



TORAH WEEKLY

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Parshas Ki Savo

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A Taste of Torah

Suffering Servant

by Rabbi Chaim Yeshaya Freeman

The parsha records that, prior to his death, Moshe delivered a chilling prophecy of the horrors that would befall the Jewish Nation if they spurned Hashem and the Torah. This portion of the Torah is called the *tochacha*, or reproof. The *tochacha* is found in two places in the Torah. The first place is in Vayikra (Ch. 26), where it was uttered by Hashem and expressed in the first person, as Hashem Himself was saying what would occur (and Moshe simply conveyed Hashem's words). This parsha is the second place where it was uttered, this time by Moshe speaking on his own, and so it was expressed in the third person, saying what Hashem would do to those who defy Him. According to the Ramban, the first *tochacha* refers to the destruction of the First Temple and the subsequent Babylonian exile, while this *tochacha* is a reference to the destruction of the Second Temple and our current exile.

There seems to be a contradiction between different verses as to the cause of all these horrors. On the one hand, the verse states (Devarim 28:15), "But it will be that if you do not listen to the voice of Hashem, to observe to fulfill all His commandments and all His statutes that I command you today, then all of these curses will come upon you and overtake you." However, later on in the parsha, the verse states (ibid.:47), "Because you did not serve Hashem, your God, with *simcha* (joy) and gladness of heart, when everything was abundant." In the first verse, it states that these horrors will occur when the Jewish People do not observe the Torah, whereas in the second verse it says that even when the Torah is observed, these calamities will befall

the Jewish People for failure to serve Hashem with joy.

Another question can be asked on the aforementioned idea of the Ramban that the two *tochachos* allude, respectively, to the destruction of the two Temples. The Talmud (Yoma 9b) discusses a number of spiritual failures that were the causes of the destruction of the two Temples and makes no mention of not serving Hashem with joy. According to the Ramban's approach, how could the Talmud omit the reason given in the Torah itself for the destruction of the Second Temple?

The answer to these questions can be found with a deeper look into the verses. The *tochacha* begins by stating the reason these terrible events will befall the Jewish People, explaining that it is due to the Jewish People not listening to Hashem. In the middle of the *tochacha*, however, the verse states (ibid.:37, "And you will become an astonishment, a parable, and a topic of discussion, among all the peoples to whom Hashem will lead you." The following verses detail the terrible events that will be beheld by the other nations. The Torah then discusses the lack of joy in serving Hashem. Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) understands that Moshe is providing the reason not for all of the calamities, but, rather, for the terrible events that will serve as a source of astonishment and discussion among the nations. It is a lack of joy in serving Hashem, says Moshe, that is to blame for the Jewish People descending to this sorry state. It is therefore not surprising that the Talmud does not list lack of *simcha* in serving Hashem as a cause of the Second Temple's destruction, since

Stories for the Soul

Unacceptable

An apostate Jew once detailed to Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821) what had led to his conversion to Christianity. "In an effort to bring a cessation to the constant taunts of the local Gentile population, I joined their crowd, eating and drinking and partying with them, figuring they would relate to me in a more positive manner." Alas, his efforts did not effect the desired change.

"Well," he continued, "I tried to further align myself with them. I even stopped keeping Shabbos, hoping they would accept me."

When this, too, failed, he took the tragic step of converting. "But," he lamented to Rav Chaim, "despite my total embrace of their way of life, I have not been spared their derision."

Rav Chaim responded that his unfortunate situation is expressed in a verse in this week's Torah portion. Moshe spells out in detail what will occur to the Jewish People if they neglect proper observance of the Torah and fail to remain loyal to Hashem. One of the travails stated is, "Hashem will lead you... to a nation you never knew... and there you will serve the gods of others - of wood and stone." (Ki Savo 28:36) Here, the Torah details exile among the Gentile nations. Although the commentators explain that serving gods of the nations refers to working for those who are idolaters, not actual idol worship, nonetheless, the verse can be understood as alluding to worship of the foreign gods, as well.

The next verse continues, "You will be a source of astonishment, a parable, and a conversation piece,

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Kollel Happenings

MUST ONE GET THE COVID VACCINE? AT SEPTEMBER 2 T4T ON ZOOM

Is vaccination during a pandemic optional? Is it a mitzvah? And just how skeptical of the mainstream medical community should one be? Join Dr. Daniel Mogyoros, MD, Infectious Diseases Specialist, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they take a shot at pinpointing the proper approach to this problem at the Thursday, September 2 T4T. Visit www.denverkollel.org for further details.

WELL READ: EXPLORING THE TORAH READINGS OF THE TISHREI HOLIDAYS

Join Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher and explore the holiday connection of the Torah reading of Rosh Hashana, the Book of Yonah of Yom Kippur, and the Book of Koheles of Sukkos on Mondays 8/30 & 9/13. In-person classes in Southeast Denver and via Zoom. Visit www.denverkollel.org for more details.

MILE HIGH TORAH PODCAST FROM THE KOLLEL

A wide variety of Kollel classes and short, inspiring Torah thoughts are now available on many podcast platforms such as Spotify, Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music. You can also access the latest podcasts at the Kollel's website, www.denverkollel.org.

Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: When would one recite an after-blessing of *borei nefashos* after eating food that normally requires *me'ein shalosh* (i.e., *al hamichya* or *al ha'eitz*)?

Answer: If one ate less than a *kezayis* (olive's-volume) of food, a *bracha acharona* is not made. However, if one ate less than a *kezayis* of food that requires *me'ein*

shalosh along with less than a *kezayis* of food that requires a *borei nefashos*, the two foods combine to require a *borei nefashos* (Mishna Berura 210:1).

This week's question: Why would the laws of *brachos* render it necessary to keep certain foods off the table on Rosh Hashana?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XIV

Agudath Israel comprised mainly of non-Zionist Orthodox groups and communities in Poland and Germany. German Orthodox Jews, who were more integrated into modern European society, played a key role in creating the necessary infrastructure to enable the new organization to

operate, while the Torah leadership came largely from Eastern European Jewry. A body of the greatest Torah leaders of the time, known as the *Mo'etzes Gedolei HaTorah*, was formed to provide Torah leadership on issues confronting the Agudah.

A Taste of Torah

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this lack of joy is not actually a cause of the general destruction.

This idea can be further understood with a frightening insight from Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821). The verse following the criticism of the Jews not serving Hashem with *simcha* states (ibid.:48), "You will serve your enemies." Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains that this punishment is measure for measure, as service without joy is a service fit when serving one's enemy. When the Jewish People do not serve Hashem properly with *simcha*, the result is that the Jewish People will be forced to serve their enemies. According to the

forementioned approach, this means that the very nations described in the verse who will view the Jewish People as an astonishment, a state attributable to their lack of joy in serving Hashem, will also be the masters of their Jewish slaves, a fitting result for that same lack of joy.

This insight provides us with awareness and impetus to think about how our service of Hashem looks in His eyes. It is important to constantly try to create depth, joy and meaning when performing mitzvos and serving Hashem, and not merely do things as a matter of routine, without feeling.

Stories for the Soul

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among all the people where Hashem will lead you." (ibid.: 37) Based on the understanding that the previous verse is discussing one who joins the belief system of the local populace, explained Rav Chaim, this verse is telling us that despite all the efforts of the apostate

to assimilate into the host culture, even going so far as to convert to their religion, his efforts will be unsuccessful; he will still be spoken of with disdain and will never be accepted into Gentile society.

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