

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 VA'ETCHANAN

DVAR TORAH: LATCHING ON TO THE LEVITES

Why did Moshe designate three of the cities of refuge in the middle of his introductory speech to Israel?

Three verses detail Moshe's act: "Then Moshe set off three cities on the eastern side of the Yarden River for a murderer to flee to if he kills accidentally ... Betzer, ... Ramot, ... and Golan" (Devarim 4:41-43). But they seem to interrupt the flow of his presentation. Had those three verses been left out, the preceding and following verses could have formed a nicely formulated unit: "Keep His laws and His commands ..." (Devarim 4:40). "And this is the Torah that Moshe placed before the Children of Israel" (Devarim 4:44). Why the interruption?

The Ramban explains that Moshe wanted to serve as a role model for the People of Israel, fulfilling whatever mitzvah he was able to, as soon as possible. But Harav Shmuel Bornshtein, זצ"ל (the Sochotchover Rebbe, 1855-1926, in his Shem Mishmuel on Vaetchanan 5675, "Az Yavdil"), makes another suggestion.

Moshe's talk included sharp words of rebuke, like "You have been rebellious from the day that I began to know you" (Devarim 9:24). This could cause Israel to give up hope, with the terrible consequences that follow. And even though Moshe also told them of G-d's great mercy and forgiveness – "Even though you have done all this, His mercy and love for you still remains, and all He asks of you is to fear Him ..." (Rashi on Devarim 10:12) – they still remain rebellious. What will be of them when they enter the Land of Israel and begin their involvement in agriculture and nature? Israel worried – how will they remain faithful servants of Hashem without the great miracles they experienced in the desert?

This is why Moshe, at this point, designated the cities of refuge. He sensed that Israel needed encouragement; and the cities of refuge carry the powerful message of never giving up hope. The murderer is "without blood" (Bamidbar 35:27), for he spilled the blood of another. Yet his stay in the city of refuge brings him the opportunity for atonement and reform.

How do the cities of refuge affect the murderer? The Shem Mishmuel quotes his father, Harav Avraham of Sochotchov, זצ"ל: In the six cities of refuge – or in one of the forty-two other Levite cities that also had the status of cities of refuge (except for two slight differences – see Rambam's Laws of Murder 8:10) – the murderer connected up with the Levites. The Levites exemplified חיות, liveliness and vitality. They were the ones who sang in the Beit Hamikdash. Latching on to Levites lifted up the lowly murderer.

There is an alternate strategy for the individual who feels lifeless and is in danger of giving up hope, says the Shem Mishmuel. That person can connect up with Klal Yisrael (Israel's collective identity), the entire Jewish community. The tzibbur (community) does not die (see Temurah 16a), so one can draw life and hope from the community. Israel's inner connectedness, adds the Shem Mishmuel, is most powerful in two contexts: the Land of Israel and on Shabbat.

SOURCE GUIDE: CHILDREN AND STUDENTS

“You should teach them to your children” (Devarim 6:7) begins the fourth verse of the Shema. Rashi’s comments on that verse about the parallels between children and students raise a number of difficulties. One segment of an article based on the solutions to those difficulties is the basis of this source guide.

A. Rashi: Children = Students

The Torah tells us to teach the Torah to our children:

<p>1. Devarim 6:7 Teach them diligently to your children; and speak of them when you sit down in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you get up.</p>	<p>דברים ו:ז וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבַנְיֵיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם בְּשֹׁבְתְךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְטְךָ בַדֶּרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ.</p>
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Rashi identifies the “children” the Torah refers to here:

<p>2. Rashi on Devarim 6:7 “To your children” – This refers to the students. We find in every place that students are called children, for it says, “You are children of Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 14:1). It says, “The children of the prophets in Beit El” (2 Melachim 2:3). Chizkiyahu, who taught Torah to all of Israel, likewise called them children, as it says, “Now, my children, do not err” (2 Divrei Hayamim 29:11). And just as students are called children, as it says, “You are children of Hashem your G-d,” so the rav is referred to as a father, as it says, “My father, my father, chariot of Israel ...” (2 Melachim 2:12).</p>	<p>רש"י על דברים ו:ז "לבניך" – אלו התלמידים. מצינו בכל מקום שהתלמידים קרוים בנים, שנאמר, "בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם" (דברים יד:א). ואומר "בני הנביאים אשר בבית אל" (מלכים ב' ב:ג). וכן בחזקיהו שלמד תורה לכל ישראל קראם בנים, שנאמר, "ועתה בני אל תשלו" (דברי הימים ב' כט:יא). וכשם שהתלמידים קרוים בנים, שנאמר, "בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם," כך הרב קרוי אב, שנאמר, "אבי אבי רכב ישראל ..." (מלכים ב' ב:ב).</p>
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B. Difficulties

The present Tolner Rebbe, Harav Yitzchak Menachem Weinberg, שליט"א, quotes the following difficulty raised by Harav David Pardo, זצ"ל (1719-1792), in his commentary on Rashi:

<p>3. Maskil L'David on Devarim 6:7 Nevertheless, I do not know why Rashi adds his closing comment, “And just as students are called children ... so the rav is referred to as a father,” Even had he not added this, the verse would still have read smoothly – that since students are called children the Torah had to say “Teach them diligently to your children.” It is possible to answer that Rashi’s intention was that, at the end of the day, even if students are referred to as children, why did this verse have to call them children? Why didn’t the Torah just say, “Teach them diligently to your students”?</p>	<p>משכיל לדוד על דברים ו:ז ומ"מ מאי דמסיים הכא רש"י "וכשם שהתלמידים וכו' כך הרב קרוי אב וכו'," לא ידענא מי הכניסו לזה. דבל"ז קרא דהכא ניהא דהואיל והתלמידים קרויים בנים שפיר קאמר ושננתם לבניך. ואפשר לומר דכוונתו משום דאיכא למידק סוף סוף לו יהיה דהתלמידים קרויים בנים מ"מ אמאי אצטריך קרא לאפוקינהו לתלמידים בל' בנים לימא 'ושננתם לתלמידך' ...</p>
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C. Rashi: Rav = Father

The Tolner Rebbe’s solution:

<p>4. Heimah Yenachamuni Devarim, p. 51 Why was it important for Rashi to include the other side, that the rav is considered like a father? This was to emphasize the importance of emotion and love between a rav and student and between a student and rav. “Like a face reflected in water, so is one man’s heart to another’s” (Mishlei 27:19). When the rav truthfully loves his student, his student will return the love.</p>	<p>המה ינחמוני דברים עמוד 51 מדוע היה חשוב לרש"י להביא את הצד שכנגד, שהרב נחשב לאב? כל זאת על מנת להדגיש את חשיבות הרגש והאהבה שבין הרב לתלמיד ובין התלמיד לרב. הרי "כמים הפנים לפנים כן לב האדם לאדם" (משלי כז:ט), וכאשר הרב באמת אוהב את תלמידו, ישיב לו התלמיד אהבה.</p>
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This explains why the Torah did not say, 'Teach the Torah to your students,' but "to your children":

<p>5. Heimah Yenachamuni Devarim, p. 51 The Torah wants to emphasize the great importance of the student's sense that he is beloved to his rav, as a child is to his father. The Torah purposely says "your children" here even though the intent is to students.</p>	<p>המה ינחמוני דברים עמוד 51 התורה רוצה להדגיש את החשיבות הרבה שבתחושת התלמיד, שיחוש שהוא אהוב על רבו כשם שבן אהוב על אביו. נאמר כאן דוקא "בניך" כשהכוונה לתלמידים.</p>
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This relationship will leave its impact on the student's relationship to the Torah he learns:

<p>6. Heimah Yenachamuni Devarim, p. 51 When the rav's heart feels love for his students, they will feel, in an extreme way, the sweetness of the Torah. For when a child receives medicine from a loving father, he knows and is sure that the liquid is for his good, even if it is bitter. All the more so – certainly all the more so – is true when we are not speaking about bitter medicine but about our holy Torah that is sweeter than honey.</p>	<p>המה ינחמוני דברים עמוד 51 כאשר לבו של הרב רוחש אהבה לתלמידיו, הם יחושו ביתר שאת את מתיקות התורה. שהרי כאשר הן מקבל תרופה מאביו האוהב, הוא יודע ובטוח שהמשקה הזה נועד לטובתו, ואפילו יהא מר. קל וחומר, בן בנו של קל וחומר, כאשר לא מדובר בתרופה מרה אלא בתורתנו הקדושה המתוקה מדבש.</p>
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The model of a loving teacher is Rav Shmuel bar Shilat:

<p>7. Bava Batra 8b "... Those who make the multitude righteous are like stars forever" (Daniel 12:3). This refers to teachers of young children. Who is an example? Rav said: Rav Shmuel bar Shilat is. For once Rav found Rav Shmuel bar Shilat in the garden, and asked him, "Did you forget your trust (your students)?" He replied, "It is now thirteen years that I haven't seen them, and even now my thoughts are about them."</p>	<p>בבא בתרא ח: "... ומצדיקי הרבים כפוכבים לעולם ועד" (דניאל יב:ג): אלו מלמדי תינוקות. כגון מאן? אמר רב: כגון רב שמואל בר שילת. דרב אשכחיה לרב שמואל בר שילת דהוה קאי בגינתא. א"ל, "שבקתיה להימנותך?" אמר ליה, "הא תליסר שנין דלא חזיא לי, והשתא נמי דעתאי עלויהו."</p>
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TRUE LOVE BY RABBI SHAYA KARLINSKY

Rav Dessler, in his classic piece "Kuntres Hachessed," teaches that we love a person to whom we give. The implication is that without giving, we don't develop true love of the other. Yet, intuitively we feel that we must first develop love for someone before we are willing to give to them. If we force ourselves to give, following Rav Dessler's "orders," it rarely works. What needs to be understood is: What is true love, and from where does it originate?

I would like to define "love" as the desire to give of one's self to others and share with them. To do that, a person must be loving and generous. Let us see a few short sections of the Maharal to help expand on this idea.

In Netivot Olam, Netiv Ahavat Hashem, at the end of Chapter 2, the Maharal quotes the Gemara in Avodah Zarah (19a) and the Mishna from Chapter 1 of Pirkei Avot: "Don't be like servants who serve in order to get a reward, but be like servants who serve with no intention of getting a reward." One who serves in order to get a reward is not committed to truly serving his master. Rather, he is working for someone to get a payoff for himself. This is a legitimate activity when serving a human master, says the Maharal, for no servant was created with the purpose of serving his master, and he has no inherent responsibility for that service. Man, however, was created for the purpose of serving G-d, and as such, his service should be performed because this is his intrinsic purpose ("עבודה בעצם"). The service should be with no intention of receiving any "payoff."

Between the two levels we have just mentioned, there is an intermediate level: One who serves G-d out of recognition of and appreciation for all the good G-d has bestowed upon him. It is more elevated than one who serves for the "payoff," but it is still not עבודה מאהבה (service of G-d from pure love). True עבודה מאהבה is independent of anything G-d does for us, and even if we are subjected to difficulties and suffering (לא עלינו); since we exist to serve G-d as the inherent mission of our existence, we willingly do whatever we are asked to do. This is true service, עבודה מאהבה.

This drive emanates completely from within us, and is independent of anything outside of us. It is up to us, and depends on our attitude, as well as our sense and recognition of responsibility.

That is what love is: the motivation to give, to share whatever resources G-d gave us, to recognize that we exist for that purpose, to utilize whatever we have in devoted service. So each of us must be a loving person, committed to giving and serving. That is something that resides within each of us, and is independent of any individual recipient. I believe this is the depth of Rav Dessler's idea. I am incapable of really giving to anyone unless I have first made myself into a loving, giving person, recognizing that I exist to serve, give and share with others. When I do that, then I will love others and will give to them; because I recognize the giving as part of the proper service of G-d, which is the reason for my existence.

The giving that Rav Dessler prescribes in order for me to develop love for the recipient is really a way to train myself to become a giving and therefore a loving person.

This idea helps clarify the difference between תשובה באהבה (repentance out of love) and תשובה מיראה (repentance out of fear). In Netiv Hateshuvah, Chapter 2, the Maharal discusses the distinction based on the Gemara in Yoma (86). תשובה באהבה brings immediate renewal rectification, while תשובה מיראה requires a healing process that comes from G-d. Explains the Maharal: One who serves G-d from love contains the motivating force, his love and attachment to G-d, within himself (מצד עצמו). When one serves G-d out of fear, the motivating force for the service resides outside of the individual. His service of G-d is dependent on the power of G-d and the fear of Him, which is based on something outside of himself. Therefore the therapeutic nature of teshuvah also requires outside intervention from G-d.

We operate on many different levels, with many different motivations. Much of our lives are devoted to fulfilling others' expectations of us, or trying to acquire things which are outside of us. This makes our mission as well as our success dependent on things which reside outside of us. Yet, it should be the recognition of our own potential and responsibilities that motivates us.

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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