

Echoes of the Ages

"הכינו את אשר יביארו" - שמות טז :

When they prepare what they shall bring" - *Shemos* 16:5

The צדיק R' Hirsh of Riminov told the following story:

When he served as assistant to his Rebbe R' Mendel of Riminov, there came a Thursday when there was not even a penny with which to buy food for שבת. The Rebbetzen sent him in to the Rebbe to ask what to do, but he had been reluctant to disturb him when he saw him engrossed in his great level of עבודת ה'.

When the night came, the Rebbetzen asked him again to go in and again he could not bring himself to shake R' Mendel of Riminov from his devout service of G-d.

'R nehW ,gninrom txen eht revewoH sih e mit d riht a d eirt h sriH ,top hsiF eht lliF ot mih dlot ebbeR rehto eht lla dna top taem eht eht gnies .retaw htiw stop gnikooc sih fo ecaf eht no tnemredliweb

תורה, he explained how the תורה says, "when they prepare what they will bring" - we must make the preparations and the שבת will bring her blessing."

And so R' Hirsh rushed off to do as he had been told and sure enough, a villager arrived, requesting if he could stay over for שבת. He had brought with him a loaded wagon, full of all the goods needed for שבת in abundance.

R' Hirsh of Riminov concluded his story by explaining: In the ברכת it says "And they shall place My Name on בני ישראל and I shall bless them." הקדוש ברוך הוא commanded the כהנים to make all the preparations that were possible for them to make - to wash their hands, take off their shoes, spread their hands and say the blessing. Only then does it say "And I shall bless them." A person is commanded only to make the effort; to prepare the pots. The blessing itself comes from Heaven.

Adapted from "Stories My Grandfather Told Me", Shemos



עמלק Annihilating

"ויאמר ה' אל-משה כתב זאת זכרון בספר ושני באוני יהושע כי-מחה אמחה את זכר עמלק" - שמות יז :

There is a מצוה in the תורה that we must not forget what עמלק did to us, in addition to completely blotting out any memory of them. This is all because they waged war with בני ישראל, which they lost. A question is asked as to why the תורה deals with עמלק so seriously? Over the years a countless amount of nations have tried to destroy בני ישראל, why does the תורה single out עמלק for this 'special treatment' - they are the only nation that we must completely remove from this world?

Furthermore what is the actual meaning of this מצוה? How does the תורה expect us to comply with this? Nowadays there is no such nation as עמלק, so it is impossible for us to destroy them. It would be totally illogical to think that the תורה requires us to determine who is descended from עמלק, and to then destroy them!

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld answers that this commandment is not a physical commandment, rather it is more of a conceptual commandment. We are being

commanded to remove from our minds the negative spiritual influences which עמלק embodied. These influences are explained by later on in יהוה - where it says

"זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים אשר קרך בדרך"

Remember what Amalek did to you when you left מצרים, that he encountered you on the way." explain that the word קרך can mean "he cooled you off." After בני ישראל had left מצרים and having just experienced the 10 plagues and the splitting of the ים סוף, they now had great אמונה in ה'.

When עמלק attacked by killing off some of the weak and defenceless people, he had suddenly "cooled off" this extreme level of בני ישראל, causing ה' in בטחון and אמונה to wonder if ה' is still in their midst. This is the reason why the תורה specifically commands us to "blot out עמלק." It is this attitude of scepticism and uncertainty in faith - personified by עמלק - that the תורה is commanding us to eradicate rather than עמלק's physical presence.

By Benjy Epstein

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The Power of חסד

”נחית בחסדך עם זו גאלת” - שמות טו : יג

“With Your kindness You guided this people that You redeemed” - *Shemos 15:13*

The תנא דבי חפץ חיים quotes the תנא דבי חיהו on this passage. The תנא דבי חיהו says that when the בני ישראל saw the Egyptian army rushing towards them, they stopped to engage in a spiritually uplifting but otherwise puzzling act – they made an agreement amongst themselves to be kind to each other. This is of course a marvellous thing to have done. Indeed, throughout the many centuries, Jews have been characterised by their kindness to each other. But of all things to be doing while an enemy army is rushing towards you, surely this is not as good an option as, for example, praying or learning תורה? We need to understand what is going on here.

The תנא דבי חפץ חיים explains that this was indeed a worthwhile thing to do specifically at that point. The בני ישראל saw that despite their prayers, the Egyptians were still

coming at them – ה' had not yet answered them. So their last recourse of action was this agreement to be kind to each other. The request encapsulated by this act was as simple as it was powerful. They were saying to ה', "look at us! Look at our behaviour to each other! ה', we are being merciful to each other – please do the same, and be merciful to us." This was not a random act at all! It was a *gevaldik* moment, when all of בני ישראל asked ה' to mimic their behaviour for the good. This is what the גמרא ירושלמי talks about in סנהדרין. It presents a piece of advice given to us by ה': "My children! If you see that the merit of the patriarchs and matriarchs fails you, go and do חסד."

So this is how the תנא דבי חפץ חיים understands this פסוק – an example of the awesome power of kindness. In this light, we can understand exactly why the בני ישראל chose this point to institute such an extraordinary covenant. May we all be זוכה to learn from their example.

By Yisroel Greenberg

Riddle of the Week

Which three people mentioned in the תורה said ברוך ה' - Blessed is Hashem?

Last week's riddle: For which sin can a person be punished by a beis din without having first been warned?

Answer: עדים זוממין - witnesses who falsely testify in court. They are found not to have been at the location of the alleged crime (and hence lying) through the testimony of a second set of witnesses. Usually, they get treated with the exact same punishment as they tried to inflict on the accused, even death.

Gratitude in Unlikely Cases

” וחמשים עלו בני-ישראל מארץ מצרים” - שמות יג : יח

“And Bnei Yisrael left Egypt Armed” - *Shemos 13:18*

The בני ישראל had to leave their homes in a hurry. Egypt had been their home for hundreds of years and now they faced the uncertainty of living in the barren desert. They had limited supplies of food and clothes as they raced into the unknown. It was clear to them that if they were going to survive in such a wilderness they would see the hand of ה', as they would live in a miraculous way. The תורה does tell us that they did have supplies of weapons, so they were at least prepared for a war. Indeed, they faced war only one week after leaving Egypt, when the Egyptians chased them to the brink of the ים סוף. Yet we find that the בני ישראל did not respond by attacking the Egyptians and fighting - instead they became scared and screamed in terror. Why did they not fight? Did they not realise that they were given the weapons to use?

The בני ישראל explains that בני ישראל did not refuse to fight; they were not allowed to fight. It would not be correct for the בני ישראל themselves to kill the Egyptians, whose land they had lived in all their lives. They owed a debt of gratitude to the

Egyptians no matter how harsh their masters had been - which would be cast aside if they killed them. They had no choice but to daven that they would be saved in a miraculous manner.

The תנא דבי חפץ חיים's explanation teaches us a very important perspective on life. If the בני ישראל needed to have appreciation for the Egyptians who caused them so much harm through slave labour, then all the more so should we appreciate what we have and the people who give us help. We tend to focus on the negatives; the parts of our life which do not work properly - we get frustrated with people because they do not fulfil all of our wants. The תורה teaches us what it means to have appreciation, how ה' split a sea rather than allow בני ישראל to harm the Egyptians, who gave them a home for their own selfish reasons. If we ponder the need to appreciate then our lives will be too busy with positives to focus on negatives.

By Rabbi D Muster

Quote of the Week

“A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred lashings into a fool” - משלי יז: י

Talking during Davening

There are some places during *davening* where a special effort should be made not to talk. The repetition of the עמידה is a good example of these. Also, עמידה which comes after the Friday night עמידה, has the same status as the repetition of the עמידה.