

Behaloscha 2017

1.

Never giving up

“There were men who had been contaminated by a human corpse and could not make the pesach offering on that day; so they approached Moshe and Aaron on that day. Those men said to him, ‘we are contaminated through a human corpse; why should we be diminished by not offering Hashem’s offering in its appointed time among the children of Israel? Moshe said to them, ‘stand by and I will hear what Hashem will command you.’” (9, 6-8)

"ויהי אנשים אשר היו טמאים לנפש אדם ולא יכלו לעשת הפסח ביום ההוא ויקרבו לפני משה ולפני אהרן ביום ההוא. ויאמרו האנשים ההמה אליו אנחנו טמאים לנפש אדם למה נגרע לבלתי הקריב את קרבן יקוק במעדו בתוך בני ישראל. ויאמר אלהם משה עמדו ואשמעה מה יצוה יקוק לכם."

The Sifri explains that Moshe told them that Kadashim cannot be brought by one who is impure. They responded that Kohanim who are pure should sprinkle the blood and they should be able to eat from the korban. Moshe responded that this is still problematic. These people were kosher, fearful and pious.

How were they pious? Rabbi Dov Meir Rubin (Zichron Meir, Rosh Yeshiva in Chaifa) answers this based on a Gemara. The Gemara in Berachos (35b) relates that the later generations were not like the earlier generations. The earlier generations would bring their produce through the front door in order to obligate it in masser. The later generations would bring their produce through skylights, courtyards and other similar areas in order to exempt them from masser.

Even though what the later generations did was technically permissible, nevertheless, it is considered a downgrade of serving Hashem. Halachically it is permissible, but hashcificially it is problematic. One who is at the level of the earlier generations wouldn't want to exempt himself. Rather he would search for ways to obligate himself in mitzvos. Those people who wanted a second chance to perform the korban pesach were considered fearful and pious because even though they were halachically exempt from bringing the korban pesach because of their state of impurity, they still nevertheless strove to the best of their abilities to bring the korban pesach.

A proof to this concept can be brought from the Gemara in Avoda Zara (3a). Hashem tested the goyim with the mitzvah of Suka. They decided to leave the Suka because it was too hot. Upon exiting they kicked the Suka. The question arises; what did they do wrong? After all, the halacha is, one who is in pain is exempt from the mitzvah of Suka (מצטער פטור מן הסוכה). The Gemara explains that they are held accountable for their actions because they kicked the Suka. They didn't have proper love for the Torah, mitzvos and Hashem. If we leave the Suka because we are in pain, we should exit with our heads down because of our disappointment caused by our inability to perform the mitzvah of Suka. The deeper lesson of Pesach Shani is a second chance. We must never give up.

As a side point how can we explain the talmedai chachamim who remain in the Suka even when it rains? The Rama says that one who remains in a Suka when he is exempt will not receive reward and is called a הדייט (commoner.) How then do they remain in the Suka while it's raining? They are not exempt because they are not in pain. Most people must leave the Suka when it rains because they are naturally pained when it rains. These talmedai chachamim differ

in this regard. Since they are above, therefore they aren't in pain when it rains. This is analogous to diamonds that are raining from the sky. We wouldn't be concerned about the diamonds hitting us; rather we would only be worried about collecting more diamonds.

2.

Jews are like fish

"They journeyed from the mountain of Hashem a three-day distance, and the Ark of the covenant of Hashem journeyed before them a three-day distance to search out for them a resting place. The cloud of Hashem was over them by day when they journeyed from the camp. When the Ark would journey, Moshe said, 'arise, Hashem, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You. And when it rested, he would say, 'reside tranquilly, O, Hashem, among the myriad thousands of Israel.'" (10, 33-36)

"ויסעו מהר יקוק דרך שלשת ימים וארון ברית יקוק נסע לפניהם דרך שלשת ימים לתור להם מנוחה." "וענן יקוק עליהם יומם בנסעם מן המחנה." "ויהי בנסע הארץ ויאמר משה קומה יקוק ויפצו איביך וינסו משנאיך מפניך. ובנחה יאמר שובה יקוק רבבות אלפי ישראל."

Why is the letter נ backwards? The Gemara in Shabbos (116) says that these two pesukim are an independent sefer. There are really seven books of Chumash; Berashis, Shemos, Vayikra, Bamidbar is split up into three and then Devarim. Tosfos explains that they ran away from Hashem like a child who runs away from School. They didn't give gratitude where gratitude was due. They rebelled and went the opposite way. The Keli Yakar quotes the Megilas Setarim that says one who forsakes the Torah for one day; the Torah will forsake him for two days. This is analogous to two people who were departing from one another. The more they walked in their opposite directions, the further apart they would go from each other.

The backwards נ symbolizes a deep idea. They complained that they didn't have fish as they did when they were in Egypt. Nun in Aramaic means fish. The nun alludes to the Jews being compared to fish (See Berashis (48, 16)). Fish need water in order to survive. If they leave water, they will die. The same applies to us as well. If we leave the waters of Torah then we will not be able to survive. Water is compared to Torah. They were like a backwards nun, fish, who left the water. They backed away from the Aaron and Torah. They went to the camp, aka temporary matters pertaining to this world. The Keli Yakar concludes and writes that this is a major sin found amongst us throughout this long exile. The Torah is very long and deep like the seas.

The Gemara in Berachos (61b) relates that the Romans decreed that the Jews were prohibited to learn. Rebbe Akiva still taught Torah. Papas came to Rebbe Akiva and said you're going to get killed! Rebbe Akiva answered him with the following mashal (parable). A fox was going by the river. The fox saw fish in the river that were gathering. The fox said what are you doing? The fish replied the fishermen are coming to hunt us. The fox told them to come up on land and then we can live in peace like our parents did together. The fish asked, why do people say that you are smart? If currently, while we are in our own environment (the water) we are in danger, surely if we were to leave our environment and go onto land, where we would be incapable of breathing, we will be in danger. Rebbe Akiva said the same concept applies to us. If, when we are in our environment, learning 'in the Torah waters' we are in trouble, then surely, if we are not in our environment, aka out of the water, and not learning Torah, then we will be in trouble. (תנו רבנן פנעם)

אחת גזרה מלכות הרשעה שלא יעסקו ישראל בתורה, בא פפוס בן יהודה ומצאו לרבי עקיבא שהיה מקהיל קהלות ברבים ועוסק בתורה. אמר ליה עקיבא, אי אתה מתירא מפני מלכות? אמר לו אמשול לך משל, למה הדבר דומה? לשועל שהיה מהלך על גב הנמר, וראה דגים שהיו מתקבצים ממקום למקום, אמר להם מפני מה אתם בורחים? אמרו לו מפני רשתות שמביאין עלינו בני אדם. אמר להם רצונכם שתעלו ליבשה, ונדור אני ואתם כשם שדרו אבותי עם אבותיכם? אמרו לו אתה הוא שאומרים עליך פקח שבחיות? לא פקח אתה, אלא טפש אתה! ומה במקום חיותנו אנו מתיראין, במקום מיתתנו על אחת כמה וכמה! אף אנחנו, עכשיו (שאנו יושבים ועוסקים בתורה, שכתוב בה כי הוא חייך וארך ימיו כך, אם אנו הולכים ומבטלים ממנה על אחת כמה וכמה).

The Marsha explains that the foxes, those impure animals, symbolize the Goyim. The fish symbolize the Jews. Their gathering from place to place symbolizes our unity. The nets are their decrees. The dry land symbolizes leaving the Torah and its ways.

The question on this Gemara is why are we specifically compared to fish out of water? Why aren't we compared to a certain land animal that can't live without air? For example, why didn't the Gemara compare us to a lion without air? Rav Mordechai Gifter zasa"l (quoted by Ohel Moshe parshas Shemini page 248) answers and explains that fish in water glides and does not look fully alive. Dissimilarly, when it is removed from the water it looks alive because it is jumping all over the place, but in reality, the fish is slowly dying. Other animals differ. Meaning, when other animals have air and are breathing properly, they look alive. When you cut off their oxygen, they look like they are dying, because they are. Those who are learning, immersed in the waters of Torah and mitzvos, might not look so alive, like the fish. It might not look like they are having the best time (so to say). Sometimes, those who are doing things that they are not supposed to be doing, at the bars, clubs, etc., might look alive, wobbling, shaking all over the place, dancing, doing their moves. But, in reality, what is happening to them? They are dying, a slow spiritual death. They are like the fish outside of water, they are flopping, but their spiritual death is imminent. Those who spend their time immersed in Torah waters, even if they do not look as alive; are more alive than anybody else.

The Chafetz Chaim explains that a fish that is removed from water will still live a little longer. It won't immediately die. However, once it remains out of the water for a longer duration of time, it will die. The same applies to us as well. If we don't learn Torah, we won't immediately die. But as time continues, we will.

The Radak (Yeshaya 55, 1) explains that just as this world cannot exist without water, so too, it is impossible to exist without Torah. Furthermore, just as it is impossible to survive without water, so too, it is impossible to survive without Torah. The truth is; Torah is greater than water. Water enables us to live. Not only does Torah enable us to live, but it is also life itself.

We could learn other lessons from the Torah being compared to water. The Gemara in Tanis (7a) explains that Torah is compared to water because water symbolizes humility. Due to gravity and because water is a liquid, it always descends to a low area. The same applies to Torah. Torah knowledge only resides within one who humbles himself.

The Gemara in Yevamos (121a) relates a story of a ship that Rabbi Akiva was on that was sinking. Subsequently, they saw Rabbi Akiva alive on the shore. They asked Rabbi Akiva how he survived. He responded that **he grabbed on to a 'דף', board, and floated ashore.**

Rav Meir Shapiro explains the 'דף', is the 'דף' of Gemara. He held on to the Torah and he

survived! Learning Torah is the way to stay shtark in the waves of this long galus (exile) and everything inappropriate around us!

Based on the aforementioned, we could offer a novel homiletical explanation. Since the water resembles Torah, it therefore wasn't able to drown Rebbi Akiva. Another explanation could be as follows. When we are in the middle of a difficult sugya that we don't understand, we must not give up. We must make sure that we continue to hold onto the daf Gemara and not give up. We must apply the lesson of those who wanted a second chance to bring the korban pesach as mentioned in the previous piece.