

## מתיקות השבת

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## IS MOSHE'S REBUKE IN VAIN?!

This week's *parsha* tells about the two and a half tribes – Gad, Reuven and half of Menashe – who did not want to cross the Yarden, but requested to settle on its east side, apart from the rest of the tribes. Moshe rebuked them harshly for that. First he said, **הֲאֵחֵיכֶם יָבֹאוּ לְמִלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם, תֵּשְׁבוּ פֹה** "Shall your brothers go out to battle while you settle here?" Then he compared them to the *meraglim* – **וְלָמָּה תִּנְיָאוּן אֶת לֵב בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַבֵּר** "אֶל הָאָרֶץ... פֹּה עָשׂוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם" "This is what your fathers did..."

Now you are trying to take your fathers' places as a band of sinners, and bring yet more of Hashem's wrath against Israel."

Now, why did Moshe rebuke them so harshly, didn't they ask politely a logical request, unlike the *meraglim* who came and slandered the Promised Land? And more so, by their request they were benefitting the rest of the tribes, that they have more space on the western side of the Yarden; then in what way were they weakening the nation's heart, and why are they compared to the *meraglim*?! Further, if Moshe understood that their request was wrong, then why did he accept their request so easily after they promised to fight on the front lines together with the rest of the nation, before settling?!

## A MASHAL –

## The Prince Rejects the Gift...

Let us begin with a *mashal* to illustrate this incident. There was a king who loved his son very much and had a special gift that he intended to give him in order to express his great love to him. The king waited many years, exciting his son with the promise of the gift so that he fully appreciate it. He told his son, "I have a special present to give you, that once you will receive it, your love to me will increase tremendously, and will keep us connected forever!" The prince yearned impatiently to know what the special gift will be.

Many years of longing passed, and one day the king called his son and invited him to a special party; "During this party you will finally receive the special gift!" For some reason, the day of the party the prince got into a bad mood, and before the party even began he went into the kitchen and started grabbing the food before it was even ready. The king was very upset, "Why have you done that, do you know what a present I have prepared for you?!" "What is it?" asked the prince impatiently.

"I have built you a gorgeous palace all for yourself and your family," said the king, "there, you will be able to



## MY STORY!

## The Sweet Paper Saves from Accident...

I was driving my car last Thursday, doing a *mitzvah* of *zikuy harabim*, distributing the *parsha* sheet "The Sweetness of Shabbos." I entered a parking lot in front of a *shul*, while another car was exiting its narrow space, and we collided with each other. I got out of my car hoping that nothing serious happened to the car, that will hold me up from continuing with my *zikuy harabim*.

I was happy to find that nothing major happened to my car, but I saw that the other car was damaged a little, and I was afraid he will get angry and hold me up and make me pay for the damage. So I went over to him and told him that I was busy with a *mitzvah* and I apologize for the damage.

To my surprise, he said, "Today is my birthday, and my *Rav* advised me to take upon myself on this day, that if any chance of giving in comes my way, I should utilize it to the best. And here is a chance, although I am not sure it is your fault; but anyways I would like to take part in your *mitzvah*." And he handed me fifty shekels as a donation to support the *parsha* sheet's printing.

With a smile on my face, I got back in the car and continued to the next city. I was driving on the fast lane when suddenly I felt my car swaying slightly side to side. First I thought it was due to work done on the road, but the car began rocking so hard that it felt like it was going to turn over; I knew for sure that one of the tires had a problem. "Hashem, what do I do?!" I called out in frustration.

*live for you entire life. I also prepared for you a big estate that will be enough for a stable for your horses, a barn for your cattle, and more.”* The son looked at his father and said, *“Oh, father, I have already a big family, there won’t be enough room in the palace; I would prefer to reside in a farmhouse among the barns and stables, where I will have much more space than inside the palace.”*

The king was terribly hurt; not only did his son act with disrespect when he came in early and grabbed the unprepared food – not waiting for it to be served in an honorable manner, as proper for a royal banquet; but now he also does not appreciate his father’s gift, which he waited so long for, and does not trust his father that he took into consideration all the minute details, making sure that he will have no lack of space.

### THE NIMSHAL – An Insult To Hashem...

So too, Hashem prepared for His nation the special present, Eretz Yisrael, the special land flowing with milk and honey. He informed the Jews of it already back during the slavery in Egypt, and they longed for it for forty years in the wilderness. Now, when it was finally almost time for the gift to be given, the tribes of Gad, Reuven and half

of Menashe came to grab a portion before everyone else, and requested for the eastern side of the Yarden, because *“the area was good for livestock.”* This was an insult to Hashem, because it showed that they did not appreciate His promised gift, and without respect they did not wait until Hashem gave out the land.

### The Two and a Half Tribes’ Mistakes...

Now, although we find that *Ever HaYarden*, the land of the two and a half tribes, was also considered to have the holiness of Eretz Yisrael; still their request was wrong, for the following reasons:

(1) The Land was not yet divided amongst the tribes, when the two tribes came to request this portion. This is similar to the prince who walked into the banquet hall and grabbed the food before it was even fully ready.

### “Strangers Shall Pasture Your Flocks...”

(2) Although the *Ever HaYarden* has some holiness, but it was not meant to be a place of residence for the Jewish nation; it was meant to be a place to raise their livestock and grow their crops – for *korbanos*, *menachos* and *bikurim* for the *Beis Hamikdash*. As Hashem promised, *“Strangers shall stand and pasture your flocks;”* and Hashem wanted

## THE BITTERNESS OF LIVING IN CHUTZ LA'ARETZ...



The people of the tribes Gad, Reuven, and half of Menashe chose to live outside of Eretz Yisrael, in *Ever HaYarden*; because it had a lot of land to pasture their animals. But this was a mistake, that for the sake of their possessions they separated themselves from the rest of *Am Yisrael* and the *Beis Hamikdash*; away from the leaders of those generations. Therefore they were

misled after Yeravam, who served Hashem in a wrong way – on a *mitzbeach* for an image of an ox, which he claimed was accepted by Hashem just like the *kravim* in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Since they kept themselves apart of the *Beis Hamikdash* and went after Yeravam, they were exiled by Ashur even before all the rest of the *asseres hashevatim*.

that the nations be our servants and care for our livestock and fields, while all the twelve *shevatim* live side by side in unity, surrounding the holy Sanctuary; not separated as enemies in two separate lands. For this Moshe rebuked them, for wanting to live apart from the rest of their brothers, for the sake of their livestock.

This we find in Yehoshua (22). When the two and a half tribes built an altar on their way back to the *Ever HaYarden*, Pinchas with ten princes of the tribes came and said to them, "אִם טְמֵאָה אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם עָבְרוּ לָכֶם אֶל אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזַּת ה'", "If the land of your possession is impure, cross over to the land of Hashem's possession where the Sanctuary of Hashem is, and take your possession among us." We see that although it had some holiness but it wasn't the ultimate residence place for them.

What they should have done, was to consult in Moshe how to raise their livestock. Indeed, Eretz Yisrael wasn't the right place for it, but Moshe would advise them to appoint servant to watch and take care of their livestock in *Ever HaYarden*, while they would live together with the rest of the nation.

### One is Led In the Way He Wants...

(3) They were rebuked also for not wanting to take part in the battle to conquer the land; which they originally intended to stay back while all the others go to fight for the land. And only afterwards they offered their pledge that they will fight on the front lines before settling on their land. Though they corrected one mistake of not wanting to take part in the battles, but their other mistake – to live apart of the rest, outside of the Chosen Land, they did not correct. Moshe accepted this and allowed them to have their request; for "in the way that a man wants to go he is led."

### The Meraglim's Sin Is Repeated...

(4) Moshe compared them to the *meraglim*; because, what reason did they have to think that Eretz Yisrael was not a good place for pasture? Rather, it must be that they believed the *meraglim's* slander. They should have trusted Hashem that He took into consideration all their needs, and Eretz Yisrael can have enough space for their livestock. As Chazal teach that Eretz Yisrael is called "נְחֻלַת צִבִי" – "Just as the skin of a deer cannot hold its flesh, [for after the animal is skinned, its hide shrinks,] so too, with regard to Eretz Yisrael, when it is settled it expands..." (Gittin 57a).

They should have been careful, especially now after they had to wander for forty years in the wilderness due to

the *meraglim's* sin; and after seeing all those who arose to dispute with Moshe being punished – Korach and his congregation, Bilam, Zimri etc. This should have taught them never again to have any doubts about Moshe's commands, or his description of the perfect land.

Similarly, Moshe was upset because their request to stay behind weakened the nation's desire to cross the Yarden and finally enter Eretz Yisrael. This was like what the *meraglim* caused, and for which we mourn during the three weeks of *Bein Hametzarim*, "אֲבֹתֵינוּ הִטְאוּ וְאֵינָם, וְאֲנַחְנוּ עֹונֵתֵיהֶם סִבְלָנוּ" "Our fathers sinned, yet we repeat those sins again and again.

### To Keep Moshe Alive...

The two and a half tribes wanted to have the land where Moshe was going to be buried, as it says, "וַיִּרְא רֵאשִׁית לוֹ כִּי" "He [Gad] chose the first portion for himself, for that is where the lawgiver's plot is hidden." And perhaps they thought Moshe would stay alive, if he could live among them and never enter Eretz Yisrael; but Moshe did not accept that, for Hashem desired that the nation will be led into the land by Yehoshua. Therefore, Moshe made them go along with the rest of the nation, and so, he had to pass away as was Hashem's will.

Nevertheless, they preferred to come back after the battle, to live at Moshe's burial place; thus they said, "The face of Moshe was like the face of the sun; the face of Yehoshua is like the face of the moon." But Pinchas tried encouraging them to live among the rest of the nation, for "you have none else but the judge that lives in your days," (see Rosh Hashana 25b); and they should have accepted Yehoshua upon themselves and come close to him as Moshe.

### Wrong Request Brings Downfall...

Since they separated themselves from Yehoshua and the rest of the Jewish nation, they were exiled first of the ten tribes, (Bamidbar Rabbah 22:7). They chose not to be close to the *Beis Hamikdash* and Yehoshua the leader of the generation; therefore, they were misled after Yeravam ben Nevat and his deviation to serve Hashem in the wrong way. They went after their property – their animals, to care for their money; therefore, "גָּלָה עַמִּי מִבְּלִי דַעַת" – "My people is being exiled because of ignorance;" exiled losing all their possessions, because they acted as ignorant as animals.

We ought to learn from this, to be careful with the way we ask and what we ask Hashem for. One can ask for something that is bad for himself, but since he insists, Hashem leads him in the way he desires and he might

eventually lose from it. Rather, we should make sure to ask for Hashem's desire, which is the best for us and will bring a person the most success.

### The Difference between Moshe's Two Rebukes...

We see that the Torah does not criticize Moshe for his seemingly unjustified rebuke to the people of Gad and Reuven and half of Menashe, as in the case of *mei meriva*, where Hashem blamed him for the way he rebuked *Bnei Yisrael*. Let us understand how the incident of *mei meriva* is different from the one in this *parsha*, and what caused Moshe to hit the rock instead of talking to it.

Hashem commanded Moshe to take the staff along to the rock that was to bring forth water; what was it for if he was supposed to talk to the rock rather than hit it?!

### Kiddush at the Rock...

Rather, Hashem wanted Moshe to take the staff that was passed down since Adam HaRishon generation to generation; and raise it as we raise the cup of wine at kiddush – as though saying, we cannot drink until we precede first with telling all the times that Hashem has redeemed us from our troubles. Hashem commanded Moshe, *"וְדַבַּרְתָּם אֶל הַסֶּלֶעַ לְעֵינֵיהֶם"* – *"Speak to the rock before their eyes."* That is, speak *about* the rock – about the miracles that happened through the rocks, when the infants in Egypt were sustained through them, and other salvations from Hashem.

Moshe was supposed to raise the staff in front of all the people, and tell of all the miracles that happened through it: for Adam HaRishon; for Yaakov when he crossed the Jordan River with the staff; all the plagues on the Egyptian

that happened through it – hitting the water and the earth, etc. That is like at *kiddush*, that everybody is hungry and cannot wait to get started with the meal, but have to stop for a minute to appreciate Hashem's kindness redeeming us from Egypt, and for the creation of the world. So too, here Hashem caused them to be very thirsty, and they should stop themselves for a moment before drinking and say a *beracha rishona*, a blessing before drinking – with greater appreciation of the life-giving water, and for all the kindnesses that were showered upon them until then.

### Who Was Punished for Moshe's Sin?...

Nevertheless, the nation complained and begged to get the water immediately, so Moshe got angry, outwardly, and hit the rock; as if to say, *"You don't want to hear about Hashem's kindness and the miracles we have gone through, then here, take the water you are begging so much for, at your loss!"* And that is why he called them rebels, *"שִׁמְעוּ"* *"נָא הַמְרִים"* – *"Listen now, O rebels;"* for they did not want to be grateful to Hashem. Thus Hashem said, *"יַעַן לֹא"* *"הֵאֱמַנְתֶּם בִּי לְהַקְדִּישֵׁנִי לְעֵינֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"* – *"Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Children of Yisrael;"* that is, to tell and publicize His kindness of the life-giving water.

The punishment that Moshe received for this, was much more a punishment for the nation than for Moshe; they lost the opportunity that Moshe should lead them into Eretz Yisrael, judging and guiding them there. Since they did not appreciate his leadership, to obey every one of his commands, therefore they lost him.

I then cut through the lanes to the shoulder, slowing down very slightly – so the car won't turn over – until it came to a full stop safely, *baruch* Hashem.

I got out of the car, and was stunned to see that the front-right tire was completely torn and almost off the wheel.

My friend that was with me said, "I think Hashem waited for us to be grateful for what happened earlier in the parking lot." So we immediately called out, *"הִדּוּ לָהּ"* *"כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חִסְדּוֹ"* – for saving us earlier from damage and now from injury.

We stood in the dark highway for a few minutes, unsure of what to do next; when a passing tow truck braked right before our car. "Wow," the driver looked at the tire shocked, "I've never seen a tire this bad. I hope you understand what a danger it was to drive with this wheel!"

I wasn't interested in towing the car, because I did not have enough money for it; instead, the tow truck driver took out some tools and said he would replace the wheel for 150 shekels. But all I had was the fifty shekels that I got earlier, so I told him of the *mitzvah* we are in middle of, and I gave him one of the sheets. He glanced at it and said, "You sweetened my day... I will repair your wheel for only fifty shekels."

The car was repaired immediately, and we were right back on our way to continue with the distribution. No doubt that the merit of the *mitzvah* saved our lives; and perhaps if we would have thanked Hashem immediately for saving us from damage, we could have used the money we got there for gas, instead of for repairing the wheel after our lives were in danger.

O. T. Cholon, Israel



The tire...