

Haftarah Weekly

Haftarah Mishpatim Yirmiyahu 34:8-22, 33:25-26

The haftarah this week begins with a description of a 'covenant' agreed between Hashem and the inhabitants of Yehuda – Judea. In it was stated that every Jew that lived in Yerushalayim would free all (Hebrew) slaves under their rule. This covenant was agreed due to the Judeans not being particular in releasing their slaves after their term of slavery had expired. Therefore their King, Tzidkiyahu, brokered a covenant between his subjects and Hashem that they would free their slaves after the legal time period.

This haftarah is fitting for Parshat Mishpatim since among the first 'mishpatim' discussed in this weeks sidrah are those concerning the enslavement of an Eved Ivri. The passuk in Mishpatim says that a slave should 'work for 6 years, and in the seventh go free.'

After the covenant was signed and the slaves released, Yirmiyahu is told by Hashem that the

Judeans had gone back on their word and had re-enslaved the newly-freed slaves. Yirmiyahu a navi who lived near the end of the time of the First Beit Hamikdash and witnessed its destruction. During his life he wrote the two books of M'lachim and the megilla of Eichah.

Yirmiyahu receives a prophecy from Hashem about what the punishment for breaking the covenant would be. He says that because Hashem's word was transgressed in the area of freeing slaves, middah K'neged middah, Hashem will make them 'free' - דרור: that is, free to death by famine, free to death by disease and free to death by conquest.

After the ominous passuk "I will make the cities of Yehudah desolate," the haftarah ends on a brighter note, with Hashem telling Yirmiyahu that although humans break their promises, Hashem does not, namely the promise that Hashem will bring the Moshiach – the 'seed of Dovid' and will return the Bnei Yisrael from galus.

M'lachah of the Week

M'napetz – Combing

This Melachah prohibits combing raw wool in order to separate its hairs. Included in this Melachah is stretching flax to thin stings of flax, and beating sinews until they are able to be spun (in the making of Tefillin). This prohibition only applies if the strings are well-tangled. For example, it is prohibited to separate tangled Tzitzit, or untangle a completely tangled-up necklace chain.

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We will do and we will Listen

עשי ושמע – But Where Does Torah Stand?

It is well known that קבלת התורה was not a one-off event; rather it repeats itself every day of our lives. However, to fully understand this idea, we must first look into the features surrounding Matan Torah and the Torah itself.

The Maharal describes the Torah as "שכל אלקי", "G-d's logic", the ultimate level of knowledge and reasoning, which, like Hashem, can have no possible boundaries or limitations. The passuk in Iyov says "ארוכה מארץ מדה". The Torah is one of Hashem's *middos*, which is what the word *middah* in the passuk is referring to, and the passuk here is saying that the Torah, by extension, is more infinite than any physical measurement or concept, even the entire earth. Furthermore, we know that the Torah was the "blueprint" for Creation, and hence, cannot be limited by any "post-Creation" boundaries. Yet, if this is all true, how is it possible for intellectually hindered, academically limited man to understand the never-ending wisdom of the Torah?

To answer this question, we must first understand that Hashem giving us the Torah was a complete gift, a true miracle. In the words of Rav Dessler, it was like putting an elephant in a matchbox. Chazal comment on the passuk, "והרחמנו מאין תמצא" – "And from where can wisdom be found?" that Torah can only be acquired through regarding oneself as nothing ('ayin' also means 'nothing' – read the passuk as a statement). This is the meaning of the B'nei Yisroel putting נעשה before נשמע; we will put Hashem's will before our desire to understand. This annulment of our wants is the way to learn Torah Lishmah (for its sake), where we remove the mundane, *limited* self. Indeed, the Mishnah in Avos tells us that anyone who learns Torah Lishmah is raised above all creations, because his pure, completely spiritual involvement in Torah means that he is raised above any restricted understanding caused by his corporeality. This is exactly what happened at הרי סיני – first we repaired our *middos*, acquired the trait of humility, and only then were we able to receive the infinite wisdom of the Torah.

This all fits very nicely. One problem. We find many Torah as an antidote to the evil inclination." According to this, the Torah is just as much a creation as anything else; it was formed specifically to battle another creation and is therefore, finite. How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

"בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין" – I created the Torah as an antidote to the evil inclination." According to this, the Torah is just as much a creation as anything else; it was formed specifically to battle another creation and is therefore, finite. How do we resolve this apparent contradiction?

We know that Matan Torah actually happened twice, and that there were two sets of Luchos. As we have already said, the Torah was first given completely השמים – we made ourselves subordinate to "רצון ה'", and the Luchos were made completely in heaven. However, after אטא העגל, the stones for the Luchos came from *earth* and the fact that Hashem engraved them is supposed to cause us to engrave the Torah onto our hearts. Therefore we see the Torah was given to refine our *middos* and was created for a particular purpose. If so, the Torah of the second Matan Torah is still part of Creation, and will be limited. This is true, but Hashem only allowed this in order for the Torah we learn to refine our *middos*. Otherwise, He would not have allowed the Torah to be limited by creation. The problem is, how does this explanation fit with learning Torah Lishmah? We defined Torah Lishmah as subjugating yourself to Hashem and then learning His Torah. Yet this explanation seems to be saying the opposite. The answer to this is that there are really two types of Lishmah – Lishmah where we learn Torah because we love Hashem, and Lishmah where we learn Torah because we enjoy it (i.e. because we love ourselves). True, compared to the former, the latter is considered Lo Lishmah, but even looking at it from this perspective, "מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה" – "we will eventually come to do it Lishmah". In our times, we must re-enact קבלת התורה every day so that eventually, we may reach the high level of learning Torah Lishmah.

Written By Nathan Witztum – Adapted from Michtav me'elyahu

Words of the Wise

When Rav Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik (R' Berel) was seriously ill, his Rebbetzin did everything she could to make him feel more comfortable. At regular intervals, she would come and visit her husband's bedside to see if he required anything. One day when she entered his room, R' Berel told his wife, "Reb Yosef Loibler is not here." Thinking she'd misheard him, the Rebbetzin asked her husband to repeat what he had said. Again, he replied "Reb Yosef Loibler is not here." The following day, R' Berel, one of the outstanding Talmidei Chachomim of the generation, passed away. During the week of the shivah, the Rebbetzin repeated her husband's strange words to his illustrious brother R' David. R' David nodded his head knowingly and explained...

He and his late brother were great grandchildren of the Beis HaLevi – R' Yosef Dov HaLevi Soloveitchik after whom R' Berel had been named. In his youth, the Beis HaLevi was referred to by the nickname 'Yosheh Ber'.

One day when he was still a young boy, Yosheh Ber came home from Yeshiva and announced that he could no longer learn Torah from his Rebbe. He explained that on that very morning, there had been a contest in class where a prize was promised to the Talmid who offered the most correct answers. Two boys had tied for first place. One boy was an orphan; the other was the son of a wealthy member of the town's Jewish community. Despite the fact that it was a tie, the Rebbe awarded the prize to the son of the rich man. Yosheh Ber became emotional as he asked his father, "How can I learn Torah from a person who is insensitive to the feelings of an orphan?" Although Yosheh Ber's father realised that the Rebbe had erred, he felt that this did not

disqualify him from being a competent Rebbe for his son. He thought that it would be in Yosheh Ber's best interest to continue studying under him. Therefore, on that same day, he went out to buy a prize and brought it to the house of the Rebbe. In shiur the next day, the Rebbe presented this new prize to the orphan and explained that on the previous day, he had only one prize and randomly awarded it to the wealthy child. This turn of events somewhat calmed Yosheh Ber and he continued to learn from the Rebbe.

A while later, young Yoseh Ber fell seriously ill and lapsed into a coma. Everyone prayed on his behalf but they feared the worst. However, miraculously, Yosheh Ber opened his eyes and slowly but surely improved until he had completely recovered. He then told his father that whilst he had been unconscious, he had seen the Angel of Death coming to remove his soul. As the angel approached, its path was blocked by Reb Yosef Loibler, the deceased father of the orphan boy. Reb Yosef Loibler declared "Stop! Let this boy live! It was he who spoke up for my son when his feelings had been so terribly damaged." The angel backed away and Yosheh Ber awoke soon thereafter. And so, as his great-grandson R' Berel Soloveitchik felt his end drawing ever closer, R' Berel remarked that there was no Rev Yosef Loibler to defend him and ask that he be granted a new lease on life in this world. The Beis HaLevi's sensitivity to his fellow Jews, especially at such a young age is an example we should all follow; particularly as this week is Parshas Mishpotim, one of the parshiyos in which the Mitzvos Bein Adam LaChaveiro are presented in great depth!

Adapted from Shabbos Stories

Gematria of the Week

In the opening possuk of this week's sidrah, it says "And these are the judgements that you shall place before them." אשרי – 'דקדוקי התורה ודקדוקי' סופרים – 'תשים לפנייהם' – that you shall place before them', has the same Gematria as סופרים – the fine interpretations of the Torah and the fine Rabbinic interpretations'. The Gemoro in Megillah 19b explaining a seemingly superfluous word, states that Hashem showed Moshe these fine interpretations at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, when he was commanded to teach the B'nei Yisroel all these judgements, his teachings included all these fine interpretations. As Rashi on the Gemoro explains, these include the amplifications derived from the words גם and את, and the exclusions learnt out from the words אך and רק. The Rabbinic interpretations refer to the sages' interpretations of the Mishnayos. However, the Medrash says that these interpretations refer to the 13 hermeneutic principles of R' Yishmael.

Based on the Ba'al Haturim - (שמירת כחא) -

The Path to Piety

אמר רב יהודה: האי מאן דבעי למהוי חסידא, לקיים מילי דנזיקין; רבא אמר: מילי דאבות; ואמרי לה: מילי דברכות. (בבא קמא דף ל.)

Rav Yehudah says: 'that person wants to be a pious person should fulfill the topics of damages, Rava says: the topics of the fathers and they say to him [also] the topics of blessings.

The מהרש"א explains that each of the three different topics advocated deal with a different factor of our עבודת ה'. Brachot refers to our relationship with HaShem. Avot, echoing the Rambam in Shmona Perakim, concerns our personal character traits and how to perfect them while the laws of damages, which are most comprehensively dealt with in our Sidrah, account for the final aspect, בין אדם לחבירו.

At the same time what is it about these things that characterises one as a חסיד, surely this is just the minimum requirement of the הלכה?

The מהר"ל explains, that damages are singular in that, often, one doesn't cause the damage personally. While obviously one would not set out to damage another's possessions what if it is caused by one's negligence, or through ones animal? Someone who is truly pious is one who doesn't want another to be damaged at all, especially as a result of one's own possessions.

Perhaps another answer, however, might be the

fact that none of the three subjects listed above are actually explicit in the Torah. Most ברכות and, with the exception of שמע and other particular prayers, are rabbinic in nature. The same can be said for פרקי אבות which, while it certainly has halachic ramifications in certain cases, is essentially an ethical work aimed at improving our character directly. This is also true of נזיקין. While the Torah describes at length all the different laws of damages and the responsibilities of guardianship nowhere do the פסוקים actually spell out that it is actually forbidden to damage another. From a reading of the text it would be conceivable to argue that there is no איסור at all, one must pay for the damage but no sin was actually committed. Most Rishonim, aware that it is certainly illegal to damage, suggest that this issur is in fact contained in one of a variety of more general prohibition such as stealing (רבינו יונה אבות א:א), or perhaps

'ואהבת לרעך כמוך'

(יד רמה ב"ב כו.)

Perhaps this is the piety; even though all of these three can be rationalised as having, chas v'shalom, lesser importance someone who is truly pious will overcome such temptation to think of these things as minor but relate to them as gravely as he should.

Written by Alex Greenberg

Riddle of the Week

When is a specific food permissible to eat outside of the home, but once it is brought into the home, prohibited?

Answer to last week's Riddle:

Which B'rochah can only be recited on a wednesday?

Bircas Hachamoh – blessing on the sun. This b'rochah commemorates the creation of the sun, and since the sun was created on the fourth day of the week (Wednesday), the b'rochah itself can only be recited on a Wednesday. It is said every 28 years and will in fact be said next year!