

Pardes Yehuda

← Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick →

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פרשת שופטים תשפ"א

The connection of three Psukim to connect Mitzvos of both Parshios

שופטים ושטרם תתן לה ככל שערך אשר ה' אלקיך נתן לה לשבטיך
ושפטו את העם משפט צדק: (ט"ז י"ח)

You shall set up judges and law enforcement officials for yourself in all your cities that Hashem your God, is giving you, for your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. (16:18) Parshas Reah concludes with the mitzvah of "עליה לרגל" /going to Jerusalem three times a year to observe the three Pilgrimage Festivals. שלוש פעמים בשנה יראה כל זכורך את פני ה' אלקיך במקום אשר Three יבחר בהג המצות ובחג השבועות ובחג הסוכות: (ט"ז ט"ח) times in the year, every one of your males shall appear before Hashem, in the place He will choose: on the Festival of Matzoth and on the Festival of Weeks, and on the Festival of Sukkoth (Devarim 16:16)

There is often some thematic connection between the concluding Posuk of one weekly Parshah and the opening Posuk of the following Parshah. What is the connection between "עליה לרגל" and the appointment of judges? The answer is that the Supreme Court chamber of the Jewish people, the lishkas hagazis, the Stone-Hewn Chamber, was in the precincts of the Beis Hamikdash. The Chamber was the seat of the high Sanhedrin, the epitome of Torah authority for Klal Yisroel. This was an ideal arrangement for the Pilgrims, since if two Yidden had a dispute hinging on Halacha, they would both be in Yerushalayim together. What better opportunity could there be for resolving their case before the Sanhedrin. In fact, the importance of timely judgement with integrity is expressed in the Mishna (Avos, perek 5, mishna 8):

Procrastination in justice brings the sword to the world. תהרב באה לעולם על ענוי הדין. Therefore, the Torah teaches us that it is crucial to establish a structure for jurisprudence in small towns, since one cannot cause another person pain, and anguish by forcing him to await a tardy judgment from a distant court. (אור החיים הק) Based on this insight we can understand the connection to another Posuk at the end of the previous Parsha, and connect all three Psukim. We must understand that when Hashem gives a commandment, since the person might think that the Mitzvah might be of harm to him, one must know that there is always a positive part of it. Therefore, since the appointment of judges was for the benefit of the Jewish people, and going to the Bais Hamikdash was also a benefit, so is giving tzedakka. The Torah states end of Reah איש כמתנת ידו כברכת ה' אלקיך אשר נתן לך: *"Every man shall bring as much as he can afford, according to the blessing of Hashem, which He has given you."* Here Hashem is teaching us, that no one will have any monetary loss by giving tzedakka. On the contrary, there will be a reciprocal blessing from Hashem. We all know what the blessing of Hashem is which Moshe revealed in Devorim 1:10 ה' אלקי אבותכם יסף עליכם ככבם אלה פעמים *May Hashem add to you a thousandfold as many as you are, and may He bless you, as He spoke concerning you!* For every dollar one gives for tzedakka, one gets it back in abundance. Hence, all three Psukim are connected. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

STORY OF THE WEEK

(By Yehuda Z. Klitnick) (Revised and edited by David Pinchas Rose)

*** A tale for early Elul: "Ma'amudos" payments to Rav Pinchas of Koretz yield a lifeline for a Yid***

Since the days of the Ba'al Shem Tov, chassidim have always felt a close personal bond to their Rebbe, their spiritual master. It was the Ba'al Hatanya who instituted the custom of "ma'amudos" -- monetary payments from loyal chassidim for the upkeep of their Rebbe's personal household -- not as tzedaka per se, but more in the way of "dues" paid by a member of a flock to his shepherd. [See endnote.] The custom is practiced to this day in many Chassidic "courts". Rav Pinchas of Koretz personally set the amount he felt each chosid was able to pay -- and should in fact pay, as a source of personal merit.

Two of his students would circulate, collecting the ma'amudos assessments. One wealthy follower lived far away from Koretz and would send the ma'amudos directly

without waiting for the Rebbe's emissaries to collect. One year the money arrived in the name of the man's son. Inquiries revealed that the father had passed away but with instructions for his son and heir to continue the payments as assessed by the Rebbe in the letters he had been receiving. Several years passed routinely like this until one year, with no forewarning, the Rebbe struck the son's name from the donor list, making people wonder if the son too had gone to his reward. In those days before modern communications, sending messengers to one's town was the most direct means of finding out about someone's situation. A very sobering report came back to Koretz: the son, during his business travels, had taken to fraternizing heavily with local tradesmen. He was unable to withstand the temptations of

the gentile lifestyle he encountered. At first, he would drink in taverns with the traders and then take meals with them, eventually sliding down the slippery slope until there was nothing left of his Yiddishkeit, Rachmana litzlan. Sad to say, he dragged his hapless wife along on the descent.

One could not have anticipated Rav Pinchas's reaction. He dispatched a letter to the wayward chosid with a renewed ma'amudos assessment, informing also that emissaries were on their way to collect it. The talmidim were puzzled, to put it mildly, in light of what they had heard about the man's "yerida / spiritual decline." Still they journeyed to the man's town and inquired of him. What they heard was as mystifying as the Rebbe's letter they were carrying. It seems that one day, out of the blue, the errant young merchant together with his wife, totally kashered their treifa kitchen top to bottom and rejoined the community of shomrei Torah umitzvos. No one could explain their flip-flop return to the Yiddishe Derech. One thing was clear as day, however. The Rebbe's hand was at work behind the scenes. The shelichim sought out the man and delivered the letter with the sum it designated for ma'amudos gelt, which the man paid on the spot. Still, the agents pressed him to explain the turnabout that had occurred in his life.

"Your curiosity is understandable, and you will have your explanation. When I thought I had left the Yiddishe derech behind, I lived a comfortable life, lacking nothing. Once when I returned from a long business trip, exhausted, I fell into a deep sleep and dreamed that I was on one of my accustomed trips but this time extremely hungry with nothing to eat. In the dream, a business associate gave me lodgings in his house and set down a table full of delicacies to eat which smelled tantalizingly good. My mouth began to water but before I could load in a spoon, an impressive-looking man with a flowing beard appeared, bearing a summons to a Din Torah, demanding a large payout. I told him I would pay up straight out, without going to court. The man would not hear of it and dragged me, faint from hunger, to the Beis Din.

The court officer verified my identity but said that my case was not yet ready to be called. I returned to the host's home, ready to eat at last but the long-bearded messenger reappeared. Even though I agreed unreservedly to pay what the plaintiff was demanding, the man wouldn't hear of it and back we were in the Bais Din antechambers. I was sent back, and the scenario repeated itself yet again but this time with the promise that I would be admitted to the Bais Din chamber and the proceedings would be over quickly. The

gatekeeper admitted me to a regally decorated hall with a large table surrounded by dayanim, each with a handsome appearance more awesome than the next. The senior dayan informed me that the plaintiff in the case would soon appear and so he did -- but as a prosecutor, not a civil plaintiff. He read out a bill of particulars of all the sins I had willfully committed for the past several years, all in gruesome detail of "what, when and where." Claiming innocence was futile, for the prosecutor had all the evidence against me at his fingertips. I trembled from fear at the mountain of shame which threatened to bury me. The prosecutor ended his case and turned it over to the dayanim to decide my fate. The decision: until they reach a final verdict, I was to remain in the Olam HaEmes, the Upper Worlds. That meant I was already a dead man. "Choshuve dayanim," I began to plead my case. "I am far too young to leave the World Below. If you permit me to return, I undertake to mend my ways, repent my sins and become a full-fledged Ba'al Teshuva in the purest sense of the word, 100%."

"The time came for the senior dayan to take center stage. 'My brother judges, I can personally guarantee that this man's repentance will be sincere and total. He benefited me personally over the years and I affirm that his violation of our Holy Torah was "letayovon" [as the seforim describe someone who cannot resist the fleeting blandishments of the Yetzer Hora], not a willful rebellion, chas vesholom, and that he truly wants to return to the fold.' Up close, I saw that the dayan speaking was Rav Pinchas Koretzer."

The other dayanim in my dream actually took issue with Rav Pinchas's leniency, but in deference to his honour, acquiesced with his ruling and permitted me to return alive to This World -- contingent, of course, on my performing "Teshuva gemura usheleima / total and sincere repentance." "At this point, I fell out of bed, shaken to the core, cleansed of sin and set full speed ahead on my path of return to Hashem as never before. Our Rebbe Rav Pinchas knew exactly what happened and hence jump-started my new journey by sending the new ma'amudos assessment. It was that monthly payment, started by my father and continued by me, that forged the bond between us that saved my life and my soul."

[Chassidische seforim explain a source for the term "ma'amud". Money puts a man on his feet (it is "ma'amid" him) and enables him to buy his needs and serve Hashem without worry. The chosid shares some of that money with his Rebbe, thereby easing his livelihood and by so doing, connecting with a special d'veikus to the Rebbe. (DPR)]

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