

RED ALERT!

Eikev

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

DIVREI TORAH

- When the Torah warns Bnei Yisrael to observe Mitzvot, the Hebrew is addressed to us in plural: “You shall observe them and perform them...” (7:12). Immediately afterward the Torah itemizes the reward for their observance: “And I shall love you and bless you...” (7:13), and this is written in singular. The implication is that all of Bnei Yisrael are equal in their obligation to obey the Mitzvot, but the reward granted each of us is not the same. It would seem that Hashem judges each of us separately because our individual Kavana (intent and concentration) is not the same. One person might take the Lulav and Etrog and concentrate on the B'racha and the purposeful shaking of the Four Species, while another person rushes the performance and does the job, but with a lack of concentration. Hashem notices the difference and rewards each person individually. So do not perform Mitzvot by rote; put more of your heart and soul in the Mitzvot we perform.

- Twice in the Torah does Hashem say that “He will bless” : U'VEIRACH. “He will bless your bread” (Sh'mot 23:25)

and here “He will bless the fruit of your womb” (7:13). In a commentary called Ohr Pnei Moshe, a Chassidic text of the late 18th century, the author writes that Hashem will bless us with sustenance, the ability to make a living. Having many children, but without parnassa (without a livelihood) is no blessing whatsoever. There is no B'racha being poor. So if one is blessed with children, he should make sure to work hard and be blessed with monetary sustenance to support them!

- (7:17) “Perhaps you will say in your heart that those nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out.” And Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael - forever remember what Hashem did to Pharaoh and to Egypt. How these verses can speak to us and to the previous generation who declared an independent State of Israel in 1948. To us who just read about it, it is inconceivable to realize the courage and determination of the Modern Zionists to declare a state knowing full well that the Arab armies will immediately attack. This verse quoted above must have been somewhere in the minds of those brave Israelis at that time. That is why Religious Zionists cannot think of those times without recalling and applying this text. The tiny Israeli army was out-manned and lacking in military equipment, and yet managed to prove victorious - with Hashem's

help. Is it heretical to believe that the modern day Yehoshuas were miraculously aided by the Divine Will that brought about the State of Israel? To me it is clear. And yet to many ultra-Orthodox they do not see what occurred was a modern application of the Torah! I, for one, rejoice in singing Hallel on Yom Ha'Atzmaut; we see Hashem's hand in all of this.

- In the desert their clothing was not dirty or worn out during the forty year trek! Every day when they put on their clothes and their shoes, and ate their Manna, they should have been reminded “every day” that Hashem was protecting them and giving them their daily needs. “Every day!” And yet they complained - for water, for meat, for onions and garlic, and for the kehuna. They must have become used to the miracles of everyday life. They failed to see Hashem in their midst. And we are no better! We take for granted the daily miracles of motherhood, the sun rising in the east, the sight of a woman giving birth to another life in the world. We begin to accept these miracles as the normal daily activities of regular life. We lose sight of Hashem's hand in our lives.

- Based on verses 10:12 and 11:22, the Chafetz Chayim wrote there are three stages in relating to Hashem. The first stage is to fear Him. You will observe Mitzvot because you fear His wrath and want to avoid punishment.

The second stage is to love Him. This is a level above fear. You are beyond fearing punishment; you are observing Mitzvot because you have developed true love for Hashem. He is merciful and kind; therefore you are merciful and kind. The third stage is to cling to Hashem. This is the highest level possible in relating to the Holy One, Blessed Be He. You should not be satisfied when you reach the level of loving Hashem. You need to seek the highest level of clinging to Hashem, where you yearn to be close to Him and never lose sight of His presence in your life. I realize that most of us operate on the lowest level, but we should never lose sight of the goal: to cling to Hashem.

- “You shall eat and be satisfied and you shall bless Hashem...” (8:10). The Torah tells us that the Promised Land is blessed and has the natural resources that most countries require. But we are told that Eretz Yisrael has it all: extreme abundance of more than what is needed. In the early part of the twentieth century, the Jewish settlers worked feverishly to develop the land: to get rid of the malaria infested swamps along the coast. And the lack of fresh water was a serious hurdle halting agricultural development. Now in the twenty first century we see such a change in the Promised Land. Israel is the number three producer of shale oil (behind the United States and China).

Thanks to drip irrigation and five water desalination plants, Israel does not suffer severe water shortage. Electricity production is up, and the technology propels Israel to be a world leader. The natural resources were there all along; it was up to man to discover and reveal them to the world. And the Torah tells no lie: Eretz Yisrael is truly a blessed country.

- The second passage of the Sh'ma is near the end of the Sidra, and in it we are told to serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul (11:13). The service of the heart is prayer. We are given the privilege of talking to Hashem three times a day. Collectively as a community, as a congregation, as a Minyan. And individually, as a private person. Prayer is the opportunity for us to speak to Hashem. Learning Torah is the opportunity for Hashem to speak to us. Seek guidance from the Torah and speak your heart to Hashem. There are prayers we say out loud. And prayers we say quietly to ourselves. But we need to say each prayer, not just to think it. To remember the Torah, it helps to say the words in an audible tone that at least we hear the words we say.

Questions by RED

From the Text

1. “You shall be blessed above all nations.” (7:14). How so?

2. Name all seven “fruits” of Eretz Yisrael? (8:8)

3. By what merit will Bnei Yisrael come to defeat the Canaanites and possess the Promised Land? (9:5)

4. What two points did Moshe make to Hashem to save Bnei Yisrael after the sin of the Golden Calf? (9:27,28)

5. Moshe made the second tablets of the Ten Commandments. Where did he store them? (10:1,2)

From Rashi

6. Against Bnei Yisrael’s enemies, Hashem will send a Tzir’a. What is a Tzir’a? (7:20)

7. After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe prayed for Aharon. How was he (partially) successful? (9:20)

8. Why were the Leviyim appointed to serve in the Mishkan and in the Holy Temple? (10:8)

9. What do we have to be concerned about during the time of prosperity? (11:16)

10. How will you retain your Jewish identity in Exile? (11:18)

From the Rabbis

11. “He will love you and bless you.” (7:13) How will Hashem bless Bnei Yisrael for performance of the Mitzvot? (S'forno)

12. What will propel you to bless

Hashem after you eat? (Ramban)

13. What geographical expanse will Bnei Yisrael experience in the time of their ultimate return to Hashem? (11:24, Ramban)

From the Haftara (Yeshayahu)

14. The prophet raises the question of the issue of a “Get” between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael. When was there a Get between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem? (Kimchi and Ibn Ezra)

Relationships

- a) Rivka - Ada
- b) Eisav - Amalek
- c) Elifaz - Yaakov
- d) Yaakov - Yocheved
- e) Binyamin - Sered

ANSWERS

1. You, your children, and your animals shall be fertile and be fruitful.
2. Wheat, Barley, Grapes, Figs, Pomegranates, Olives, and Dates.
3. Because of the wickedness of the Canaanites and because of Hashem’s promise to the Patriarchs.
4. Remember the promise Hashem made to the Patriarchs, and this would be bad PR for Hashem to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt and kill them in the desert.
5. Moshe placed them in an Ark of

Wood, which he built at G-d's command.

6. A flying insect that injects a poison. (Ibn Ezra: a form of Tzoraat)

7. Due to Moshe’s prayers, only two of Aharon’s sons died. Two of his sons survived.

8. Because the Leviyim did not worship the Golden Calf.

9. In time of prosperity, one would be tempted to be disloyal to Hashem.

10. By wearing Tefillin and by affixing Mezuzot on your homes.

11. With wealth.

12. Contrasting the current happy condition with the bondage in Egypt will move you to bless Hashem.

13. From the Euphrates to the Mediterranean.

14. The Get refers to Hashem’s relationship with the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom. No Get existed between Hashem and the Southern Kingdom of Yehuda and Binyamin.

Relationships

- a) Mother-in-Law Rivkah
- b) Grandfather & grandson
- c) Nephew & uncle
- d) Grandfather & granddaughter
- e) Uncle & nephew