it becomes to him as if it is permitted.</p>	<p>קידושין מ. אמר רב הונא: כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה הותרה לו. הותרה לו סלקא דעתך? אלא נעשית לו כהיתר.</p>
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The same theme underlies the following passage:

<p>8. Bava Kamma 67b Rabbi Akiva said: Why did the Torah say that [someone who stole a sheep or ox] then slaughtered or sold it pays four or five times the value of what he stole? The reason is because he became deeply rooted in sin.</p>	<p>בבא קמא סז: אמר ר' עקיבא: מפני מה אמרה תורה טבח ומכר משלם תשלומי ארבעה וחמשה? מפני שנשתרש בחטא.</p>
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Rav Ulla uses a powerful image to illustrate the problem of habituation to sin:

<p>9. Shabbat 31b Rav Ulla expounded: What is meant by the verse “Do not be too evil” (Kohelet 7:17)? Should one only not do too much evil but a little is fine?! Rather, one who ate garlic and his breath stinks – should he eat more garlic and his breath will stink even more?</p>	<p>שבת לא: דרש רב עולא: מאי דכתיב “אל תרשע הרבה וגו'” (קהלת ז:ז)? הרבה הוא דלא לירשע הא מעט לירשע? ! אלא, מי שאכל שום וריחו נודף יחזור ויאכל שום אחר ויהא ריחו נודף?</p>
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C. Practical Conclusions

- Breaking out of bad behavior as soon as possible prevents getting rooted in sin. Rather than saying, “Anyways I've got garlic on my breath, I might as well eat another clove,” a person should stop eating the garlic. Stop sinning immediately.
- Developing good habits will result in good baseline behavior even when not thinking or enthusiastic.
- Mitzvot should always be done with depth of intention and with joy and excitement.
- Jews should never tolerate impure culture, even if stuck in it. The Jews' intolerance of Egyptian impurity was their first step towards redemption.

REPLACING PAIN BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

Hashem told Moshe: “I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt ... I will redeem you ... I will take you to Me as a nation (when I give you the Torah at Mount Sinai – Ibn Ezra and Sforno)” (Shemot 6:6-7). This process the People of Israel went through, from שעבוד מצרים to יציאת מצרים to מתן תורה – from Egyptian slavery to the Exodus to the giving of the Torah – was a transition from Divine hiddenness to Divine revelation.

How can we experience the same transition on a personal level?

The key lies in a surprising passage from the Zohar (1:27a) about a verse in last week's Parshah (Shemot 1:14):
"וימררו את חייהם בעבודה קשה – בקושיא; 'בחומר' – בקל וחומר; 'ובלבנים' – בלבון הלכתא; 'ובכל עבודה בשדה' – דא ...
... ברייתא: 'They embittered our lives through hard work' – through raising difficulties (asking questions while learning Torah); 'through clay' – through kal vachomer; 'through bricks' – through clarifying halachah; 'and through all work in the field' – this refers to baraita ..."

What is behind these cryptic words? Though it is true that the Torah's word קשה evokes associations with the word קושיא, חומר reminds us of וחומר, קל וחומר, and the same is the case for לבנים (ליבון) and שדה (בר means outside and is sometimes used to refer to the fields, as in חיות ברא, the animals of the field) – what is hidden within this passage?

Harav Gedalyahu Schorr, זצ"ל (1910–1979, who served as Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas and Beis Medresh Elyon, in Section 2 of his Or Gedalyahu on Shemot) learned two things from the words of the Zohar.

One is that the physical suffering of Egyptian slavery led to Am Yisrael becoming spiritually refined. Egypt is referred to as the כור הברזל, the iron crucible where impurities are removed from precious metal. In order to be ready for the spirituality of the Torah, the Jewish People's physicality had to be limited and subjugated.

True, Torah itself elevates. But Torah comes from a sphere beyond the boundaries of physicality and can only reside within a person and nation where the hierarchy of physical and spiritual is clear. The soul is superior to the body; body is subservient to the soul. Egyptian slavery forced the Children of Israel to realize that. Their physical bodies suffered so their spirit was able to develop.

But the Or Gedalyahu has a second insight into this passage in the Zohar. The Zohar also teaches us to replace the pain of the body with the pain of the spirit, the עבודה קשה with the קושיא. Toil in Torah, the hard work involved in raising difficulties and trying to solve them, can replace יסורי הגוף, physical suffering. As the verse says, "אַשְׁרֵי הַגֵּבֶר אֲשֶׁר תִּיסְרְנוּ יָהּ וּמַתְּרִתָּהּ תִּלְמְדֶנּוּ" – Fortunate is the man whom You, G-d, chastise, and from Your Torah You teach him" (Tehillim 94:12). Fortunate is the man who gets his מוסר and יסורין through exerting himself in Torah.

Through these Parshiot at the beginning of the Book of Shemot the People of Israel moved from hiddenness to revelation. When the slavery begins Hashem's Presence was hidden and gradually His Name became more and more revealed to Moshe and Israel. Our goal is that also in our personal lives Hashem's Torah will no longer be hidden from us.

But it is not the Torah that is covered up – there is no shell around its sweet fruit. We ourselves are covered up. We must refine ourselves, crack ourselves open, in order to meet the Torah. We must toil, through kushiot and teirutzim, through clarifying the halachah, in order for our spiritual soul to triumph over our physicality. Then we too will merit the revelation of Torah.

שבת שלום ומבורך

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The following digital Torah resources have been extremely helpful in researching and preparing the Shapell's Daf Keshet:
DBS – Hataklitor Hatorani, Otzar Hachochmah, the Bar Ilan Responsa Project, Hebrewbooks.org, and the Tanach section of Chabad.org.

We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing, for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.