Points to Ponder

Devarim/Chazon 5782

**יֹסֵ֧ף עֲלֵיכֶ֛ם כָּכֶ֖ם וְהִנְּכֶ֣ם הַיּ֔וֹם כְּכֽוֹכְבֵ֥י הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם לָרֹֽב: Like the stars of the Heavens (1:10)** - Why does he give them this praise before criticizing them? **Rav Menachem Benzion  Zacks** suggests that the answer might lie in the next pasuk — ויברך אתכם כאשר דבר לכם. There are two models which HaShem blesses Klal Yisrael, to be like the stars in the sky and like the sand of the earth. The stars represent the potential of each individual to be a shining light. Each star has its own unique qualities and everyone has the ability to be a “star.” But we also need to be like sand, which doesn’t appear as individual grains, but one unit mixed together indistinguishable from the next. Without the synergy of everyone working together, being like the stars becomes a fault. Moshe Rabbeinu was able to see their star power, but they still lacked the unity necessary and therefore, he said ויברך אתכם כאשר דבר לכם, referring to the beracha to be like the sand of the earth.

**Should add to you LIKE YOU (1:11) -** Why did Moshe say that the addition should be “like you”? **Rav Laibele Eiger** noted that since Moshe was giving the people massive rebuke, he did not want them to think that they were totally evil. In afact he would want them to have a thousandfold just like them. **Rav Zelig Pliskin** reminds parents, Rebbeim and so many who offer rebuke that if we make the listener think that s/he is so awful, s/he will never want to improve. Positive words of encouragement are always important when offering rebuke.

**הָב֣וּ לָ֠כֶ֠ם אֲנָשִׁ֨ים חֲכָמִ֧ים  Choose from among you men (1:13) - Rashi** citing the Sifre makes a fascinating comment: After asking what is the meaning of the term "*anoshim*"? Was there even a "*salka daitach*" to appoint women rabbis?? The expression must certainly mean "*anoshim tzadikim*". **Rav Schachter Shlita** asked why was it so obvious to the *tanaim* that we can not have women rabbis? After all, Tosfos (*Bava Kama* 15a) raises the possibility of giving *semicha* to women, and having them serve on a *beth din*. So if women can possibly receive *semicha*, why can't they serve the community as rabbis?The answer, noted Rav Schachter,  is obvious. Although we must sometimes compromise on our *midas hatznius* and do certain *mitzvos befarhesia* (in public), this is not required of women. Women are not being discriminated against. They alone, unlike men, are given the opportunity to maintain their *midas hahistatrus* at all times.

**וַתֵּרָֽגְנ֤וּ בְאָֽהֳלֵיכֶם֙ And you complained in your tents (1:27**) - The possuk describes the reaction to the report of the Miraglim. They cried that night and so, Chazal tell us, Hashem punished us with a promise of a need to cry in the future. What is meant by “in the tents?” **Rav Dovid Feinstein** explained that the tents are a reference to the parents and specifically the mothers who traditionally pass the fundamentals of Judaism to their children. Since the tradition of crying had been passed there, it would pass forever more.

**וּבַדָּבָ֖ר הַזֶּ֑ה אֵֽינְכֶם֙ מַֽאֲמִינִ֔ם And in regard to this matter you did not believe in Hashem (1:32)** - Here it sounds as if the sin was a lack of belief while in Parshas Pinchas it sounds like it was more like the people despised the land. Is there a connection between the 2? **Rav Pam** explained that there is a concept in the Gemara (Bava Basra (142) of Hamizakeh L’Ubar - if one tries to transfer something to an unborn fetus the acquisition is not binding. However, the גמרא says, that if one is מזכה to his own unborn child, the acquisition does work. To explain the discrepancy the גמרא tells us that when it comes to someone’s unborn child a person is close to his own child. Rav Pam explains, in the name of “גדול אחד”, that for the outsider the unborn fetus is a major uncertainty. Will he be born at all? Will he come out normal and healthy? The entire pregnancy, for the outsider, is an afterthought. Obviously, for the mother, going through significant physical changes and connecting with the unborn fetus in ways that are impossible for anybody else, the baby is anything but an afterthought. It changes her entire lifestyle and colors every decision. Even for the father, though, it’s a different experience. He is thinking about teaching his child how to play ball and how to read a משנה. He has already envisioned the child’s graduation from medical school or law school. For him, the baby is a reality. Thus, a קנין can be binding. Ergo, an emotional connection can taint a cost/benefit analysis. The מרגלים saw how great the land was and acknowledged intellectually that it was good. Their failing was in their inability to emotionally connect sufficiently to the land to have it affect their judgment. We were not supposed to coldly analyze the benefits and risks of Israel – we were supposed to lovingly look at it the way a parent looks at a child’s faults. The same way we love our spouses even though they may do things occasionally that we find irritating, we should allow our emotional connection to ארץ ישראל to carry the day. The lack of בטחון was therefore a direct result of the מיאוס בארץ – not disgust, but better translated in this context as failure to properly adore.

**פְּנ֥וּ לָכֶ֖ם צָפֹֽנָה Turn northward (2:3)** - The Midrash notes that when Eisav came to Yitzchak and got the news that Yaakov took the Berachos he asked for a remaining Beracha. Yitzchak told him that even if Eisav got a Beracha that Beracha strengthens Yaakov. But what does turn North mean? **Rav Nosson Wachtfogel** explains that when Bnei Yisrael find someone like Eisav rising against them, they should turn to the north, in other words, hide themselves and stay under the radar. The best place to hide from the outside world is in the world of Torah.

**לֹ֥א חָסַ֖רְתָּ דָּבָֽר Hashem has blessed you in all your undertakings. He has watched over your wanderings through this great wilderness; Hashem, your G-d, has been with you these past forty years—you have lacked nothing. (2:7)** - The Midrash explains that this posuk refers to the physical comforts of the forty years in the desert. Hashem provided shelter, food, and clothing. **The Slonimer Rebbe** reads this verse more metaphorically. He understands that Hashem is sending a message of eternal support to the Jewish people. When a Jew feels down and hopeless—as if in the middle of a forty year trek through an empty desert—he or she is not alone. Indeed, by becoming aware of the reality that Hashem is present, the pain dissipates and one feels as if ‘you have lacked nothing.

**Haftara**

**וְאָשִׁ֚יבָה שֹֽׁפְטַ֙יִךְ֙ כְּבָרִ֣אשֹׁנָ֔ה  And I will return your judges as before (Yeshayahu 1:26)** - The Gemara (Sukkah 27b) notes that there is no Shevet that didn’t raise Shoftim. The **Taz** notes that in Shevet Shimon there were no Shoftim. How do we reconcile these contradictions? **Rav Moshe Wolfson** explained that Shimon alone did not raise Shoftim but Shimon was scattered around the Jewish people and were primarily influenced by Shevet Yehuda who had many Shoftim. (He adds that the connection helps explain the connection between Shimon who corresponds to the month of Av, the month of Eisav and of sadness and the Month of Nissan, Yehuda’s month which connects the day of the week of Tisha B’Av and of Pesach Seder.) On the surface, Shimon had no Shofet, but when connected to Yehuda he certainly benefitted from the Shoftim around.