Points to Ponder

Matos-Maasei 5782

**כִּֽי־יִדֹּ֨ר נֶ֜דֶר לַֽה אֽוֹ־הִשָּׁ֤בַע שְׁבֻעָה֙ When you make a Neder or a Shevua (30:3) – Ramban** notes that Neder is like swearing in the life of the king and Shevuah is like swearing in the king himself. What does that mean? **Rav Schachter Shlita noted that Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** explained that Nedarim are a part of a course of the life created by Hashem (hence Nedarim are on Cheftzaos like Hekdeish) but a Shevuah which employs the name of Hashem, requires a person who understands the name of Hashem and knows Hashem. That Shaliach is a Gavra. When a child is about to be born we tell him “swear to be a Tzaddik not a Rasha” In other words, even if something seems ok to you to do, remember you are an agent of Hashem and need to live up to that standard even when unstated.

**כְּכָל־הַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּ֖יו יַֽעֲשֶֽׂה According to that which emanates from your mouth you shall do (30:3)** – Why is this section of the Torah brought specifically here? Simply, we are coming out of a section of the Torah dealing with Korbanos and just like there the issue of keeping one’s word is essential (Korbanos and oaths are linked on many levels in the Gemara) the same is true here. However, **Rabbi Dr. Lord Sacks ztl.** explained that there is a deeper meaning here. As Bnei Yisrael were getting closer to the land they were about to embark on making a society that would be based primarily not on the use of force but rather on people honoring their moral commitments as they promised Hashem they would. The power of one’s word binds us and that bond is one that creates order out of chaos. Hence Nedarim comes before conquering the land setting the tone for the future governance of the land.

**וַיֹּ֥אמֶר אֲלֵיהֶ֖ם משֶׁ֑ה Moshe said to them (31:15)** – If we know that Moshe was the one who got angry, we also know that he is the one who spoke to them. Why does the Possuk repeat it? **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explained that we learn that when one gets angry, s/he needs to put some space in before speaking and addressing the situation. Speaking too early out of anger is not a wise move.

**בְּנֽוּ־לָכֶ֤ם עָרִים֙ לְטַפְּכֶ֔ם וּגְדֵרֹ֖ת לְצֹנַֽאֲכֶ֑ם וְהַיֹּצֵ֥א מִפִּיכֶ֖ם תַּֽעֲשֽׂוּ Build pens for our flock here and cities for our children” (32:24)** - In their negotiations with Moshe, the tribes of Reuven and Gad offered to “build pens for our flock here and cities for our children” Moshe answered that they should “build for yourselves cities for your children and pens for your flock, and that which comes out of your mouths you shall do” (ibid. 24). **Rav Shaul Yisraeli ztl.** noted that it is surprising that Moshe got angry at the tribes even before hearing their whole plan, when it turned out that they apparently intended to join their brothers in battle after all. Rav Yisraeli explains that before Moshe heard the rest of their proposal, he was sure they would not come over the Jordan to fight because he knew that they were blessed with many children and those children needed to be educated. The tribes answered Moshe that they had not thought in those terms, as we see from their response. After all, they spoke first about building pens for their flock and only afterward cities for their children. While Moshe accepted the basic proposal, he corrected them about the order of the pens and the cities. Moshe added that they should take his correction seriously and not claim that the order of how you do things does not make a difference. “That which comes out of your mouths you shall do.” In other words, just the fact that you said these words is impactful, and it is impossible to know how impactful something said in passing can be.

**וַיִּבְנ֣וּ בְנֵי־גָ֔ד אֶת־דִּיבֹ֖ן וְאֶת־עֲטָרֹ֑ת The Bnei Gad built Divon, Ataros and Aroer (32:34)** – The Talmud usues this verse to remind us that one needs to complete Stayim Mikra V’Echad Targum even on words that have no translation like Ataros and Divon. Why these words and not Reuven and Shimon? **Rav Yitzchak Hutner ztl.** explained that one can extend Kodesh nto Chol through boundaires. Shabbos can be extended into the week both at the beginning and the end. Theoretically this should extend to the borders of the land of Israel including Ataros and Divon. Lest one think that Ataros and Divon need no Targum as they are already sanctified we do. We learn how important the opportunity to increase Kedusha is, even if seemingly superfluous. The chance to create Kedusha instead of having it happen, is a big plus to a Jew.

**וַיִּסְע֖וּ מִמִּדְבַּ֣ר סִינָ֑י וַיַּֽחֲנ֖וּ בְּקִבְרֹ֥ת הַתַּֽאֲוָֽה They traveled from Midbar Sinai and camped in Kivros HaTaava (33:16)** – It is interesting to follow the map of the travels of Bnei Yisrael at the beginning of Parshas Maasei. However, **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank ztl.** notes the significance of these 2 locations.He explains that when one leaves Sinai—when one depart from the Torah, the next step is Kivros HaTaava – the distinct desire to become victim of one’s earthly desires. When neglecting the Torah, one becomes absorbed with daily pursuits of physical nature. The secret to not becoming addicted, is to remain connected to Torah.

**וְיָ֣שַׁב בָּ֗הּ עַד־מוֹת֙ הַכֹּהֵ֣ן הַגָּדֹ֔ל He shall remain there until the death of the Kohein Gadol (35:25)** – **The Rambam** in Moreh Nevuchim explains that waiting until the death of the Kohein Gadol because when he dies it will shake the people up and they will forgive one another. **Rav Shmuel Turovitz (Rosh Yeshiva l’Tzirim Be’er Yaakov)** noted that this is the power of the kohein Gadol. As the focal point of the Jewish people, he can cause people to forgive issues and squabbles that have been in place sometimes for decades.

**Haftara**

**וְתֹֽפְשֵׂ֚י הַתּוֹרָה֙ לֹ֣א יְדָע֔וּנִי The bearers of the Law have not known Me” (2:8) - Targum Yonasan** explains this to mean, “the teachers of Torah have not taught knowledge of fearing Me.” The Alter of Kelm, **Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv, (Chokhma Va-da’as 130),** explains that there is a vital necessity of studying mussar alongside one’s regular Torah learning. Targum Yonasan quite clearly speaks of a situation where scholars were teaching Torah but neglected to try to instill Yiras Shomayim within their students. They taught the dry material, but failed to guide their charges towards sincere religious commitment. God condemns these teachers for their failure, because teaching Torah without attempting to teach “knowledge of fearing Me” does not qualify as effective Torah education.