



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Va'eschanan

July 31, 2020

A Taste of Torah Run for Your Life

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

Toward the end of the Book of Devarim, as the Jewish Nation prepared to enter the Land of Israel, the Torah (Devarim 29:28) writes the following cryptic statement: "The hidden ones are for Hashem and the revealed ones are for man." Rashi (ibid.) explains this enigmatic verse as follows: Until the Jews entered the Land of Israel, it was, in a certain sense, each man on his own. Every person was responsible for his own actions, but not for those of his fellow. Once the Jews would enter the Land of Israel, however, all that would change. From that point on, every Jew would be responsible for the next, and one could no longer say regarding another, "See no evil, hear no evil." Although one Jew would not be responsible for "the hidden ones," the private sins of a fellow Jew which he could not have prevented, every Jew would be held accountable for "the revealed ones," the known and revealed sins that he could have possibly stopped. Even the most pious of Jews could be punished for not doing his part in preventing another Jew from sinning. This seems pretty frightening; I can hold my own and do what I should be doing, but carrying the responsibility of the whole Jewish Nation is quite a burden to bear.

This responsibility is, indeed, great. However, it also comes with some prodigious benefits. In the beginning of this week's parsha, Moshe continues his monologue of rebuke and warning that the nation heed the words of the Torah as they would enter the Land of Israel. In the second half of the parsha, Moshe reminds the Jews of the great events of the Giving of the Torah, gives a review of the Ten Commandments, and teaches the first chapter of *Shema*, which contains the fundamental mitzvos of recognizing the oneness and unity of Hashem, loving Him, and fearing him.

The Ramban (introduction to Sefer Devarim) explains that the theme of Sefer Devarim is the review of the mitzvos detailed in Sefer Vayikra, as well as the inclusion of other mitzvos which had not been detailed yet. Before doing so, Moshe rebuked the Jewish Nation for their sins in the desert in order to deter them from repeating such errors upon entering the Land of Israel, and to show them G-d's great mercy in preserving them as a nation despite their shortcomings. This rebuke, says the

Ramban (Devarim 4:41) runs through Parshas Devarim and the beginning of this week's parsha. After concluding, Moshe began the review of the Torah (Va'eschanan 5:1).

It is therefore quite strange that in between these two parts of Sefer Devarim, the Torah teaches us (Va'eschanan 4:41-42), "Then Moshe separated three cities... To escape there any killer who killed his friend inadvertently." These cities were a fulfillment of Hashem's commandment to create *arei miklat*, cities of refuge designated for the inadvertent murderer to escape the revenge of the relative of the deceased individual. What is the creation of *arei miklat* doing here, at the point of transition between the two parts of Sefer Devarim?

The Shem Mishmuel (Rabbi Shmuel Bornsztain; 1855-1926) provides insight to resolve this question. Moshe felt the need to rebuke the Nation of Israel before his death. Rebuke, in all situations, comes with the great danger of hopelessness on the part of the one who is rebuked. This danger was especially great in the case of this particular rebuke, which was given to the generation of the Jewish People who were preparing to enter and conquer the Land of Israel. If the Generation of the Desert, which witnessed the presence of G-d on a daily basis, and which experienced such great and miraculous events such as the Exodous, the Splitting of the Sea, and the Giving of the Torah, had still fallen and sinned, how could this new generation, which, upon entering the Land of Israel, would no longer experience such a clear manifestation of G-d's presence, ever manage to live up to the great task of keeping the Torah properly?

To head of this potential pitfall, Moshe separated the cities of refuge immediately upon completing his rebuke of the Jewish Nation. The Shem Mishmuel cites an explanation from his father, the Avnei Nezer (Rabbi Avraham Bornsztain; 1838-1910), regarding the significance of the cities of refuge: One who kills another, albeit unintentionally, becomes spiritually disconnected from his own life. On a physical level, this is manifested by the right of the nearest relative of the deceased person to avenge the death by killing

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Stories for the Soul

Success Story

"I was twelve years old when I was admitted to the yeshiva of Shtetl (Poland)," related a former student of that preeminent yeshiva of pre-WWII Europe. "Due to my young age, my father asked the Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer (1870-1953) to hire one of the best students to tutor me. This was necessary in order for me to reach the level of the other students in the yeshiva.

"The Rosh Yeshiva suggested to my father one of the best young scholars, Reb Elazar Menachem Shach (1899-2001). My father agreed, and I began studying with him. After a period of time, my father came to pay Reb Elazar Menachem, as previously agreed. To his surprise, the young man, who was quite poverty-stricken, refused to accept the money.

"It is true that I agreed to tutor your son in order to help him to achieve a higher level of study," said Reb Elazar Menachem. "But it was a mistake! Your son does not need me or any tutor. He is advancing to higher levels on his own, so no payment is due."

"My father did not know what to do. He consulted Rav Isser Zalman, who was also at a loss as to how to persuade his student to accept the money. He went to his son-in-law, Rabbi Aharon Kotler, who was then teaching in the yeshiva, and asked for his advice. Rav Aharon had a brilliant idea. He told Reb Elazar Man, 'If the boy is really gifted and does not need you to advance in his studies, then let us test him. We will ask him to prepare a particular Tosafos in Tractate Bava Kamma 77a (known as a particularly difficult, long passage). If he is able to recite it properly after the given amount of time, then you are correct. But if he can't, that means that he needs your assistance and you deserve payment for your tutoring.'

"Reb Elazar Menachem agreed to the trial, and I was asked to study the tough Tosafos on my own. Being so young, I didn't grasp Rav Aharon's intention, and I took the challenge seriously. I struggled through the passage, putting tremendous effort into it, and when the Rosh Yeshiva tested

Kollel Happenings

KOLLEL CLASSES CONTINUE VIA ZOOM MEETING

The Kollel is continuing many of its classes and offering new classes via Zoom Meeting. You can tune in to live classes online or call in on a phone. For a full schedule and the links and phone numbers to access this treasure trove of Torah, visit www.denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

The Kollel is one of 28 local organizations selected to be part of Rose Community Foundation's Live On/LIFE & LEGACY program, which focuses on creating financial stability for the future through planned giving. Think it's not for you? Think again! Anyone can make a planned gift, no matter the amount. Visit www.denverkollel.org, email rmh@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855 for more information.

HELP BUILD THE FUTURE OF TORAH IN DENVER

Claim your part in building the future of Torah in Denver! The Kollel is in the midst of a capital campaign to build a three-story, state-of-the-art Torah Center that will serve the entire Denver Jewish community. To contribute, or for dedication opportunities and details on the building, visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org.

Parsha Quizzers

The six items below can be found in Rashi's commentary to this week's parsha. Can you figure out where they are? (Answers on bottom)

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|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1) Nothing to stop you | 4) Speak to the seller |
| 2) Get out early | 5) Your money or your life |
| 3) Tear up (and down) | 6) No compliments |

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Menashe ben Yisrael - Part XV

Montezinos attempted to convince Rabbi Menashe of his belief that these South American natives were from the Ten Lost Tribes, and it seems that Rabbi Menashe bought into the idea.

This belief galvanized his Messianic hopes, as there was a belief that for the Messianic era to arrive, Jews needed to settle throughout the world

A Taste of Torah

continued from front

the unintentional killer.

The beauty of the *arei miklat* was that they could grant new life to a dead man. These cities were situated in the property of the *Levi'im*, whose job it was to serve Hashem in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and, later, in the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple). The Tribe of Levi is also regarded as the primary repository of the Torah, and its members are tasked with teaching the Torah to the rest of the Jewish People. The inadvertent killer, in his state of spiritual lifelessness, would live in the area populated by these people who are living life in the fullest sense of the word, thanks to their special status in serving Hashem. The inadvertent killer, whose lack of sufficient respect for human life led to a situation where he took the life of another, would be infused and influenced with an appreciation for, and connection to, true life.

Moshe, with the creation of these cities, was

hinting that a similar framework would exist within the Jewish Nation. The responsibility between one Jew and another which would begin upon entrance to the Land of Israel would have the same effect. Even a sinner could connect, via this structure of mutual responsibility, to the righteous and the devout, and become enlivened and infused with new spiritual life. This was not so with the Generation of the Desert, which did not share this spiritual connection and linking of every person to the other. Thus, the people entering the Land of Israel, despite experiencing a diminished level of Hashem's clear presence, would be equipped with the necessary tool to prevent them from failing.

The intrinsic connection of every Jew to the whole of the Jewish Nation comes with great responsibility. But the benefits of this responsibility can be and are eternally rewarding!

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

me, I knew it well. Reb Elazar Menachem's face beamed when he heard me, obviously delighted in my success. Needless to say, he refused to take money from my father despite his poverty."

In this week's parsha, our Sages teach that Hashem told Moshe that just as He, Hashem,

taught Moshe the Torah at no charge, so, too, must future Torah teachers instruct their students at no charge. While there are halachic grounds for a Torah teacher to be paid, the lesson is clear: Torah is to be made available for all, regardless of financial ability or social status.

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| 1) Nothing to stop you 3:24 s.v. <i>asher mi</i> | 4) Speak to the seller 5:4 s.v. <i>laimor</i> |
| 2) Get out early 4:25 s.v. <i>vinoshantem</i> | 5) Your money or your life 6:5 s.v. <i>uitchol me'odecha</i> |
| 3) Tear up (and down) 4:35 s.v. <i>haraisa</i> | 6) No compliments 7:2 s.v. <i>lo satichanem</i> |

Parsha Quizzers - Answers