



Parshat HaShavuah

בהעלותך
B'HAALOTCHA
 MAY 25, 2013
 ט"ז סיון תשע"ג

A PUBLICATION OF



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting

7:46

S"Z Kriat Shema

9:54

Sunset

8:05

Motzei

Shabbat

8:44



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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THE LESSON OF TAVEIRA

MRS. ORA LEE KANNER

In our parsha, the Torah recounts the tragedy at *Taveira*, where the *mitonenim* spoke evil in the ears of Hashem and were punished with a raging fire, sent by Hashem, which burned the ends of the camp. Rashi explains that these "ends of the camp" could have been the lowly *eiruv rav* or alternatively, as proposed by R' Shimon ben Menasia, these "ends" could actually have been the elders and most esteemed amongst the Jews.

The *Siftei Chachamim* expounds upon this alternate and seemingly far-fetched opinion, explaining that in the very next chapter, we find Moshe asking Hashem for help in carrying the burdensome onus of the Jewish people. Hashem responds by offering Moshe to gather 70 elders to aid him in leading the people. Where, asks Rashi, were the original 70 *zekeinim* that had aided Moshe in Mitzrayim? Rashi explains that these original 70 elders must have perished in the fire of *Taveira*, thus supporting the suggestion of R' Shimon ben Menasia.

Rashi informs us that the elders were guilty of death due to their sin close to a year earlier, when they had "gazed at Hashem" while eating and drinking: "*veyechezu et haelokim, vayochlu vayishtu*" (as told to us in Sefer Shmot, Parshat Mishpatim). According to Rashi, the elders were eating and drinking while experiencing a sublime vision of Hashem. This egregious act of disrespect ("*hayu mistaklim bo b'lev gass*") was a capital offense. Hashem withheld the death penalty for a later date, so as not to forever have the most joyous day of the year, *Matan Torah*, marred with the death of these individuals.

Why, however, was this earlier warranted punishment meted out at *Taveira*? Why now? What's the connection between the *zekeinim*'s prior offense of disrespect and the evil speaking of the Jewish people that is recorded in our parsha?

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GARDEN OF THANKS DANIEL FELDAN ('16)

There is a garden. So far this garden is just full of soil ready to hold a plant. The gardener has a choice. This garden can grow any plant he decides to plant, or he can just let it sit. If he decides to plant, the garden, as small as it is, will bloom and flourish. However, if he decides not to plant and let the garden lay fallow, weeds will start to grow. Bugs will find a home in the dirt. The farmer can change his mind later on about whether to plant in this garden, but it will be much harder to do so. He will have to dig up all the weeds and kill all the bugs. As the work to fix the garden adds up, the garden is left alone and the chance for the gardener to put in the effort to make the garden beautiful decreases.

This garden represents our lives. If one would plant something in this garden, if he would take something and make it a blessing, he would bloom and be happy. However, if he lets it sit and doesn't take everything he has and do anything with it, rather he just takes it for granted, then all he gets is an ugly piece of dirt.

Bnei Yisrael in this week's parsha are the gardeners who do not plant anything. They decide to complain about how they have no meat, when they tell Moshe: "Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt...but now...we have nothing...but the *mun*" (Bamidbar 11:4-10). They already have the *mun*, which drops from the sky to their doorstep. Yet they decide not to make something great out of this gift, but rather to let it sit and become something full of weeds and bugs, something disgusting that no one wants to touch. They do not appreciate the gift that is before them. The Torah is trying to teach us that we have to start planting in our gardens and become grateful for what we have.


CALM THE COMPLAINTS! JACOB HENSCHEL ('16)

In this week's parsha, the Jews receive falling bread from the sky—*mun*. This is not any ordinary bread, this is bread that falls from the sky and it can taste like anything you want it to taste like. If you desire a thick, juicy steak, that is the taste you get. Pizza with extra olives, coming right up! Chocolate chip ice cream, on its way!

Yet, Bnei Yisrael manage to complain and, worse, they claim to prefer the slaves' ration in Egypt! How can they possibly do this? Surprisingly enough, we do the same thing all the time. Complaining is almost always non-specific. We are looking for something to complain about. And we find it. If you want to complain, you will. You can stay at a five-star resort and complain that a waiter stops smiling for a second, or that the tea is too strong or weak, or that the beds are too soft. Complaining has nothing to do with circumstance and everything to do with mindset and attitude. If your mindset is bad enough, you will even complain about *mun* coming down from the sky and tasting like anything you want.

Continued page 3





Henschel continued

The universal question is, why do we complain? The problem is our expectations. The higher our expectations, the more upset we feel when life does not live up to them. The less we expect, the more likely we are to see the good in whatever comes our way. Expectations will never contribute to our happiness; they will only undermine it. Expect perfection and life will disappoint you. Expect very little and life will always surprise you. If you see life as a blessing from Hashem—unmerited and undeserved—you will be granted immunity from complaining.

HILLEL'S SANDWICH

JONAH KEEHN ('16)

In Parshat B'haalotcha, we read about the Hillel sandwich that is eaten at the Pesach Seder. The source for this is "*Al matzot u'mrorim yochluhu*" (9:11). However, the beginning of this pasuk is "*Ba'chodesh hasheini, b'arba asar yom,*" clearly referring to Pesach Sheini.

If this is so, then why do we eat the sandwich at the Seder? Why don't we wait a month until Pesach Sheini? It seems strange that Hillel's source for eating the sandwich at the Seder is taken from a pasuk that was not intended to speak of the original Korban Pesach!

There is a *Midrash Rabah* that links the *arba minim* of Succot to korech, the Hillel sandwich. Just like the *arba minim* can represent the unification of different Jews, so too it would appear that by wrapping matzah and maror together we are demonstrating a bond amongst K'lal Yisrael.

Most of Hillel's teachings revolve around *ahavat yisrael*. By eating Hillel's sandwich we are demonstrating that we are trying to fully understand this concept of *ahavat yisrael*, just as Hillel did by using the pasuk of "*al matzot u'mrorim yochluhu.*" During the Seder, which represents our freedom, we also remember the Beit Hamikdash by eating the Hillel sandwich. This demonstrates K'lal Yisrael's bond that will hopefully earn us the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash.

PASSION FOR TORAH

MAYA BORZAK ('16)

While Moshe greets Hashem with complete devotion and a passionate yearning for being at one with Hashem, Bnei Yisrael—corresponding to their perpetual complaining and subsequent punishment in Bamidbar—are very far from this level of spirituality. The pasuk (11:1) states, "But the people were as if in mourning over themselves, were bad in the Ears of God...," illustrating that Bnei Yisrael is "Kmitoninim," according to Rav Hirsch, somehow mourning themselves.

They are simply mourning themselves as if currently dead. The cloud of Hashem and Hashem's presence, the "Ark of His covenant", made Bnei Yisrael feel sequestered and isolated from the rest of the world and its Avodah Zara predilection.

Continued page 4



Borzak continued

They developed a paucity of enthusiasm, in contrast to which they had previously possessed when receiving the Torah and fleeing Mitzraim; their unique connection and relationship with Hashem, the Mishkan in their midst, and God-promised destiny, did not continue to motivate them and consequently, did not serve as a rectification which it was supposed to be. They felt buried alive with the Hashem that gave and gives others a "higher, fuller, happier life." They no longer recognized Torah as a gift, they rather saw it as a burden. (Rav Hirsch)

Notwithstanding their mourning and feeling of burden as Hashem's "chosen nation," they did not become "ra Beinei Hashem," merely "Beoznai Hashem." They recognized that Hashem was conscious of their inappropriate mourning and "what was in their hearts" (Rav Hirsch). So His response was that "a fire of Hashem burned against them and it consumed at the edge of the camp," instigating a realization that their lives in fact did have value, and they had not right to mourn over themselves. The fire did not burn the whole camp, only a section of it, perhaps including the leaders of the nation who did not properly lead, quiet the complaining, and teaching them to have faith (Rav Shimon). Hashem could have destroyed the whole camp, yet He only threatened to progress the fire right through the camp and kill everyone.

May this experience in the desert bring us to realize that we can not jump to conclusions or be too involved in self-pity and complaints. Though we do not see the fire of Hashem to come to punish us, may the fire of passion for Torah guide our way.

Mrs. Kanner continued

The actions of the *mitonenim* were blatantly audacious, as they targeted their unjustified complaints directly into the "ears of Hashem." This sudden widespread temerity of the Jewish people was a direct outgrowth of the disdain shown by the elders at Har Sinai. The repercussions of the disrespectful behavior initiated by the *zekeinim* at Har Sinai, had now, at *Taveira*, suffused the ranks of the people and spread its corrosive effect. It is for this reason that the punishment of the *zekeinim* is implemented at this time.

Perhaps Hashem is willing to withhold his anger when our sins are private and limited to ourselves. However His forbearance will not countenance our failings when their pernicious influence affects others. He takes swift and immediate action when others are dragged down by our transgressions and are negatively affected by our attitudes. This is the lesson of *Taveira*.

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