



Parsha Perspectives RABBI DOVID BASLAW

אז יבדיל משה שלש ערים בעבר הירדן מזרחה...

"Then Moses set aside three cities on the side of the Jordan, on the east." (Deuteronomy 4:41)

One of the many remarkable qualities we learn about Moses from this week's Torah portion is his commitment to every commandment, even those commandments for which he knew he would not be alive to witness their implementation.

Moses was told that six cities of refuge would have to be designated throughout the areas in which the Jewish people were going to live in order to grant asylum to the unintentional murderer. Three such cities would have to be set aside in the then-occupied Transjordan and another three in the land of Israel itself. In his commentary, Rashi writes that Moses was also told that all six cities chosen for refuge would become officially opened for use only after Jewish settlement in the land of Israel (which meant they would operate only after Moses's death). Nevertheless, Moses immediately designated three cities of refuge in Transjordan, putting his full heart into carrying out the orders he could execute while he was still alive.

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (the Chofetz Chaim) writes that the above observation sheds light on the words of the great Torah scholar Rabbi Yochanan, who was known to say that a person should stay with a project even when its end is not in sight. These words are especially relevant, the Chofetz Chaim explains, when we remember that we are commanded to guard our tongues

from speaking derogatory speech (*lashon hara*). When considering the intricate guidelines involved, we might rationalize that committing to these laws for the rest of our lives is a lost cause and conclude that there is no value in trying. Rabbi Yochanan therefore urges us to stay the course.

The following parable illustrates this point. A man is walking along a beach and suddenly notices that a wave just washed up a large number of precious stones and pearls. Does the man question why he should bother to reach down and pick up the precious gems when he couldn't possibly collect them all before the next wave washes them away? On the contrary, he makes the most of the small window of time to gather whatever he can. Getting started and making the effort to be careful about the words which come out of our mouths is certainly the preferred approach, even if we don't believe we'll be able to maintain the highest standard on all occasions.

A similar approach can be taken with every virtuous project. Whether it's

an effort to control anger, to become more generous, to build on our Torah knowledge, or to concentrate more intently during prayer, we can resolve to make the very best of the opportunity that the present has to offer.

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WORD of the WEEK
by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

כפרה

"And the seventh day is a Sabbath... You shall do no manner of מלאכה —melachah..." (Deuteronomy 5:14). Melachah is translated as "work" or "tasks," and in Jewish legal terms it is understood as one of the 39 activities listed in the Mishnah (Shabbat ch. 7) defined by Rabbi Hirsch as "acts that shows human mastery over the world by a constructive exercise of intelligence." According to this, the root of melachah may be מלך—melech—king, because of the display of human mastery or rule. Others relate the word to לאך—lach, meaning the fulfillment of a plan, goal, or task, related to מלאך—malach—"angel," or "messenger" (Rabbi David Kimchi, Sefer Hashorashim).

Table Talk

FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

"*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*"—"Hear oh Israel the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One." If there is one line in the Torah that can be called the "mission statement" of the Jewish people, this is probably it. It's what we recite in the morning and the evening each day. It is scrolled onto the doorposts (*mezuzahs/mezuzos*) throughout our homes. It has also been the final and ultimate expression of unshakable devotion, spontaneously uttered by so many being ushered to death's door. That declaration is followed immediately by the commandment, "And you should love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." A very tall order indeed!

א) In the first of these verses, the Torah proclaims that the L-rd our G-d is One. In the second verse, we are commanded to love G-d. It would seem that the acceptance of G-d's "oneness" triggers an intense feeling of love for G-d. What is the connection between these two concepts and verses?

ב) We are required to love G-d. Love is an emotion, and we might contend that we either feel this love or we don't. How can the Torah possibly legislate love?

A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS

by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

Houses full of all good..." (Deuteronomy 6:11.) The Talmud (*Chullin* 17a) permits front line troops who conquered Israel to eat non-kosher items found in the war zone. Does this apply to soldiers in the IDF today? A contemporary work on *halachah* (Jewish law) for soldiers cites the view of Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (*Ha'emek Davar*) who writes that "Any limitations on food during war can bring to danger of life, and eating is permitted not only to sustain life, but even to satisfy hunger without having to hesitate or calculate, because during the war there is no time to think about these things, lest he be in danger. In addition, sufficient nutrition increases the strength of the soldier and gives him the additional energy needed for battle." According to this view, it is argued that the leniency should apply to contemporary Israeli soldiers under battlefield conditions (*Kishrei Milchamah*, Eyal Moshe Krim, p. 143) Rabbi Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg (Tzitz Eliezer 18:70) also discusses this but does not clearly permit this for contemporary soldiers, as it may be dependent on an argument of Nachmanides and Maimonides.

HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT!

by Rabbi Mordechai Becher

And I pleaded with the L-rd at that time, saying... 'I beg You, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that goodly mountain region, and Lebanon' (Deuteronomy 3:23-25)." These first few verses of the *parsha* in which Moses pleaded with G-d to enter the Land of Israel have generated a tremendous amount of literature and commentary. One outstanding example of this is the book, *Megaleh Amukos (Revealer of the Depths)* written by Rabbi Nathan Nata Spira, Head of the Beth Din and Dean of the Yeshiva in Cracow, Poland (1585–1633). His lengthy book explains this plea based on the works of, amongst others, Rabbi Menachem Recanati, Rabbi Elazar Rokeach of Worms, the Arizal, Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Pano, Rabbi Moshe Cordovero, and Maimonides. Rabbi Spira presents 252 different explanations of Moses's plea to G-d, each one presenting a unique aspect of the greatness and holiness of the land of Israel! may be a professional football player.



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