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PARSHAT EMOR פרשת אמור – YOM HAZIKARON – YOM HA'ATZMAUT

This issue is dedicated in memory of Israel's fallen soldiers and victims of terror attacks, **ד"הי"ד**, of blessed memory.

DVAR TORAH

THE OMER AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish caution: One should not take the mitzvah of Omer lightly, for it was in the merit of the mitzvah of Omer that Avraham merited inheriting the Land of Israel (Vayikra Rabbah 28:6). Why, of all the מצוות התלויות בארץ, those commandments only obligatory in the Land of Israel, was Omer singled out?

Commentators on the Midrash Rabbah deal with an additional problem: The Midrash's derivation from Bereishit 17:8 is puzzling. "I will give you and your descendants after you [the Land of Israel as an eternal inheritance]," says Hashem, "on the condition that 'You [and your descendants] will keep My covenant (וְאַתָּה אֶת בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר)'" "What does this refer to?" asks the Midrash. It answers that it refers to the mitzvah of the Omer. Isn't that verse referring to Brit Milah? Furthermore, where does that verse mention the Omer?

The answer to this last question is based on a verse in Yirmiyahu (quoted by an earlier Midrash in conjunction with the Omer). The prophet chastises the People of Israel for straying from service of Hashem, like wayward sons. "Why did you not say in your hearts, 'We should fear G-d who provides the rains, the יורה rains at the beginning of the season and the מלקוש rains at its end, all in their proper times? He keeps for us [His] oaths that the harvest should come regularly (שִׁבְעַת הַקָּוֹת קָצִיר יִשְׁמֹר לָנוּ)". The expression יִשְׁמֹר לָנוּ connects with וְאַתָּה אֶת בְּרִיתִי תִשְׁמֹר, but what does this have to do with the Omer?

The Maharal (Or Chadash 182) explains that the Omer sacrifice recognizes Hashem's constant control of nature. He made a covenant with the world after the Great Flood that he would keep the seasons going regularly. Those are the oaths that He keeps for us.

Our constant consciousness of G-d's constant Providence over us in the Land of Israel through nature merited our constant connection with the Land. Because of the Omer, Hashem gave Avraham the Land of Israel as an eternal inheritance to his descendants, for all generations.

The Omer was the first mitzvah tied to the Land of Israel that the Jews kept when they crossed the Yarden River with Yehoshua and entered the Land (They offered a Pesach sacrifice in Egypt and in the desert.). The Omer is brought from the very first harvest, the barley harvest in early spring. Like Brit Milah, where immediately after birth a father affirms his son's covenant with G-d through a sign on his body, the Omer affirms our connection with G-d through the Land of Israel immediately as the harvest begins.

Season after season we brought the Omer offering in the Beit Hamikdash and season after season Hashem would bring the rains on the fields of Israel. The Omer is about our constant connection with Hashem.

The very next comment of the Midrash is: Do not take the mitzvah of the Omer lightly, for the Omer (like the Sotah offering, from barley) brings peace between a husband and wife. The Omer affirms that our connection with Hashem in the Land of Israel is a covenant, like the marriage between a husband and wife.

SOURCE GUIDE: INGATHERING OF THE EXILES

The starting point of this week's source guide is a verse in the Book of Yishayahu foretelling the return of the People of Israel to their land. A comment by the Malbim about the wording of that verse brings out two different aspects of the ingathering of the exiles.

A. The Lost of Israel, the Scattered of Yehudah

Yishayahu's prophecy about the ingathering of the exiles – part of the Haftarah of the 8th day of Pesach and read by many on the morning of Yom Ha'atzmaut – includes a double expression:

<p>1. Yishayahu 11:12 ... And He will bring in the lost ones of Israel and gather the scattered ones of Yehudah from the four corners of the world.</p>	<p>ישעיה יא:יב ... וְאַסַּף נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּנְפֻצוֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ.</p>
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Harav Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel, זצ"ל, (1809-1879) known by his acronym as "the Malbim," paid close attention to the subtle differences between seemingly synonymous words, and devoted a special section of commentary on the Tanach to clarifying the precise meanings of biblical words. He notes that our verse uses two contrasting pairs of words: וְאַסַּף goes along with נְדָחֵי whereas יִקְבֹּץ is paired with נְפֻצוֹת. What are the precise meanings of these two roots – אָסַף and קָבַץ?

אָסַף means to bring something in to a special place. To illustrate this the Malbim gives a number of examples:

<p>2. Malbim on Yishayahu 11:12 – Word Explanations We mostly find the root אָסַף used for bringing something in to a special place ... "He (Yosef) brought them in to jail" (Bereishit 42:17), "... No man (of the people of Givah in Binyamin) took them (the Levite and his concubine) into their home ..." (Shoftim 19:15).</p>	<p>מלבי"ם לישעיה יא:יב - חלק באור המלים פעל אסף מצאנוהו ברוב על כניסת איזה דבר למקום מיוחד ... "וַיֹּאסֶף אֹתָם אֶל מִשְׁמֶר ... (בראשית מ"ב:יז)", "... וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֶסֶף אוֹתָם הַבֵּיתָה ... (שופטים י"ט:טו)."</p>
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This is why אָסַף was chosen to describe the return of "the lost ones of Israel." They were outside of their land and G-d brought them back. The Malbim notes the contrast between Yehudah and Yisrael in our verse:

<p>3. Malbim on Yishayahu 11:12 – Topical Explanations "He will gather" – the Ten Tribes that are not scattered but displaced. They are all living together beyond the river Kush, according to the tradition of our Sages. He will bring them in and have them enter their land.</p>	<p>מלבי"ם לישעיה יא:יב - חלק באור הענין "ואסף" - העשרת השבטים שהם אינם מפוזרים רק נדחים ממקומם מהלאה לנהרי כוש, ושם יושבים כולם מקובצים יחד, כמו שבא בקבלת חז"ל, אותם יאסוף ויכנס לארצם.</p>
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The root קָבַץ, in contrast, "always means gathering together things that were scattered." The Malbim illustrates this contrast in two other verses:

<p>4. Yishayahu 13:14 He (Bavel) will be like a lost deer and like sheep with no one to gather them ...</p> <p>Bereishit 49:1 Yaakov called out to his sons: Come in and I will tell you what will happen to you in the end of days. Gather together and listen, sons of Yaakov; and listen to Yisrael your father.</p>	<p>ישעיה יג:יד וְהָיָה כְּצִבֵי מִדְּחַ וּכְצֹאֵן וְאִין מְקַבֵּץ ...</p> <p>בראשית מט:א-ב (א) וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בְּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאִסְפוּ וְאִגְדְּהָ לָּכֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא אֶתְכֶם בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים. (ב) הִקְבְּצוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וְשִׁמְעוּ אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיכֶם.</p>
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Sheep flock together and are gathered by a shepherd; whereas the deer is a loner but needs to return to his own place. Yaakov brought his sons into his room before his death; but he sensed that there was still need for inner unity between them. That explains his double call before blessing them. The Ten Tribes were exiled by Sancheriv. They were relocated as a unified group, but need to return to their land, the Land of Israel. But the Kingdom of Yehudah, after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, was scattered all over the world and also needs to be gathered together. The ingathering of the exiles includes two aspects – entering the Land of Israel and gathering

together. The prophecy of Yishayahu develops both of these aspects, unity and return:

<p>5. Yishayahu 11:11-13 (11) And it shall come to pass that on that day, G-d will continue, a second time, to with His hand acquire the rest of His nation, that will remain from Assyria and from Egypt and from Patros and from Cush and from Elam and from Sumeria and from Hamat and from the islands of the sea. (12) And He will raise a banner to the nations, and He will gather the lost ones of Israel; and the scattered ones of Yehudah He will gather from the four corners of the earth. (13) And the envy of Efraim shall cease, and the adversaries of Yehudah will be cut off; Efraim will not envy Yehudah, nor will Yehudah aggravate Efraim.</p>	<p>ישעיה יא:יא-יג (יא) וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יוֹסִיף אֲדֹנָי שְׁנִית יְדוֹ לְקַנּוֹת אֶת שְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר שְׂאֵר מֵאֲשׁוּר וּמִמִּצְרַיִם וּמִמִּצְרָוֹס וּמִכּוּשׁ וּמִעִלָּם וּמִשִּׁנְעָר וּמִחֲמַת וּמֵאֵי הַיָּם. (יב) וְנִשָּׂא נֶס לְגוֹיִם וְאָסַף גְּדֻחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּנְפֻצוֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ. (יג) וְסָרָה קִנְאֵת אֶפְרַיִם וְצָרְרֵי יְהוּדָה יִכְרְתוּ אֶפְרַיִם לֹא יִקְנֵא אֶת יְהוּדָה וְיְהוּדָה לֹא יֵצֵר אֶת אֶפְרַיִם.</p>
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B. Ingathering of the Exiles in the Shemoneh Esrei

In light of the Malbim’s observation about Yishayahu’s prophecy let us now take a closer look at the tenth blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei that focuses on **קיבוץ גלויות**, the ingathering of the exiles. It opens based on another verse in Yishayahu:

<p>6. Yishayahu 27:13 And it shall be on that day, that a great shofar shall be sounded, and those lost in the land of Assyria and those exiled in the land of Egypt shall come and they shall prostrate themselves before the Lord on the holy mountain in Yerushalayim.</p>	<p>ישעיה כז:יג וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גְּדוֹל וּבָאוּ הָאֲבָדִים בְּאָרֶץ אֲשׁוּר וְהַגְּדָחִים בְּאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לֵה' בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם.</p>
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<p>7. Siddur – Silent Prayer Blow the great shofar for our freedom. Raise a banner to gather our exiles. And gather us together from the four corners of the world. Blessed are You, Hashem, the one who gathers the exiles of His nation Israel.</p>	<p>סדר תפלה – סדר עמידה נוסח אשכנז תִּקְעַ עַל גְּדוֹל לְחֵרֻתֵנוּ. וְנִשָּׂא נֶס לְקַבֵּץ גְּלוּתֵינוּ. וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יְחַד (מִהַרְה) מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפוֹת הָאָרֶץ (לְאַרְצֵנוּ). בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מְקַבֵּץ גְּדוּחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p>
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- Note how the two aspects of the ingathering of the exiles are woven together in the blessing.
- What is the relevance of the two additions words that appear in some versions of this prayer? Eidot Hamizrach and some versions of Nusach Sfarad tack on the word **וְאַרְצֵנוּ** iand some versions of Nusach Sfarad add the word **מִהַרְה**.
- Note how the closing of the blessing combines **מְקַבֵּץ** with **גְּדוּחֵי**: Is that out of sync with the Malbim’s approach to Yishayahu 11:12?

Further Learning

The Maharal (Gur Aryeh on Devarim 30:3) comments on a cryptic Midrash Rashi quotes about the return of the People of Israel to the Land of Israel. The Torah says, **וְיָשָׁב ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרָחַמְךָ וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצֶךָ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר** “Hashem will return **with** your exile and have mercy over you; and He will return and gather you together from all of the nations where He scattered you” (Devarim 30:3). Rashi comments: **“רבותינו – למדו מכאן כביכול שהשכינה שרויה עם ישראל בצרת גלותם וכשנגאלין הכתיב גאולה לעצמו שהוא ישוב עמהם”** “Our rabbis learned from the formulation of this verse that, so to speak, that the Divine Presence dwells among Israel during the distress of their exile; and when they are redeemed He formulates the verse as if He Himself was redeemed. He will return along with them.” When Israel returns to its land, Hashem, so to speak, returns along with them.

- The Maharal takes on the question: Why, even though Hashem sent Israel into exile because of their sins, did He, so to speak, write in the Torah that He Himself went into exile and returns to Israel with them?

MAINTAINING THE BALANCE

BY RABBI YISROEL CHOLEVA

The end of Parshat Kedoshim and the beginning of Parshat Emor seem unrelated. Emor begins with the verse, "Hashem said to Moshe: Say to the Kohanim the sons of Aharon and tell them, 'Each of you shall not contaminate himself to a dead person among his people'" (Vayikra 21:1). Parshat Kedoshim closes with a warning against consulting with Ov or Yidoni, a pagan practice punishable by death. Asks the Baal Haturim: What is the connection between the end of Parshat Kedoshim and the beginning of Parshat Emor?

He answers that the purpose of Ov and Yidoni was to consult the dead in order to reveal the future. Therefore, if a Jew asks, "How will we know the future since the avenue of Ov and Yidoni has been prohibited to us?" we can therefore answer, "Turn to the Kohanim who will ask G-d through the Urim Vetumim, part of the special garments of the High Priest, and thereby know the future."

There is a very important principle being taught here by the juxtaposition of the Ov and Yidoni of Parshat Kedoshim to the Kohanim of Parshat Emor. Every force in this world has a positive aspect balanced by a negative aspect. In our example, there is an improper way to reveal the future, through Ov and Yidoni; and, alternatively, there is a path of holiness to reveal the future, through the Kohanim.

We see this principle – that there is an equal negative force to every positive force – in the famous Gemara that tells of how the sages got together and nullified the evil inclination for idolatry (Sanhedrin 64a). At the same time that this desire was eliminated the power of prophecy was taken from us. The world must exist in a balance between good and evil; and therefore, if one is weakened; to maintain the balance the other must also be diminished.

However, this correlation works in the reverse direction as well. If there is a particularly negative force growing in the world logic dictates that to maintain the balance an equally strong positive force must be emerging as well. When we look around the world and see the powers of evil growing and tragedies befalling those around us, we have to look out for that positive counterforce and tap into it. Just like we have the choice to follow Ov and Yidoni down a negative path we also have the choice to turn to the Kohen and strive forward towards holiness. This fundamental choice is ultimately what makes us unique as human beings – the ability to choose good over evil when they are at equilibrium.

Let us look this week at different things in our own lives that we can do in a different way, a more positive and giving way, a way that infuses holiness into ourselves and those around us. Let us abandon the Ov and Yidoni and choose the path of the Kohanim, a path of turning to Hashem and following in His ways.

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