

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 PINCHAS

DVAR TORAH: UNITED SISTERS

Yaakov's blessing to Yosef includes the cryptic expression "בנות צעדה עלי שור". One way of translating "בנות צעדה עלי שור" (Bereishit 49:22) is, "The daughters stepped over the wall." Who are those daughters and what wall did they step over?

One approach in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 14:6) holds that the "daughters" are the daughters of Tzafchad, and the "wall" is the Yarden River. Tzafchad is descended from Yosef; so his daughters are aptly referred to as Yosef's daughters. Why is the Yarden referred to as a wall? The Midrash answers that because Hashem did not allow Moshe to cross the Yarden, the Yarden is a wall. In contrast, the "daughters" of Tzafchad "stepped over the wall" – the Yarden – because they were able to enter the Land of Israel and settle in the area on the western side of the Yarden. The Book of Yehoshua (17:1-6) confirms that only Machir, the first born son of Menasheh, settled on the eastern side of the Yarden; but the family of Chefer, along with the other sons of Menasheh, all lived west of the Yarden. The husbands of the daughters of Tzafchad were from Chefer's family.

There might have been another reason for the Midrash to assume that this particular line in Yosef's blessing refers to the daughters of Tzafchad. There is a blatant grammatical difficulty in the verse: בנות is a plural noun while צעדה is a singular verb. Why isn't the verb also in the plural form? Shouldn't the Torah have said, "בנות צעדו עלי שור"? [Some commentators (assuming that the verse refers to the daughters of Egypt climbing on a wall to see how handsome Yosef was) explain that each one of the daughters climbed on the wall. But even according to that explanation צעדו would still have been a simpler choice of words.]

The daughters of Tzafchad are five sisters but act as one unit. All five sisters always appear together: when listed in the family tree of the tribe of Menasheh (Bamidbar 26:33); when they approach Moshe (Bamidbar 27:1); and when they get married (Bamidbar 36:11). They are five, but they are one.

The Sifrei (133, quoted by Rashi) points out how the Torah orders them differently in different places to make it clear that they were all of equal stature. Another Midrash says that when they spoke with Moshe, each one of them said a different part of their speech (Yalkut Shimoni Bamidbar 27, Remez 773); they even spoke as one. When they finally settled in Israel, because they married men of their grandfather Chefer's family, they all lived near each other. There were even able to put down roots in the Land of Israel together. It is not surprising that in the blessing of Yaakov, a singular verb sufficed for all five sisters.

To complete the picture, note the following two details: 1) Rashi's approach is that twice the Torah orders the daughters of Tzafchad according to their wisdom, but when they got married the Torah orders them by age (Rashi on Bamidbar 36:11). It follows that the youngest of the five, No'ah, was the second wisest. 2) Look at the "Vav"s in the three lists of the daughters in Bamidbar: a. 26:33 – "מחלה ונעה וחגלה ומלכה ותרצה"; b. 27:1 – "מחלה נעה וחגלה ומלכה ותרצה"; c. 36:11 – "מחלה ונעה וחגלה ומלכה ותרצה".

SOURCE GUIDE: CHOOSING THE PRIZE BY RABBI ASHER BRANDER

[Rabbi Brander, Rav and Rosh Kollel of Los Angeles' LINK Kollel and Shul, is a scholar-in-residence this summer at Shapell's / Darche Noam. This week's source guide is based on a chapter of Rabbi Brander's book, *Teachings: In-depth Reflections on the Parshah*, published by Mosaica Press.]

The wise and righteous daughters of Tzelafchad petition Moshe for a piece of land in Eretz Yisrael (Bamidbar 27, their father died and why should their family lose out?). Their claim is vindicated by the Almighty and through their merit, a parshah in the Torah comes to light - one of only four places in Torah where Moshe seeks Divine counsel to gain ultimate clarity regarding Halachah.

Rashi wonders why the placement of this episode immediately follows the new census [conducted by Yehoshua and Elazar -the new leaders of Klal Yisrael] – a counting that the Torah sadly reminds us of the post-meraglim (spies) reality:

<p>1. Bamidbar 26:64-65 (64) And of these, there was no man counted by Moshe and Aharon ... (65) for Hashem had said of them they will surely die in the wilderness ... save for Kalev and Yehoshua.</p>	<p>במדבר כו:סד-סה (סד) וּבְאֵלֶּה לֹא הָיָה אִישׁ מִמִּקְוֵי מִשְׁחָה וְאַהֲרֹן ... (סה) כִּי אָמַר ה' לָהֶם מוֹת יָמָתוֹ בְּמִדְבָּר ... כִּי אִם כָּלֵב בֶּן יִפְתָּה וַיהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן נוּן.</p>
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Quoting the Midrash (Tanchuma Pinchas 7), Rashi posits a poignant notion:

<p>2. Rashi on Bamidbar 26:64 Among these there was no man... But the women were not included in the decree of the spies, for they cherished the Land. The men said, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt!" (Bamidbar 14:4), whereas the women said, "Give us a portion" (Bamidbar 27:4). This is why the passage of Tzafchad's daughters follows here.</p>	<p>רש"י על במדבר כו:סד באלה לא היה איש וגו'. אבל על הנשים לא נגזרה גזרת המרגלים לפי שהן היו מחבבות את הארץ. האנשים אומרים, "נתנה ראש ונשובה מצרימה" (במדבר יד:ד). והנשים אומרות, "תנה לנו אחוזה" (במדבר כז:ד). לכך נסמכה פרשת בנות צלפחד לכאן.</p>
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Men vs. Women is the contrast here. **The women who sought a piece of the land and the men who rejected it** is the point of the textual positioning.

It is remarkable to note that the basic midrashic view is that that the women took no part in either of the two major desert sins, the Golden Calf and the Spies.

Rashi's explanation here – “the women were not included in the decree of the spies, **for they cherished the Land**” – however, requires analysis^[1]. And the men did not cherish the land? Did the spies themselves^[2] not say:

<p>3. Devarim 1:25 And they took some of the fruit of the land in their hand[s] and brought it down to us, brought us back word, and said, "The land that Hashem, our G-d, is giving us is good."</p>	<p>דברים א:כה וַיִּקְחוּ בְיָדָם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּרְדוּ אֵלֵינוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֵתְנֵנוּ דְבַר וַיֹּאמְרוּ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ נֹתֵן לָנוּ.</p>
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It wasn't about not cherishing the land - it was about being afraid for their lives:

4. Bamidbar, 13:31-14:3

(31) But the men who went up with him said, "We are unable to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we ... (32) The land we passed through to explore is a land that consumes its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are men of stature ... (3) Why does Hashem bring us to this land to fall by the sword; our wives and children will be as spoils. Is it not better for us to return to Egypt?"

במדבר יג:לא – יד:ג

(לא) וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָלוּ עִמּוֹ אָמְרוּ, "לֹא נוּכָל לָעֲלוֹת אֶל הָעָם כִּי חֲזָק הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ ... (לב) הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר עִבְרָנוּ בָּהּ לְתוֹר אֶתְּהָ אֶרֶץ אֲכָלֹת יוֹשְׁבֶיהָ הוּא וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ אֲנָשִׁי מַדּוֹת ... (ג) וְלָמָּה ה' מְבִיא אֹתָנוּ אֶל הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְנַפֵּל בְּחַרְבַּב נַפְשֵׁינוּ וְטַפְּנוּ יִהְיוּ לְבַז הַלֹּא טוֹב לָנוּ שׁוּב מִצְרָיִם."

Perhaps there is a mussar *darher* (insight) here. I apologize in advance for the pop psychology, but maybe we can glean an element of truth from Rashi's words that may teach us about the dynamics of human choice.

Consider a few classic choices, [from the generic to the boutique]:

- a. ... *sleeping vs. studying for the final*;
- b. ... *eating the cake or skipping it*;
- c. ... *avoiding the plane or taking the trip to see the family* .

Would we say that the one who studies for the final does not cherish sleep? Would we say that the one who overcomes the cake likes it less than he who succumbs? Would we say that the one who gets on the plane fears flying less? Intuitively, we sense that is not the case.

Wherein lays the difference between one who overcomes his fear [to fly] and one who does not. For both, fear is an absolute reality. Wherein lays the difference between the one sleeps and the one who studies? For both, sleep is a great value. Wherein lay the difference between the one who eats the cake and the one who avoids it? For both, cake tastes great.

Bnei Yisrael are confronted with two choices: Should they enter into the beautiful Land of Israel or because they were afraid^[3], should they avoid it. The men opted for fear and the women for courage. Wherein lay the difference? Rashi's words here are critical: "Among these there was no man ... **But the women were not included in the decree of the spies, for they cherished the Land.**"

Note what Rashi omits. He does not say that the women were not afraid. In all likelihood they were certainly afraid as well. In Rashi's words we see a different nuance. There is no frontal attack on their weakness. Simply put, it may not always be sufficient to say "I should not be afraid, I should not be afraid, I should not be afraid"!

Why did the women gain entrance into the Land of Israel? *Their ability to see beyond the obstacle and fixate on the goal, on the prize of Eretz Yisrael was the key to their success. **They did not fear less, they cherished more.***

Recognizing and identifying with the greatness of a goal – and the attendant loss of the one who succumbs, is the key. As good as the cake is, it tastes even better to not have it and be healthy. As scary as Eretz Yisrael is, the beauty of being in the land teeming with kedushah simply transcends anything else.

Perhaps this is a key to meaningful Jewish education. We need to teach and model the greatness of the goal! One who wakes up for קריאת שמע (sunrise) minyan does not dislike sleep; but as he drags his tired body out of bed, he recognizes that special sense of intimacy one feels whilst speaking with God at the very first moment of the day. To not have that is too great a loss to bear.

It was this very formula that the Chofetz Chaim invoked in his own internal world. A remarkable non-classic Chofetz Chaim story told by Rabbi Berel Wein gives us a window into a very real and great tzaddik:

Rabbi Wein's father-in-law Rav Layzer Levine grew up in the home of the Chafetz Chaim and related that, from time to time, visitors would come to the Chofetz Chaim [who was a kohein and, according to the Talmud, kohanim have tempers] and truly provoke and annoy the Chofetz Chaim. At times, the Chofetz Chaim, feeling the inner anger, would withdraw from the conversation and speak to himself. "Yisroel Meir, will anger help you? Will it accomplish anything?" After several moments of self-conversation he would regain calm and control of his emotions and would be able to engage quietly and peacefully.

Giving in to anger initially tastes good, but in the end what has been accomplished? The transcendent personality thus waxes great by cherishing and deepening his understanding of that the ultimate prize – a relationship with Hashem. Everything else is just not that good.

To the extent that we really want it, we will be able to transmit it. In a world of ever expanding choices (of seemingly infinite *naarishkeit*), may Hashem give us the strength to really want it.

[1] Cf. Kli Yakar 26:64 for 2 explanations why the men sinned in the spy episode and the women did not

[2] Cf. Rashi there. This line is written according to the simple textual meaning which is explicated by Ramban there

[3] The particular nature of that fear requires analysis. Some say it was fear of losing their midbar comfort or the nesi'im losing their midbar status or primal fear of the inhabitants of the land

שבת שלום ומבורך

This issue is dedicated in memory of
Yaakov ben Michah ז"ל

*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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