

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT PIKUDEI

DVAR TORAH: SHEMOT – THE SECOND CHUMASH

The author of the Geonic work Halachot Gedolot (Hilchot Hespel Chapter 76) refers to the second book of the Torah – what most call “Shemot” – as “The Second Chumash (Fifth).” This would not be so surprising if he referred to the other books of the Torah as the 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 5th. But, instead, he lists the five books of the Torah as: “Bereishit” (In the Beginning); “The Second Chumash;” “The Book of Kohanim;” “The Chumash of Countings;” and “Mishneh Torah (Restatement of the Torah).” [On Sotah 36b Shemot is also called “The Second Chumash” while Bamidbar is called “The Chumash of Countings.”] Why is Shemot’s name just a number while the other four books of the Torah get thematic names?

In his introduction to the book of Shemot, the Netziv (Harav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, 1816-1893 זצ"ל) contends that “The Second Chumash” expresses the book’s theme, not just its location in the Torah.

Shemot, says the Netziv, is called by the Halachot Gedolot “Bereishit Part II” because the creation of G-d’s world, the theme of Bereishit, is not complete until the end of the book of Shemot. Bereishit’s story of the creation of the world is missing a crucial element, G-d’s Nation. The world needs at least one nation that is totally connected to G-d, following His ways, and knows His teachings. That one nation can be a light to the world. They can eventually teach the entire world how to serve G-d. That people is Israel.

The book of Shemot tells the story of the formation of the People of Israel. At the close of the book of Bereishit they are still only a family, a clan. Shemot begins with their growth into a nation in Egypt. Pharaoh and the Egyptians fear their power and enslave them, but Israel’s population continues to increase exponentially. When G-d miraculously saves Israel through the Exodus, they become His People. When at Mount Sinai G-d gives them His Torah they gain the tools to become His light unto the nations of the world. But it is only in the last verses of Shemot that Israel fully matures, when the Divine Presence rests in their midst in the Mishkan.

This, says the Netziv, is what Rabbi Berechiah (quoted in Vayikra Rabbah 36:4) meant when he explained the word בראשית as "בשביל ישראל שנקראו ראשית". The ultimate purpose of G-d’s world, expressing the Divine ideal, will come about through the People of Israel living according to G-d’s plan with the Divine Presence in their midst in the Land of Israel. That will bring the entire world to serve Hashem together.

It is striking that Amalek is also referred to as ראשית, in the verse "ראשית גוים עמלק" – “Amalek is the first of the nations” (Bamidbar 24:20). They were the first ones to try to stop the People of Israel from making it to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. Amalek prevents the Divine Throne and the Divine Name from being complete (Tanchuma Ki Teitzei 11). The force of Amalek prevents the full revelation of G-dliness in the world; they prevent creation from reaching its true culmination. We pray instead for a time when “Hashem will be the King over the entire world. On that day He will be one, and His Name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

SOURCE GUIDE: MOSHE'S BLESSING

When the nation completed their work on the Mishkan, Moshe saw it all and, says the Torah, gave them a blessing. What was that blessing? The Midrash answers, the Kli Yakar explains, and sheds light on an entire chapter of Tehillim.

A. Moshe Blesses the People

The Torah says that Moshe blessed them but does not quote his words:

<p>1. Shemot 39:42-43 (42) According to everything Hashem commanded Moshe thus the Children of Israel did the work. (43) Moshe saw all of the work and behold they had done it. Just as Hashem commanded, thus they did; and Moshe blessed them.</p>	<p>שמות לט:מב-מג (מב) כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הָעֵבֶדְהָ. (מג) וַיִּרְא מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל הַמְּלָאכָה וַהֲנִיחַ עֵשׂוּ אֶתָּה כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' בְּנֵי עֲשׂוּ וַיְבָרֵךְ אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה.</p>
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The Midrash offers two approaches to Moshe's blessing:

<p>2. Seder Olam Rabbah Chapter 6 What blessing did he give them? He said to them, "May it be His Will that the Divine Presence should rest in the works of your hands." They answered him, "May the pleasantness of Hashem our G-d be upon us ..." (Tehillim 90:17). Rabbi Meir said: That is not what he said to them. Rather, he said, "May Hashem the G-d of your fathers bring increase upon you" (Devarim 1:11). He said to them, "Fortunate are you Israel that you merited the service of the Mishkan. Just as you merited this, thus you should merit that He should give you the Chosen House (the Beit Hamikdash) and His Presence should rest among you, as it says, 'You should make Me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among you' (Shemot 25:8).</p>	<p>סדר עולם רבה פרק ו' מה ברכה ברכם? אמר להם "יהי רצון שתשרה שכינה במעשה ידיכם." והם אמרו, "ויהי נועם ה' אלקינו עלינו וגו'" (תהילים צ:יז). אמר רבי מאיר: לא כך אמר להם, אלא "ה' אלקי אבותיכם יוסף עליכם" (דברים א:יא). אמר להם, "אשריכם ישראל שזכיתם לעבודת המשכן. וכשם שזכיתם לכך, כך תזכו שינתן לכם בית בחירה ושתשרה שכינה בתוכם, שנאמר, 'ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם' (שמות כה:ח)."</p>
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What are the key differences between the first approach and Rabbi Meir's?

B. The Kli Yakar on Moshe's Blessing: A Commentary on Tehillim 90

The author of the Kli Yakar, Harav Shlomo Efraim of Lunshitz, זצ"ל (1550-1619, the Rav of Prague for the last fifteen years of his life), asks why Moshe's blessing was taken from the end of Tehillim 90:

<p>3. Kli Yakar on Shemot 39:43 ... Rabbeinu Bechayei explained that this is because the beginning of that psalm is "A prayer to Moshe the man of G-d." But that is not a sufficient reason [to choose a verse from this chapter] if the entire psalm doesn't include any hint to the building of the Mishkan. I say that there is a strong hint to the building of the Mishkan in the opening and closing of that psalm ...</p>	<p>כלי יקר על שמות לט:מג ... פירש רבינו בחיי: לפי שנאמר בתחילת המזמור "תפילה למשה איש האלהים וגו'." ואין זה מספיק אל הכוונה אם בכל המזמור אין רמז לבנין המשכן. ואומר אני שיש רמז נכון אל בנין המשכן בתחילת המזמור, ובסופו ...</p>
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Here are those opening verses he refers to:

<p>4. Tehillim 90:1-3 (1) A prayer to Moshe the man of G-d: G-d, You were a dwelling place for us from generation to generation. (2) Before the mountains were born and You began earth and the world, forever You were G-d. (3) You humble man and say, "Repent, children of man."</p>	<p>תהילים צ (א) תִּפְלֵה לְמֹשֶׁה אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹקִים אֲדֹנָי מְעוֹן אֶתָּה הָיִיתָ לָנוּ בְּדֹר וָדֹר. (ב) בְּטָרַם הָרִים יִלְדוּ וְתַחֲלוּל אֶרֶץ וְתַבֵּל וּמְעוֹלָם עַד־עוֹלָם אֶתָּה אֵל. (ג) תִּשָּׁב אָנוּשׁ עַד־דָּפָא וְתֹאמַר שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי־אָדָם.</p>
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These verses grapple with a serious difficulty raised by the very existence of the Mishkan:

<p>5. Kli Yakar on Shemot 39:43 ... This is in line with what Shlomo said in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple: "Behold the heavens and the heavens of the heavens do not contain You, and certainly this house" (Melachim I 8:27). This is what is meant by "G-d, You were a dwelling place for us." You are the dwelling place for the world and the world is not Your dwelling place. If so, how can one even conceive of preparing a house for Him to be situation in? He proves this by saying, "Before</p>	<p>כלי יקר על שמות לט:מג ... והוא על דרך שאמר שלמה בתפילתו כשחנך המקדש: "הנה השמים ושמי השמים לא יכלכלוך ואף כי הבית הזה" (מלכים א' ח:כז), זה שאמר "ה' מעון אתה היית", אתה מעונו של עולם ואין</p>
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<p>the mountains were born and You began earth and the world, forever You were G-d." If the Holy One, blessed be He, had to be situated in a place – what place would He have been in before the world was created?! Certainly, the world is not His place and, on the contrary, He makes a dwelling place for the entire world. If so, how is it possible that the Holy One, blessed be He, would command to build a House, as if to say that He dwells in a place? On that he follows with the answer, "Repent, children of man." The Holy One, blessed be He, needed to forgo His honor and make a dwelling place in the lower worlds to forgive them for the sin of the Golden Calf, for according to our sages (Tanchuma Pekudei 6), the Mishkan was totally an atonement for the Calf episode.</p>	<p>העולם מקום ומעון לך. ואם כן איך יעלה על הדעת לומר שיכינו לך בית להתקומם בו? ונתן מופת על זה שהרי "בטרם הרים יולדו ותחולל ארץ ותבל ומעולם עד עולם אתה קל." ואם היה הקב"ה צריך להתקומם במקום אם כן קודם שנברא העולם באיזה מקום היה מתקומם אלא ודאי שאין העולם מקומו? ואדרבה, הוא יתברך מקום ומעון לכל העולם, ואיך יתכן שיצוה לו הקב"ה לבנות לו בית כאילו היה מתקומם במקום? על זה אמר כמתרץ ואמר "תשב אנוש עד דכא ותאמר שובו בני אדם." הוצרך הקב"ה לוותר על כבודו ולעשות לו מדור בתחתונים כדי למחול להם עוון העגל, כי לדעת חז"ל (תנחומא פקודי ו) היה המשכן כולו כפרה על מעשה העגל.</p>
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This, suggests the Kli Yakar, is the reason the Mishkan is a model of the entire world (different aspects of the Mishkan correspond to different aspects of the world – for instance, the Shulchan to sustenance, the Menorah to wisdom). Before the giving of the Torah the world was in a state of nothingness and confusion (see Sanhedrin 92a), and Torah transformed that. But with the sin of the Golden Calf and the breaking of the Luchot, the Tablets, the world once again was, so to speak, destroyed. The building of the Mishkan, it follows, was a new creation of the world because it brought Israel atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. The Mishkan, according to this, carries a message to Baalei Teshuvah:

<p>6. Kli Yakar on Shemot 39:43 Through this the Holy One, blessed be He, creates an opening for penitents, Baalei Teshuvah, as our sages say, "Israel only made the Golden Calf to create an opening for penitents (to create a model of repentance) ... This is what is meant by "Repent, children of Man," for from now on there is nothing preventing repentance. For if repentance was effective for the these three sins (idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder, that were all part of the sin of the Golden Calf), it is certainly effective for lesser sins ...</p>	<p>כלי יקר על שמות לט: מג ובזה נתן הקב"ה פתחון פה לבעלי תשובה, כמו שאמרו חז"ל (עבודה זרה ד:): "לא עשו ישראל את העגל אלא כדי ליתן פתחון פה לבעלי תשובה וכו'" ... זה שאמר "ותאמר שובו בני אדם" מכאן ולהבא, כי אין לך שום מונע מן התשובה כי אם הועילה התשובה בשלוש עבירות אלו קל וחומר שתועיל בקלות מהם ...</p>
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That passage in the Kli Yakar closes with an explanation of Moshe's blessing. The goal of the Mishkan was for the Divine Presence to rest within the People of Israel. The Mishkan, "the work of our hands," creates a place where "the pleasantness of G-d," the Divine Presence, can rest within G-d's People who have repented from the sin of the Golden Calf. The Mishkan creates a place, says the Kli Yakar, for us and G-d to be together in one dwelling place, a dwelling place for both the upper and lower worlds. That is the meaning of the double expression at the end of the psalm that includes both כוננה עלינו, establishing it for us, and כוננהו establishing it for Hashem.

He closes: "This is what seems fitting to add to the words of the commentators, to explain that Tehillim 90 refers to the building of the Mishkan."

PURIM: THE MORNING AFTER

[based on two talks given by Rabbi Fyvel Shuster]

We would have expected Chazal to schedule the Purim celebrations for all generations on the day of the Jews' miraculous victory against their enemies. Instead, the Megillah tells us something that seems strange. The two days of Purim, the 14th and 15th of Adar, correspond to the days after the victory. Everywhere in Achashveirosh's kingdom except for Shushan they fought on the 13th and rested on the 14th. But for all generations the day of the victory, the 13th, ends up being the fast day of Taanis Esther; Purim is on the 14th, the day after the victory. In Shushan they only rested on the 15th, and what we call Shushan Purim is on the 15th of Adar, not on the 14th, Victory in Shushan Day.

We can understand why on the very first year the celebrations were delayed until the day after the war, when the fighting was over. But why in subsequent years was Purim instituted on the day of resting after the war, as the Megillah says, "כימים אשר נחו בהם היהודים מאויביהם" – "[Purim was instituted on the 14th and 15th of Adar] corresponding to the days that the Jews rested from their enemies" (Esther 9:22)?

The answer to this question requires understanding what Purim is and what it is not. It is not, G-d forbid, a Jewish form of Mardis Gras or New Year's Day. It is also not, G-d forbid, a day when any of the Torah's laws or standards of morality do not apply, a day to be un-Jewish. On the contrary, Purim is the day when a Jew has the opportunity to live life in the most Jewish way possible.

This, says the Sfas Emes, is the reason Chazal chose to celebrate Purim on the day we rested from our enemies. Those enemies were led by Haman and the power of Amalek. As long as Amalek was still around, we were not able to fully live as Jews, so Purim was instituted on the first day we were free from Amalek.

Because Amalek limits Israel, Hashem's Presence in the world is also limited. When the Torah says that Hashem takes an oath on His Throne to destroy Amalek, the word כס is used for Throne instead of כסא, and only the two-letter, instead of the four-letter Divine Name is used (Shemot 17:16). Israel is the vehicle for bringing G dliness to the world and bringing the world closer to G-d and Amalek tries to stop us. The real victory over Amalek takes place on the day after the military victory, when we can bring the Divine Presence into the world as Israel should.

Even though we dress up in costumes, Purim is actually the day when Jews are supposed to be the most real. It is a day when we can actualize the dream of living as a true Jew should. We pray that all of Israel has the kind of joyous and festive Purim that leaves its imprint on the day after Purim and the entire year.

שבת שלום ומבורך

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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