Points to Ponder

Eikev 5779

**רַבִּ֛ים הַגּוֹיִ֥ם הָאֵ֖לֶּה מִמֶּ֑נִּי אֵיכָ֥ה אוּכַ֖ל לְהֽוֹרִישָֽׁם: When you tell yourself that there are too many nations, how will you defeat them (7:17**)- The definition of Bitachon is often misunderstood. **Rav Mattisyahu Salomon Shlita** points out that many mistakenly believe that Bitachon means that one believes that things will turn out the way that you want. However this is incorrect. Rather Bitachon means that one does not need to rely on statistics in the face of hope. Even when facing a threat, one has the right to rely on Hashem and place his hope in Him.

**וְאָֽכַלְתָּ֖ וְשָׂבָ֑עְתָּ וּבֵֽרַכְתָּ֙ And you will eat and be satisfied (8:10) - Rav Dovid Lau Shlita** quoted the **Gerrer Rebbe** who contrasted Bentsching with the recitation of Asher Yatzar. Bentsching has a limit for how long one may recite it while Asher Yatzar can be recited for a much longer period of time. Why the difference? The Rebbe explained that the theme of Birkas HaMazon is about breaking one’s Gaava. That can only happen when a person recognizes that his sense of personal satisfaction (Savata) is due to Hashem’s goodness as opposed to his personal achievement. That realization is achieved when the person comes to the reality at his high point -- on a full stomach.

**זְכֹר֙ אַל־תִּשְׁכַּ֔ח אֵ֧ת אֲשֶׁר־הִקְצַ֛פְתָּ Remember how you angered Hashem (9:7) - Rav Schachter Shlita** would remind us that the **Ramban** seems to be unsure as to whether this command was only for the generation in the Midbar or whether it applied to the future generations as well -- making it a Mitzva that is part of the 613. The **Mogen Avraham** adds that this is a Midrash in Yalkut Shimoni. Thus, we can fulfill the Mitzva of remembering this Shabbos. Why not make a big fuss about this? Mogen Avraham notes that to publicly humiliate Bnei Yisrael is not a good idea. The **Torah Temimah** in his biography that the reading of Parshas Parah fulfills the obligation. Why? Rav Schachter explained that if it is a Mitzva than the intent is to teach the idea of Teshuva L’Rabim -- not merely to make us feel guilty. That is done through the Parah Adumah.

**וָֽאֵשֵׁ֣ב בָּהָ֗ר אַרְבָּעִ֥ים יוֹם֙ וְאַרְבָּעִ֣ים לַ֔יְלָה I sat on the mountain for 40 days -- I did not eat or drink (9:9)** - The Midrash Tanchuma determines that Moshe was Moser Nefesh for Torah and therefore it is called Toras Moshe. **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explains that the Kinyan for Torah is Mesirus Nefesh. Mesirus Nefesh was displayed here by not eating or drinking for 40 days and nights. However, that was true in Shomayim where it is not Derech Eretz to eat and drink. Ergo, Moshe’s Kinyan came about not only because of his Mesirus Nefesh for Torah but also for the Derech Eretz that should precede it.

**ק֣וּם רֵ֤ד מַהֵר֙ מִזֶּ֔ה  Go down quickly (9:12)** - Why did Hashem tell Moshe to go down quickly only AFTER the Eigel began? Why not send him down EARLIER and stop the episode? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explains that when Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah and the yoke of Shomayim in the process, they became like Malachim, correcting the sin of Adam Harishon. However, when the other nations didn’t join them, the world was left in a confusion -- with some people like Malachim (Bnei Yisrael) and others not able to release themselves from animalistic choices. At that point, Hashem gave permission to the Satan to unite the world by bringing Bnei Yisrael down, if they could not raise the nations of the world. Hence, the delay until after the Eigel happened and the reason we continue to suffer the consequences even today. We didn’t raise the rest of the world and fell prey to them instead.

**וְהָיָ֗ה אִם־שָׁמֹ֤עַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ֙ אֶל־מִצְו‍ֹתַ֔י If you will listen to my Mitzvos (11:13)** - We note that this section of the Shema is known as Kabbalas Hamitzvos. Why do we need to accept the Mitzvos if we already accept the yoke of Heaven in the first section of Shema? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explains that while the responsibility to do Mitzvos comes with one who accepted the yoke of heaven, Hashem wants us to also develop a Simcha Shel Mitzva and accept the Mitzva responsibility not as a force but as an opportunity.

**לֹֽא־יִתְיַצֵּ֥ב אִ֖ישׁ בִּפְנֵיכֶ֑ם No person shall stand in front of you (11:25) - Rav Yechiel Yitzchak Perr Shlita** once noted that the reason we refer to Tefilla as Amidah is that while on the one hand it seems logical for a person to subjugate himself before Hashem in Tefillah, it does not appear that Hashem wants that. Hashem wants us to serve him not as crushed, mushy frog shaped humans. He wants us to serve Him as tall upright human beings. When we come to pray as human beings who crackle with creativity, we choose to serve Him (and thus no one else). We do not get squashed into doing so.

**Haftara: מַדּ֨וּעַ בָּ֜אתִי וְאֵ֣ין אִ֗ישׁ Why did I come and there was no man (Yeshayahu 50:2)** - The Talmud learns that this refers to a time when Hashem comes to a Shul and doesn’t find ten people there. **Rav Schwab ztl**. explains that any opportunity to engage self improvement without seizing upon it disappoints Hashem. The Navi is telling us that He gave many chances for a meeting of the minds but felt that He was the only one trying.