

Pardes Yehuda

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Parshas Mattos Massai 5776 [year 6] 267

פרשת מטות מסעי תשע"ז שבת חזק

This week the diaspora finally meets up with the Sidra of Eretz Yisrael
 Parshas Mattos:

Proving that Hashem does only good

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־רִאשֵׁי הַמִּטּוֹת לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' (ל ב)
 Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying: This is the thing Hashem has commanded (30:2) Having just said וַיְדַבֵּר "spoke" seven words earlier, why does the posuk write לֵאמֹר "saying"? Is it not redundant? And if it is there, why does it occur in the middle of the posuk, as opposed to the end, after *This is the thing Hashem has commanded, "saying"* -- where it might have more impact as a connective word to what follows? The Gemara (Brochos 60b) teaches an important principle: לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר, כל דעביד רהמנא לטב עביד THAT WHATEVER HASHEM DOES IS ONLY FOR A PERSON'S BENEFIT. Let us reference the posuk referring to righteous judgment: לא תעשו עוֹל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט (ויקרא יט טו) You shall commit no injustice in judgment. (Vayikra 19:15) Hashem judges each person on an ongoing basis, and there can be no injustice in that process. We can parse our posuk against the dual background of this posuk and this Gemara, and thereby answer the questions which we posed earlier. Moshe, the Rav of Klal Yisroel is teaching the Yidden the importance of "Laimor", "saying" constantly-- what? that *This is the thing Hashem has commanded*, that anything that happens to a person is as a result of Divine judgement, and that Hashem decrees only goodness for each person. (תפארת שמואל - אלכסנדר)

Two Sedros in tandem teach: Pay your pledges to tzedaka!

Our sedra opens with:
 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה וּגְוִי זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אִישׁ כִּי־יִדְבֹר נָדָר לְהו' וּגְוִי לֹא יַחַל דְּבָרוֹ בְּכָל־הֵיבָא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה: (ל ב -ג)
 If a man makes a vow to Hashem or makes an oath to prohibit himself, he shall not violate his word; according to whatever came out of his mouth, he shall do.(30:2-3) It is often instructive to link the ending of one sedra to the beginning of the following one. In trying to do so this week, the previous sedra of Pinchas closes with mentioning vows and offerings in a general way:: אֱלֹהֵי תַעֲשׂוּ לְה' בְּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם לְכַר מַנְדְּרֵיכֶם וְנִדְבְתֵיכֶם: (כט:לט) These you shall offer up for Hashem on your festivals, besides your vows and voluntary offerings (29:39) The Torah mentions vows (end of Pinchas) and then proceeds to detail their specific laws (start of Mattos). But there is a deeper allusion. Parshas Pinchas is replete with details of the Yomim Tovim, which usually generate extra aliyos during krias haTorah in shul. These aliyos are generally accompanied by pledges for tzedaka. This is also the case during the Yizkor observance on the last days of those same Yom Tovim, as well as on Yom Kippur, to arouse merit for the souls of departed

family members. Now the juxtaposition of the two parshiyos comes into play. Pinchas, ending with tzedaka vows is followed by the admonition of Mattos: כָּל־הֵיבָא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה -- the vower had best make good on the pledges he made during the Yomtovim detailed in Pinchas. (תרחם ציון ר' שלום הכהן) .

Parshas Massai

Firstborn people and firstborn lambs: both felled by the Plague

וּמִצְרַיִם מְקַבְּרִים אֶת־אֲשֶׁר הִקְהָה ה' בָּהֶם כָּל־בְּכוֹר וּבְאֵלֹהֵיהֶם עֲשָׂה ה' שְׁפָטִים: (לג ד) The Egyptians were busy burying because Hashem had struck down their firstborn and had wrought vengeance against their deities.(33:4) What is the connection between the Egyptians' burying their firstborn and their idolatrous false g-ds? Recall Shemos 11:5: וַיָּמָת כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרֹעָה וּגְוִי וְכָל בְּכוֹר (שמות יא ה) Every firstborn in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne ..., and every firstborn animal. Among those firstborn animals were found the firstborn lambs, which were worshipped by the Egyptians as pagan deities. To show honour to those idolatries, the Egyptians felt obliged to bury the dead of them. Our posuk now comes into focus: The Mitzriyim were busy burying both their human firstborn, whom Hashem had slain, as well as אֱלֹהֵיהֶם -- their false firstborn idols -- against whom Hashem had likewise exacted vengeance. (תפארת ערוך מיימון)

Torah study: an antidote for Loshon Horah

וַיִּסְעוּ מִחַצְרֵת וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּרִחְמָה: (לג יח) They journeyed from Chatzeros and camped in Rismah.(33:18) Our meforshim sometimes shed light on teachings which are concealed in words that seem unrelated to the message. Here is one such example. The Ohr HaChaim haKodosh (beginning of Parshas Devorim) sees an allusion to Torah in the geographical name "Chatzeros", based on Tehillim 84:11, כִּי טוֹב־יוֹם בְּחַצְרֵיךָ מֵאֶלֶף, For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. [Courts = chatzros kodshecha = batei midrashim = Torah] And Midrash Shocheh Tov writes: לא ניתן הקב"ה התורה לישראל אלא כדי שלא יהיו מדברים לשון הרע The Torah was given to Klal Yisroel only so that they should not speak Loshon Horah/slander. The clear implication is that the only guard against slander is Torah study. Further along these lines, "Rismah" alludes to closing one's mouth (seen from רָתַם, a muzzle of an animal which keeps it from eating.) So: if one cholila travels away from Torah study, ("away from Chatzeiros"), when he "camps", i.e "rests" in his dwelling, let him make sure his mouth is "closed", i.e. "muzzled" from slanderous speech. A clear message is that one should immerse himself in Torah study and thereby be shielded from slanderous speech. The Rambam teaches that all sin ultimately stems from an absence of Torah. (Y. Z. Klitnick)

Rav Shlomo of Karlin launches a Yid to higher levels, and Reb Leib Sarah's spurs him along.

In Barditchev there lived a certain pious young man named Meir, learned in both the revealed and hidden Torahs, and a sincere servant of Hashem. He saw in seforim that in every generation there are a small number of exalted tzaddikim who can enter freely into the higher worlds without prior permission, to catch a glimpse of the Divine Presence. [See Gemara Sukkah 45b, Rav Abaye's teaching]. Meir yearned to personally encounter one of those tzaddikim. Problem was, both his father and father-in-law, both wealthy and learned Jews, opposed any connection to Chasidism and its proponents, and did everything they could to prevent him from leaving Barditchev. His worthy wife, however, knew that he was a totally sincere Oved Hashem and looked the other way as he escaped late one night on his journey to find a tzaddik. He wended his way from one town to the next, and as Chazal say "The way a person is seeking to go is the way he is led from Shomayim." His path took him to Rebbe Shlomo of Karlin, and with his first glimpse of the Rebbe, he felt in his soul that here was the tzaddik he had been meant to find. He stayed there, hoping for a peaceful sojourn. But it was not to be. A letter arrived from his wife, informing him that their two sons had taken ill -- gravely so -- and she had no funds for household expenses, not to mention for medical care for the lads. The family's situation was dire. The time had come for him to air his plight before the tzaddik Rebbe Shlomo. He prepared a kvittel and entered the inner sanctum to show the Rebbe the plaintive letter. The Rebbe said that he could not help him, but instead referred him to Rebbe Levi Yitzchok of Barditchev, who was then in Pinsk, and who would surely advise him appropriately. Rav Levi Yitzchok received him sympathetically, and after reading the letter, became immersed in holy meditations, until he spoke these words; "Your Rebbe could not bring himself to tell you this, which is why he sent you to me. But I am able to reveal to you that your dire plight now is a punishment for having in your possession certain manuscripts which you enjoy reading. But the author is known to be a confirmed evil person and a heretic, and his words are corrupting you. I promise you that from the time you consign those papers to the flames, your sons will recover their health and you yourself will attain wealth and Torah learning."

The young man harboured some doubts in his mind about what he had just heard and returned to Rebbe Shlomo to seek clarification. He did not think that merely possessing some writings was such a bad infraction; they could also fetch a nice sum on the manuscript market, and he was not convinced he had to burn them. The Karliner Rebbe told him straight out: "The Oibershter has been guiding you on the proper path until now and Rav Levi Yitzchok spoke words of pure truth to you. My son, follow the words of advice you heard in Pinsk and you will soon be showered with brochos." After words like these, Meir lost no time in burning the problematic writings to ash. He lingered six weeks in Karlin and left for

home with copious blessings from the Rebbe. When he arrived home, after the good news that his sons had returned to full health, the first brocho which embraced him was that of wealth.

One day, when on a business trip selling merchandise, he happened into a kretschma (a Jewish country tavern) which was frequented by poor young men. One fellow in particular, with a handsome face, caught Meir's eye. The chap bought a small loaf of bread from the innkeeper but seemed hesitant to eat it once he held it in his hand. He passed it from one hand to other, in close contemplation. It was clear to Meir that this man simply would not put that loaf of bread into his mouth, but for reasons that were unclear, to say the least. Meir sought an explanation, and launched an investigation. He asked the innkeeper's wife if she had separated challah from the dough from which that bread had been baked. "No," she said. "My daughter-in-law takes care of that." The answer to the same question from the younger woman was, "No, I didn't separate challah this week. My mother-in-law said she would do it." Meir immediately discerned that no Yid was permitted to eat that bread, but... how could the young man have known that just by holding and looking at the loaf? He went over to talk to the mysterious man, but meanwhile he had disappeared. The men in the inn told him that this man was a regular customer there, and that he had a habit of going out into the forest and returning. This meant that he was probably in the forest then. Meir tracked him down and found him sitting on a fallen log, deep in meditation. He asked him his name. "What business is it of yours?" came the gruff reply. "See here, Reb Yid. I mean no harm. I have just spent two years near my Rebbe, Rav Shlomo of Karlin and while there I learned to size up people pretty well. I see on your face, and how you avoided the non-kosher bread, that you are a hidden tzaddik! I want to be close to you." "Alright," said the man. "My name is Leib Sarah's [Leib, son of Sarah]. You should know that you merited to encounter me because you obeyed Rav Levi Yitzchok and burned the heretical manuscripts. I am in galus/exile now, traveling from place to place, for one reason: to repair the spiritual damage done by the writer of those papers."

Reb Meir was amazed by the encounter with the tzaddik, evidently another one of the type he had long been seeking and begged for a brocho from Reb Leib Sarah's. With that in his pocket, he became a wealthy businessman and was able to relocate to Eretz Yisroel with his entire family, where he became a leading and upstanding citizen. He often related his entire story to HaKodosh Rabbi Moshe Tzvi miSavran.

(ספר שמע שלמה - פרי ישיע אהרן)

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