

Vezos Haberachah 2016

1.

Don't break the religious chain

“The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.” (33, 4)

"תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב."

Rashi says that we must hold on to the Torah and not forsake it. The Gemara in Sukkah (42a) tells us that when a child knows how to speak his father teaches him Torah and shema. Rav Hamnuna says the Torah the father teaches the child is “The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.”

**What is so important about this pasuk? Why is this first pasuk the first thing we teach our children?**

The Safer Otzer Hamashalim (page 233) relates the following story. There was a person who started detaching a small part of the train tracks. The people who saw him quickly objected. They wanted to prevent him from causing a disaster. They shouted and yelled at him. However, he continued because he thought he wasn't doing anything wrong. He incorrectly thought that only a tiny part of the train tracks were being ruined and that it wasn't a problem. He incorrectly thought that this small act would not negatively affect the long tracks or big train. This person is certainly foolish.

The Chafetz Chaim explains that **those who don't learn and incorrectly think that they are utilizing their time in a better way by not learning are very mistaken. They are not just negatively affecting themselves; rather, all of the Jews are being negatively affected. The Torah is given to us as an inheritance. The Torah was given to Moshe on Har Sanai then to Yehoshua, etc. The obligation is placed upon us not to break this chain/train track and we should allow this Torah to go to future generations.**

**Those who don't learn Torah properly will not be able to transmit the Torah to the next generation. It is as if he is detaching one track from the train. A tremendous negative impact will result. However, one who learns, and is worthy to continue the track, will have great merit. This Pasuk is instructing us to continue the transmission from one track to the next. This is why this pasuk is so vital and it is the first pasuk we teach children.**

The Vayikra Raba (9, 3) relates a fundamental story. Rabbi Yanai was walking and saw a man who was very good looking, well-dressed and looked like a talmid chacham. Rav Yanai invited him to his house and he agreed. He was given food and drink. Rav Yanai tested his Torah knowledge. He was tested in Tanach, Mishna, Agada, and Gemara. He didn't know anything. He didn't even know how to lead benching. Rav Yanai said repeat after me, ‘a dog ate the bread of Yanai.’ He got up and grabbed Rav Yanai and said do you think the Torah is an inheritance just for you? He said one time I was walking past the Yeshiva. I heard the voices of kids who were saying “The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.” They said the Torah is for everyone, not just Yanai.

He was saying because of people not teaching Torah like you, there are people like me who don't even know how to bench!

מעשה ברבי ינאי שהיה מהלך בדרך וראה אדם אחד שהיה משופע ביותר א"ל משגח רבי מתקבלא גבן אמר לו ( אין הכניסו לביתו האכילו והשקהו בדקו במקרא ולא מצאו במשנה ולא מצאו באגדה ולא מצאו בתלמוד ולא מצאו א"ל סב בריך א"ל יברך ינאי בביתיה א"ל אית בכ אמר מה דאנא אמר לך א"ל אין א"ל אמור אכול כלבא פיסטיא דינאי קם תפסיה א"ל ירותתי גבך דאת מונע לי א"ל ומה ירתותך גבי א"ל חד זמן הוינא עבר קמי בית ספרא ושמעית קלהון דמניקיא אמרין (דברים לג) תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב מורשה קהלת ינאי אין כתיב כאן אלא קהלת יעקב א"ל למה זכיתה למיכלא על פתורי אמר לו מיומי לא שמעית מילא בישא וחזרתי למרה ולא חמית תרין דמתכתשין דין עם דין ולא יהבית שלמא ביניהון א"ל כל הדא דרך ארץ גבך וקרייתך כלבא קרא עליה (שם דרך דשיים אורחיה סגי שוי דא"ר ישמעאל בר רב נחמן עשרים וששה דורות קדמה דרך ארץ את התורה.

The Tana d'bei Eliyahu Raba perek 11 states that all Jews are for each other (כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה). The Jews are comparable to a ship that has a hole in it. If there is a hole in this ship it affects all of the people on the ship! If one Jew is falling, it affects us all! An example of this is Achan who took from the consecrated property. Consequently, all of the other Jews were negatively affected. (Yehoshua 7)

The Baal Haturim (33, 4) quotes the pasuk in Berashis (25, 27) “Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents. The Berashis Raba (63, 10) explains the plurality of the word tents. One is the tent of Shem and the other is the tent of Ever. The Torah endures when everyone gathers together.

2.

Rivivos Ephraim is bothered by why the Torah says that Moshe commanded us, and not Hashem. The pasuk says (4, 44) “this is the teaching that Moshe placed before the Jews.” **Since Moshe taught us the concept of toiling over the Torah, therefore the pasuk says “Moshe commanded us.”**

3.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky (Emes Leyaakov page 530) says the name Yaakov is said in the pasuk. This teaches us a fundamental difference between our religion and other religions. Many other religions focus on the intellectually gifted individuals. Everyone else is acceptably ignorant. Dissimilarly, us, the Torah is for everyone. The pasuk says Yaakov because Yisroel is for the higher people of the nation (Bereishis 32). The word Yaakov is rooted from the word עקב, which means heel. This alludes to the Torah being for everyone. It's placed in the corner and anyone who wants it can come and take it (Kiddushin 66). In Judaism ignorance is not an excuse.

Another difference between our religion and other religions is the following. Other religions only apply in their place of worship. Conversely, the Torah is constantly applicable. The Torah must be followed; from our birth to death, every morning and evening, and every situation in life.

We find this concept by korbanos as well. The Gemara in Menachos (73b) says a non-Jew can only bring a korban olah because it is completely for Hashem. Jews can bring a

shlamim which is for the Kohanim, other Jews and it's also for Hashem. We are able to combine the physical with the spiritual, and uplift the physical, unlike them.

4.

The Gemara in Makkos (23b) quotes Rav Simlai who says there are 613 mitzvos. The 365 negative/passive mitzvos correspond to the days of the year. The 248 positive/active commandments correspond to our limbs. Our pasuk alludes to the fact Hashem gave us 613 mitzvos. The Gematria of תורה is 611, plus the commandments that Hashem said directly to the Jewish nation. Those two commandments were "I am Hashem your God. And don't worship other Gods." The 248 limbs all scream out to do a mitzvah for them. The 365 days of the year remind us not to transgress the 365 negative commandments!

דרש רבי שמלאי שש מאות ושלוש עשרה מצות נאמרו לו למשה, שלש מאות וששים וחמש לאוין כמנין ימות החמה, ומאתים וארבעים ושמונה עשה כנגד איבריו של אדם. אמר רב המנונא מאי קרא? תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה, תורה בגימטריא שית מאה וחד סרי הוי, אנכי ולא יהיה לך מפי הגבורה שמענום. וכתב רש"י רמ"ח מצות עשה, דכל אבר ואבר אומר לו עשה מצוה. שס"ה [מצות] לא תעשה, שבכל יום מזהירים עליו שלא לעבור. שית מאה וחד סרי, והיינו דכתיב תורה צוה לנו משה ושתים מפי הגבורה הרי שית מאה ותליסרי.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.