

Reincarnation as water

On the ground shall you pour it like water (Deut. 12:16). The *Yalkut Reuveni* writes in the name of the Arizal that one who pours out water will be reincarnated as water. He explains that such a person will continuously come back as a reincarnation into water and will not have respite. He notes that if people would have understood the pain that is caused by pouring out water, then were constantly be crying over it.

Do the right thing

Do not do so to Hashem your God (Deut. 12:31). It is brought in the name of the Chozeh of Lublin (cited in *Noam Megadim* at the end of Parshas Ki Sisa and in *Agra Dikallah* here) that sometimes you find people who keep to the exact same schedule every day, they learn a specific thing or they recite a certain number of Psalms. But the truth is that not all times should be treated equally, rather what might be considered something noble today might not be considered so the next day. Each day and each moment of each day has to be judged on its own, one cannot just decide on a certain habit and assume that that approach will remain statically positive for his personal growth. *Agra Dikallah* finds an allusion to this idea in the verse at hand which says “Do not do so (כך) to Hashem your God”, where the word “so” (כך) can also mean “correct” or “right”. In this way, the Torah warns a person that he ought to not think that whatever he has previously decided on will always be “correct” or “right” in Hashem’s eyes. Rather, he must constantly rethink his approach and make sure that he is still doing the right thing for himself. *Agra Dikallah* also finds in this verse an allusion to the Talmud’s assertion that a sin done for noble purposes can sometimes be greater than a *mitzvah* done for ignoble purposes (*Nazir* 23b). He explains that this is alluded to in our verse which can be read as “The No [i.e. the things which one are *not* supposed to do, that is, sins] you shall indeed do [i.e. you may be justified in committing such sins, if it is] for Hashem your God [i.e. if the sin is performed for noble reasons]”.

Mercy....

And Hashem will give you mercy and He will pity you (Deut. 13:18). The Rabbis (*Shabbos* 151b) expound on this verse to teach that if somebody pities others, then from the Heavens they will have mercy upon on him. Rabbi Chaim Palagi in *Nefesh Chaim (Maareches Reish, 19)* proposes an explanation of this idea by noting that the letters immediately preceding the letters of the word Satan (שטן) spell out the word “mercy” (רחם), which teaches us that he who has mastered the trait of mercy, the Satan cannot rule over him. This means that if a person has made himself able to have mercy on others, he is immune to the attacks of the Satan and can rest assured that Hashem will treat him with mercy. Rabbi Palagi mentions that Rabbi Eliyahu HaKohen of Izmir in *Meil Tzedakah* (434) brings a fascinating story about a groom about whom it was decreed that he will die immediately upon completing his marriage, but when Satan appeared to this groom as a poor man upon whom the groom had mercy, then the Satan was no longer able to kill the groom and he survived because of his mercy.

Not making the cut

You are sons to Hashem... do not cut... (Deut. 14:1). Rashi explains that because the Jewish People are considered like sons of Hashem, it does not befit them to cut themselves or tear their skin, rather they should remain wholesome and handsome as befits the Sons of God. The *Zohar* (2:34a, cited in *Yalkut Reuveni*) writes that whatever Hashem created in the Lower Realms, He also created something parallel to it in the Upper Realms. To that effect, the *Zohar* explains that whilst Hashem created man in the Lower Realms as the choicest of all creatures, He created angels in the Upper Realms as the choices of all creatures there. The only difference is that Hashem does not call angels His “sons”, while he does call the Jewish People His sons (and they, in turn, refer to Him as “Our Father”). Indeed, the Midrash Rabbah says that Hashem gave the Jewish People commandments while he didn’t give such commandments to angels because the Jewish People are especially dear to Him, because He calls them His children.

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Two for the price of one

Do not cut... (Deut. 14:1). The Talmud (*Yevamos* 13b) derives two prohibitions from this one verse. The first is that one may not cut their skin as a sign of mourning over somebody who died. The second is that the Jewish People may not splinter into factions. The Maharal (*Gut Aryeh*) explains how these two very different ideas are indeed two sides of the same coin, and explains that whenever the Torah teaches two distinct things within one word/phrase, it is really teaching manifestations of the same one truth that simply has more than one implication.

Moshiach's Name... Will the real Moshiach please stand up...

When there shall be within you a poor man from one of your brothers in one of your gates [i.e. cities] in your land that Hashem your God is giving to you, do not strengthen your heart and do not clench your hand [and hold back] from your poor brother (Deut. 15:7). Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar in *Or Hachaim* explains that “from your poor brother” means “because of your poor brother” which he explains refers to the act that one who withholds giving charity to the poor and needy is effectively holding back the Moshiach from coming. In talking about Moshiach, Ibn Attar writes that that Moshiach's name is Chaim. He alludes to the idea that the letters of the word Moshiach serves as an acronym for the phrase “Hashem's Messiah—his name is Chaim” (משיח = משיח י.ה.ו.ה שמו חיים). While it is not so clear that this is what Ibn Ittar means, the commentary *Segulas Moshe* to *Ohr HaChaim* explains his intentions thusly, and this acronym is also cited in the name of Rabbi Dovid of Myripol.

Now, this is kind of funny that Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar would write that Moshiach's name is Chaim, which so happens to be his own first name. But we can explain this in light of what the Maharal writes in *Netzach Yisrael* (ch. 41) to explain a similar phenomenon found in the Talmud. The Talmud (*Sanbedrin* 98b) also discusses Moshiach's name and relates that in Rabbi Shilah's academy, they taught that his name will be Sheiloh, in Rabbi Yannai's academy, they taught that his name will be Yenon, and in Rabbi Chaninah's academy they taught that Moshiach's name will be Chaninah. **Maharal explains that the real Moshiach will embody elements of all the different *tzaddikim*, such that each**

academy will see in Moshaiach elements of their master in him and thus calls Moshaiach after the name of their master. (Note: he does not ever suggest that any of these students understood that their master himself was the Moshiach, but rather that they projected the great traits that their master represented upon Moshiach, and imagined that Moshiach would be great in that same way). In this way, Or Hachaim does not mean that Moshiach's first name ought to be Chaim, but he means that the Moshiach will resemble himself in certain ways. The *Hagabos Shai LaTorah* (*Even HaEzer* 129 when discussing names of men which start with the letter of SHIN) writes that he heard that Rabbi Shachna added to the Gemara's list that the name of Moshiach will be Shachna, as it says "for His dwelling place (לשכנו) shall you seek Him out" (Deut. 4) and the word "for His dwelling place" "*lishichno* is phonetically similar to the name Shachna.

Just a large city

You shall surely give to him, and you will not have made evil your heart when you give to him, for because of this matter Hashem your God will bless you in all your actions and in all upon which you send forth your hand (Deut. 15:10). The Chida, in his work *Pnei David* (9) quotes a story about Alexander the Great that is cited by Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz (who famously authored *Lecha Dod*) in his work *Manos HaLevi*. One time, a poor man asked for charity from Alexander the Great, the latter gave him as a present a large city. Alexander's servants pointed out to him that for this poor man, it would have sufficed to just give him ten dinar; giving him an entire city is sort of over-kill. Alexander responded by saying that the poor man asked for something, and from his (i.e. Alexander's) own perspective, a large city is considered a small gift, even though from the poor man's perspective that would be a highly significant gift. **From here we see that charity ought to be measured by the giver's means, not by the receiver's means.** We similarly can glean a perspective about the future reward for the righteous who follow Hashem's commandments. Hashem is infinite; even a small gift would be something highly substantial by our finite human standards.

The Alshich explains this verse as referring to a poor person. He explains that even a poor person himself is expected to give charity, as the Talmud (*Gittin* 7b) says that even if a poor person who is sustained through charity, if he also gives charity, then Hashem will widen his horizons.

Open your hands

For the unfortunate have not been withdrawn from the midst of the land, therefore I command you saying 'you shall surely open your hand'... (Deut. 15:11). Rabbi Chaim Vital in *Eitz HaDaas Tov* (cited by *Likkutei Basar Likkutei*) explains that this verse refers to the notion that one ought to order the members of his household to open their hands to the poor. He understands that “I commanded you saying” means that Hashem **commands us to say** to the members of our household “you shall surely...”.

Remembering the Exodus

So that you will remember the day of your exodus from the Land of Egypt all the days of your life (Deut. 16:3). The Talmud (*Brachos* 12b) related that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said that he is like seventy years old, and he did not merit to find a source for the requirement to remember the Exodus at night until Ben Zoma expounded on such a requirement from what it says “So that you will remember the day of your exodus from the Land of Egypt all the days of your life”, in which case “the days of your life” literally mean each day, while “*all* the days of your life” includes even the nights. The Sages disagreed with this and explains that “the days of your life” means in This World as it is now, (i.e. pre-Moshiach), while “*all* the days of your life” means even in Messianic Times.

Rabbi Yosef Gigi in *Pi Hamidaber* on the Haggadah Shel Pesach (first printed in Leghorn in 1854 by the author’s son, and reprinted in Monsey in 2009 by Shalom Jacob) explains this based on a dispute on the Talmud (*Shabbos* 53b) concerning a man who could not find a woman to nurse his son, and a miracle happened and he was able to nurse the child from his own breasts which filled with milk. One opinion in the Talmud says this miracle shows the man’s praise, while the other opinion maintains that it is disparaging of him, for he was responsible for

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Hashem having to alter the normal order of nature just for him. Moreover, on the night of the Exodus, the night became illuminated like the day¹, and although the Exodus happened in the spring, the sun shined as though it were the summer. This miracle too can be viewed as either praising or disparaging. Accordingly, if there is an obligation to remember the Exodus at night, that would require commemorating this miracle of the night become light like the day. This works according to the opinion that this miracle of the breastfeeding was to be praised, but if it was to be viewed a disparagement, then there is no reason to commemorate something negative. In light of this, comes along Rabbi Elazar ben Azryiah and says “I am like seventy years” meaning I too experienced a miracle which defied nature (in order to look older)² and I maintain that such miracles are a form of praise and not disparagement. As a result, even though I hold that according to Halacha one must remember the Exodus at night, I cannot say so without a proper source because otherwise people which just think I am trying to make myself look good because I was part of a miracle which upended the rules of nature. Therefore, since I had no exegetical basis for this Halacha, I

¹ בזהר חלק ב' לח, א איתא שבליל יציאת מצרים התקיים הפסוק הזה, ושם איתא "ותנא הוה נהיר ליליא כיומא דתקופה דתמוז, וחמא כל עמא דינוי דקודשא בריך הוא, הדא הוא דכתיב (תהלים קלט יב) ולילה כיום יאיר כחשכה כאורה". הרי שבליל יציאת מצרים היה הלילה מאיר כיום. וכן הביא החייד"א במדבר קדמות (מערכת י, אות ט) את דברי הזהר הזה, והוסיף שרבינו אשכנז הביאו בשם רז"ל ש"בחצי הלילה החמה היתה זורחת כיום". וזה היה דוגמת השבת הראשונה של אדם הראשון שהלילה היה מאיר כיום ולא ידע חשוכא עד מוצאי שבת כדאיתא בשוחר טוב צב, ובראשית רבה יב, ו. וכתב ביערות דבש (חלק א דרוש יא) שלכן ראש השנה נחשב ליומא אריכתא, וכן הביא החייד"א במדבר קדמות (מערכת י אות מ"ט), ויש להטעים בזה ענין וספרתם לכם ממחרת ה"שבת" שיום יציאת מצרים נקרא בשם שבת והרי מצינו שהוא דוגמת שבת בראשית שגם לילה כיום האיר. והנה במכילתא (בא פרשה ה, ושם פרשה טו) ובשמות רבה (ז, ג) איתא שבדמדוך חיי בדמדוך חיי קאי אדם פסח ודם מילה שמלו אותו הלילה, ועיין רש"י שמות יב, ו. והקשה ר"ש קלוגר בשו"ת טוב טעם ודעת (תליתאה ח"ב סי קי"א) איך מלו בלילה, והא במגילה כ, א איתא שאין מלין אלא ביום [וכן הקשה המשכיל לדוד על רש"י שם]. ושמו יש לתרץ שהרי למילת אברהם אבינו אין כל צורך למול ביום דווקא, וכן כתב ר' חיים קניבסקי בדרך שיחה חלק א פ בא עמ רל"ד, ושם ציין המגיה להגהות הרש"ש לשיר השירים רבה א, יב אות ד שכתב כן [ועוד ציין לשו"ת בית יצחק יו"ד א, קכט. ע"ש]. וראיתי מתרצים (שו"ת משנה הלכות חלק י"א, סי רנו ועוד מקומות) ע"פ דברי הזהר הללו, שאותו הלילה היה מאיר כיום, אבל הקשו על זה דא"כ איך קיימו "ואכלו את הבשר בלילה הזה" אם היה מאיר כיום. ובהגדת מהר"י שטייף פירש בדרך אפשר שאכן יש לתרץ שהלילה היה מאיר כיום אבל בענין אכילת הפסח יש לומר ע"פ הא דאיתא בתרגום יונתן (יט, ד) עה"פ ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים שהעננים הביאו את ישראל למקום המקדש בהר המוריה, ושם לא היה מאיר כיום ואכלו את הפסח שם. וכן כתב המרכבת המשנה על המכילתא הובא בחבצלת השרון על הגדה של פסח עמ נט, ונמצא לפי"ז שהלילה האיר כיום אך ורק במצרים. [ועיין משי"כ הרש"ש פסחים צו, ב ד"ה גמרא אלא ע"פ דברי התרגום יונתן שמבואר שלשיתנו באמת הלכו שם בעולם העשיה והקריבו קרבן שם ממש ע"ש. ובדרש משה (פ בא שם) כתב אה"י הג"ר משה פיינשטיין שלא מלו בלילה שזה אי אפשר שהרי מילה ביום, אלא מלו ביום כדי יהיו מוכנים לקרבן בלילה עיי"ש. ועיין רמב"ן וחי מט, י שמשמע שלא מלו אלא עד זמן האכילה, פירוש שבשעת שחיתות הקרבן היו ערלים, וכן דייק החת"ס לקידושין מא, ב בענין שליחות (בספר החדש ע"מ קדושין המלקט דבריו מכל ספריו ע"ש), וע"ע משי"כ ר' שלמה קלוגר שם בענין מילת גירות שכשרה בלילה אם טבל ביום, וע"ש ר"ד סי רס"ח סק"ט שמילת גירות בלילה כשרה בדיעבד בשם ראשונים. וע"ע משי"כ המשכיל לדוד שם בענין איך מלו בליל יו"ט והא מילה שלא בזמנה אינה דוחה יו"ט, וכתב שלא היה איסור מלאכה ודין יו"ט וכן איתא בתווי"ט פסחים י, ה, אבל שיטת הר"ן (פסחים קטז.) שהיה איסור מלאכה, וצ"ע לשיטתו].

² Rabbi Gigi's son points out that the word "seventy" (שבעים) can be taken as an acronym for the declaration "Hashem changed for me the order of creation" (י"י שינה עלי מעשה בראשית = שבעים)

never spoke about it until Ben Zoma came along and found a legitimate source for this Halacha which I could then use to back up my position.

Secret Gifts

Each man like the gift of his hand in accordance with the blessing that Hashem our God has given to you (Deut. 16:17). The Alshich explains that this verse means that one should give charity to the poor in a clandestine way, just like Hashem only gives blessings to those elements which are “hidden from the eye”. Rabbi Tzvi Horowitz (son of Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz) writes in *Lachmei Todah* (p. 224) that the Talmud (*Moed Katan* 16a) relates that once, Rebbi decreed that one not teach one’s students Torah in the public marketplace because the Torah is likened to “thighs” which are hidden from plain view. Nonetheless, Rabbi Chiyya taught his nephews in public and when pressed by Rebbi as to his reasoning, Rabbi Chiyya explains that the analogy to “thighs” ought to be applied to acts of charity and kindness, but not to Torah Study. Accordingly, only charity and other forms of kindness ought to be done in secret, while Torah Study should may even be done out in the open. Rabbi Horowitz then cites our verse at hand and explains it in the same way as the Alshich. He adds that this is what the Torah means when it says about Moshe Rabbeinu “The righteousness of Hashem he performed, and His laws with Israel” (Deut. 33:21), “the righteousness of Hashem” means that Moshe gave charity in the same way that Hashem gives blessing—that is hidden from plain sight, while “and His laws with Israel” means that when Moshe taught Hashem’s laws, he did so out in the open in front of the public at large to the entire Jewish People.