



OD YOSEF HAI NEWSLETTER

ROSH YESHIVAH AND COMMUNITY RABBI
DAYAN ABRAHAM DAVID SHLI"TA

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Thoughts on Chukat / Balak Year 25

by Dayan Abraham David

King Solomon said '*Amarti echkemah vehe rechoka mimmeni*', I wished to be wise to know and understand all the Mitzvot. I was able to explain them all until I came to the Mitzvah of Parasha Adumah, the red cow whose ashes were used to purify those who became unclean through physical contact with a dead person. There I gave up rationalising the Mitzvot for the ashes purify those who are unclean and make unclean those who come in contact with them in the cleansing process and its preparation, a contradiction it would seem. Shlomo HaMelech came to the understanding that we should accept the Mitzvot as a statute. As the Midrash says, Rebi Yochanan Ben Zacai told his students who asked him to explain the Parah Adumah: '*Chuka chackakti gezerah he milefanai ein lecha reshut leharer acharaiha*', it is a statute, a decree, and you have no permission to question it. In fact the Rambam in Moreh Hanebuchim says it is not recommendable to seek reasons for the Mitzvot for fear that one will do them because of the reason behind it. It is only commendable to fulfil the Mitzvot because G-d has commanded us to do so, to do His will.

But the Zohar seems to say otherwise as brought down in the Sefer Arbe Nachal, '*Ki ain nachat ruach leHashem rak be yediat Yisrael kavanot hamitzvoti*

vehatifilah veinyanah vetikunam begavahe meromem vehistaklut ha'adam beshiur komah ad sheyargish haish ha Yisraeli taanug mullah bemitzvot vubaTorah v Batefilah meain olam habah'.

G-d only has pleasure when Yisrael knows the thoughts and understanding of Mitzvot and Tefillah and their affect in the higher worlds and the deeper understanding to his limit until he feels a wonderful pleasure in Torah, Mitzvot and prayers like '*Olam Habah*'. It would seem that the right way is to delve into the understanding to the highest levels and to feel a wonderful pleasure like '*Olam Habah*'.

Perhaps we can reconcile this contradiction. The Rambam is warning ordinary people in his Sefer, 'Guide to the Perplexed' not to rationalise on the Mitzvot by giving them reasons so as to make it easier to keep them for fear they might do it for those reasons and not as a command from G-d, and say that Shlomo HaMelech too who tried to explain all the Mitzvot with a rationale that would be easily accepted, came to the conclusion that this was not the will of Hashem and learnt from this Mitzvah that we cannot really explain them and must do them without understanding, only as a command.

The Zohar agrees that the acceptance of our keeping the Mitzvah is to fulfil the will of Hashem. But when we actually do them we should have in mind the effect of these Mitzvot in the higher worlds and how they affect our world. This is of course for people who are able to understand that

these thoughts are to draw them near to G-d through appreciating the great wisdom in Torah and Mitzvot bringing them to *'Debekut Hashem'*.

INSIGHTS

1) *'Ki Merosh Tsurim Avenu vumigivaot ashurenu'*. 'From the top of the rocks I see them and from the hills I see them'. Rashi explains the *'tsurim'* as a reference to the *'Avot'*, Abraham, Yitzhak and Yaacov and the *'migvaot'* as our Matriarchs, Sarah, Rifka, Rachel and Leah, the foundations of Am Yisrael and strong and established as the rocks and hills. Why are the *'Avot'* compared to the pinnacles of *'Rock'* and the *'Emaot'* to the heights of the hills. The rocks stand out as pinnacles reaching up, they stood out among all the peoples, Abraham with his Chesed, Yitzhak with his *'gevurah'* and Yaacov with *'emet'*. The Matriarchs played no less a part, but in their modesty did not stand out in the public eye as it says by Sarah: *'heneh baohel'*, they were like the hills and heights which raised the level of Klal Yisrael but did not stand out because of their modesty.

2) *'Lo hebeet aven beYaacov ve lo ra-ah amal beYisrael Hashem Elokav imo vu teruat melech bo'*. Rashi explains that G-d does not scrutinise the sins of Yaacov (lower level) and not the *'averot'* of Yisrael (higher level). G-d is always with them and His Glory of Kingship stays with them. The only reason Rashi seems to give for this seems to be because they do not have sooth-sayers and magicians among them: *'Lo Nachash beYaacov ve lo kesem beYisrael'*, as he says that is why they are fit for a Beracha, but this explanation does not answer why Hashem overlooks their sins. Chazal say anyone who says *'Hashem vatran mevate me-av'*, (*Bava Kama 50a*) anyone who thinks Hashem forgoes *'averot'* is forfeiting his life. So how do we reconcile these words of Bilaam above. Maybe we could explain that even when a Jew *sins 'Hashem*

Elokav emo', the sin does not imbed itself in him for in the back of his mind Hashem is there and the sin is superficial, done in a moment of weakness. A Jew will sigh immediately after the *'averah'* for he has thoughts of G-d with him and has regrets. He is not far from *'teshubah'*. *'Vu teruat melech bo'*, refers to the *'tekiot'* of Rosh Hashana, which penetrates the heart of the Jew with fear and awakening, this has an effect on him even when he sins afterwards and gives in to his *'Yetzer harah'*, there are some thoughts of fear and feelings of guilt which stop him from enjoying the *'avera'* too much. Hence a Jew is like a chicken even though he wallows in the dust, when he stands up he is able to shake it off, for it is not really deeply embedded. That is why Hashem does not scrutinise his sins and somewhat overlooks it: *'Lo hebit aven ve lo ra-ah amal beYisrael.'* *Ki Elokav imo.*

The sins of Am Yisrael are committed on the surface and not from deep down so we are closer to *'teshubah'* and with a little *'hitorrerut'*, awakening, we can come back. We should always be thinking of Hashem, so even if we have a short lapse, and do succumb we will have regrets straight away, G-d awaits and gives us a chance but he does not forgo.

3) The Yalkut in the beginning of Parashat Tzav says that Bilaam who was the defender of the Nations offered to bring more offerings than Aaron and the Bnei Yisrael. He built *'mizbechot'*, (altars) as many as all the *'avot'*. He tried to outdo Abraham Avinu to offer even a son and daughter as is mentioned in the Haftorah, but Hashem refused his offerings and only wanted the offerings of Aaron and the Bnei Yisrael. Why was this? The *'yalkut'* brings a parable of a butcher who had a large consignment of meat which was liable for tax when he saw the tax collector approaching he sent his servant with a large piece of meat telling the tax collector: "Show me the way to your house so I can take the gift to your home." In the meantime he would clear

out the meat and not pay tax, so it was with Bilaam and his offerings as it says: 'et shiva mezbechot baneti.....'

It would seem all Bilaam's offerings were like a bribe and distraction so he could do his will, whereas Aaron's and the Bnei Yisrael's offerings were in fact in gratitude, they wished to do the will of Hashem. Bilaam was willing to offer even a son and daughter just to be able to achieve his will but not to do the will of Hashem.

The Midrash says in Avot: '*Batel retzoncha mepeneh retzono*,' and that he was not willing to do. But with Aaron it was '*aseh retzono ke ratzoncha*', Aaron, did the will of Hashem with all his heart, as if it was his own will. In our service to G-d we should be like Aaron, we appreciate what G-d has done for us and is doing for us and we do his will, keeping Torah and Mitzvot.

Of course we beseech G-d for our needs and we pray to him for everything is in His Hands. But our service to Him is not dependant on His fulfilling what we think we need and ask for. Not like Bilaam whose service and offerings were to get his will done by G-d.

STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

A Rabbi of a kfar in Israel said over, there was a time when I was taking a group of tourists from South Africa in Israel during the Ben Hametzarim, the days after the 17th of Tamuz leading to Tisha B'av. I was a bit apprehensive about this since it is a custom of the tourists to go shopping for souvenirs and artifacts and generally have a good time and maybe it would be against the spirit of this period in the year. But on the other hand if I stopped them from this I would be depriving them from their holidays. I decided to ask Rabbi Mordecai Eliyahu z"l as to what I should do. He answered me, "It is a mitzvah for them to tour the land in the 3 weeks, a

mitzvah to buy souvenirs and artifacts and pictures and more so in this period." I asked him why he said it was permitted and a mitzvah. He answered the suffering we have in this period is because of the sin of the meraglim, the spies, who did not value the Land of Israel. They gave a bad report about the land and dissuaded the Bnei Yisrael from entering, hence this is the time to show our love for Eretz Yisrael, if these tourists do not tour the land and see its holiness and beauty how will they come to love the land, if they do not buy souvenirs and pictures of the land to show their friends and to remember eretz Yisrael, how will they pass such a message to their friends at home. It is a mitzvah especially in these days to do all we can to love and spread the great gift G-d has given us, Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom

HALACHOT

Taanit Shiva Asar Be Tammuz
The fast is on Thursday 9th July

1. Both men and women are obliged to complete the fast. But women who are pregnant or feeding do not have to. An ill person or someone who is old and feeble does not have to fast.
2. A chatan and kallah in the 7 days of sheva brachot do need to fast.
3. If there is a brit milah on the day the minhag is to make the seuda in the night.
4. The purpose of the fast is to awaken us to *Teshuva* to avoid the *Tzarot* which the bad deeds of our forefathers and our deeds invoke.
5. On *Shiva Asar Be Tammuz*, five tragedies happened to our people:
 - i) The first set of luchot were broken by Moshe when he descended the mountain and saw the people rejoicing with the golden calf.

- ii) The *Korban Tamid* was stopped sometime before the destruction of the First Temple
- iii) The walls of the City of Jerusalem were breached before the destruction of the Second Temple.
- iv) Apostomos the Greek Rasha burnt the Sefer Torah and
- v) Placed an idol in the Temple.
6. One is not allowed to wash his mouth on a *Taanit Tsibbur*, as *this one is*.
7. There are some who keep the Minhag of the Zekenim and do not have a haircut or shave for the 3 weeks starting from the fast of Tammuz even though, according to the Shulchan Aruch, we only refrain from this on the week of Tisha B'Av
8. We refrain from musical entertainment during the three weeks as suggested by the Magen Avraham and accepted by other Poskim. This restriction would apply to the playing of musical instruments and even listening to musical tapes, according to our Poskim. But those who have a Minhag to play musical instruments for a Brit Mila or other mitzvot may do so. However, this Heter would not apply to the night before the Mila (Brit Yitzhak or 'Agdil Yas') as it is not considered a Seudat Mitzva. We refrain from music even in teaching classes.
9. We also refrain from saying Shehechyanu on a new fruit or new clothes during these days. But if a pregnant woman needs to eat such a fruit, she should make Shehechyanu for it.
10. We make Shehechyanu for a Pidyon or Brit according to our custom.

SHABBAT TIMES

Shabbat commences	9:05 pm
<u>We should not light candles before 7:37 pm</u>	
Shabbat terminates	10:33 pm

Shacharit	8:30 am
Shabbat :Latest Shema	
Magen Avraham	8:21 am
Shabbat Latest Shema Gra	8:57 am

Mincha	7:30 pm
Arvit	10:40pm

WEEKDAY TIMES

Shacharit	7:00 am
Sundays	8.00 am
Mincha	7:30 pm
followed by Arvit	

TAANIT TIMES

Shiva Asar Be Tamuz

Thursday 9th July 2016

Fast commences	3:25 am
Terminates	10:14 pm
Shacharit	7:00 am
Mincha	8:40 pm
Followed by Arvit	

**PLEASE FOLLOW ALL THE GUIDELINES
AND WARNINGS CONCERNING COVID-19**

PANDEMIC

**VUSHMARTEM MEOD
LE'NAFSHOTEHEM**

VEHAVTA L'REACHA KAMOCHA