

REFLECTIONS

On the Parsha

Rabbi Yehoshua Berman

First edition: February 2014
Copyright © 2014: Yehoshua Berman
All rights reserved
ISBN: 978-0-9936744-0-2
Front Cover Design: Photo by P.S Laudy

No part of this publication may be translated, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means; electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission from the copyright holder – except for a reviewer wishing to quote brief passages in connection with a review for inclusion in a magazine or newspaper.

This book was part of the self-publish program offered by Adir Press:

As a result, the views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Adir Press.



For information about other publications from Adir Press, or to discuss publishing your material. email: publications@AdirPress.com or visit us at www.AdirPress.com
Tel: (00972)548 466 318

Questions and comments regarding this seifer can be sent directly to the author at the following address:
rbsa613@gmail.com

Approbations

בס"ד

Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky
ROSH YESHIVA

הרב אהרון לאפיאנסקי
ראש ישיבה

ישיבה גדולה דושינגטאן *Yeshiva Gedola of Washington*

שבט תשע"ג

הנה בא לפני תלמידי יקירי הרה"ג ר' יהושע ברמן שיחי', ת"ח חשוב וירא שמים, השקד בתורה ובעבודת ה' מנעוריו בהתמדה וביגיעה רבה, וב"ה עלה ונתעלה ועתה זכה לזכות את הרבים בספרו אשר הציג לפני בשמו "Reflections" התבונניות בהרבה עניינים בפרשיות התורה. הרבה מתוכן הדברים הם מה ששמע מרבו הגאון רבי יעקב וינברג, צוק"ל, ראש ישיבת באלטימור. והנה הגאון הנ"ל אינו צריך להסכמתי או להסכמת כוותי, גאון בכל חלקי התורה היה, ונדע במיוחד במקוריותו ובבהירות מחשבתו. אולם זאת אעידה, כי הדברים נכתבו בסגנון וצורה שגם נאמנים למקורם וגם עריבים ונעימים לקורא. וגם העניינים שהמחבר העלה בעצמו מצטיינים הם בישרותם, וגם נוגעים הם למעשה בעניינים השייכים לקורא המצוי. וע"אברך המחבר, להמשיך ולזכות הצבור עם כשרונותיו וכוחותיו המיוחדים, ויהיו דברים אלו לעלוי נשמת רבו הגדול הגר"י וינברג צוק"ל.

החותם בברכה לכבוד עמלי התורה

אהרון שרגא הלוי לופיאנסקי

Paraphrased translation of above approbation:

Shevat 5773

My dear talmid R' Yehoshua Berman is an noteworthy Talmid Chacham and yirei-Shamayim who has assiduously applied himself to learning Torah and avodas Hashem from his youth, and he has baruch Hashem reached significant achievements. Now he is bringing merit to the public through his Seifer "Reflections" that he presented to me. It is a collection of profound thoughts on many topics of the Parshiyos of the Torah. Much of the material is what the author heard from the great gaon Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg zt"l, late Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Israel Baltimore, who was masterfully proficient in every aspect of the Torah. Such a personage certainly does not require my approbation. He was particularly known for his thoughts and ideas being directly culled from the fundamental Torah sources, and his absolute clarity of thought. However, what I will say is that the material was written in a manner that is faithful to its source and in a style that is pleasant to read. The ideas that the author expounded himself as well are noteworthy in their straightforwardness, in addition to addressing issues that have practical ramifications for many readers.

Therefore, I bless the author that he continue to bring merit to the public through his unique talents and strengths, and may these words be an iluy-neshama for Rav Weinberg zt"l.

Signed in blessing for the honor of those who toil in Torah,
Aharon Shraga Ha'Levi Lopiansky

Rabbi Zev Leff

*Rabbi of Moshav Matityahu
Rosh HaYeshiva—Yeshiva Gedola Matityahu*

הרב זאב לף

מרא דאתרא פושב סתתיהו
ראש הישיבה—ישיבה גדולה סתתיהו

כ"ז

D.N. Modiin 71917

Tel: 08-976-1138 טל'

Fax: 08-976-5326 פקס'

ד.ג. מודיעין 71917

Dear Friends,

I have seen pictures of the manuscript “Reflections on the Parshiyos Ha’shavuah” by Rabbi Yehoshua Berman. Rabbi Berman presents short essays on one theme from each Parsha. Many of the essays present the ideas of his Rebbi, HaRav Yaakov Weinberg ZT”L. He also quotes other contemporary rabbanim as well as providing his own insights.

I found the Divrei Torah informative, interesting and inspiring. The ideas are presented in a lucid and well written manner. The ideas presented are based on sound Torah true foundations.

I recommend this work to all those who want to enhance their understanding of the Torah portions, and cull the very pertinent messages they contain, to guide one’s journey through this world as a Torah Jew.

I commend Rabbi Berman for a fine Torah work and pray that Hashem Yisborach grant him, and his family, life, health and the wherewithal to continue to contribute to the community, works that will enhance and glorify the Torah.

Sincerely,
With Torah blessings



Rabbi Zev Leff

Table of Contents

Seifer Breishis	1	<i>Acharei Mos</i>	102
<i>Noach</i>	4	<i>Kedoshim</i>	106
<i>Lech Lecha</i>	7	<i>Emor</i>	110
<i>Vayeirah</i>	9	<i>B'har</i>	114
<i>Chayei Sarah</i>	13	<i>Bechukosai</i>	125
<i>Toldos</i>	15	Seifer Bamidbar	134
<i>Vayeitzei</i>	18	<i>Nasoh</i>	137
<i>Vayishlach</i>	21	<i>Beha'aloscha</i>	142
<i>Vayeishev</i>	24	<i>Shlach</i>	147
<i>Mikeitz</i>	28	<i>Korach</i>	151
<i>Vayigash</i>	31	<i>Chukas</i>	155
<i>Vayechi</i>	34	<i>Balak</i>	159
Seifer Shmos	37	<i>Pinchas</i>	163
<i>Vaeirah</i>	41	<i>Matos</i>	167
<i>Bo</i>	47	<i>Masei</i>	171
<i>Beshalach</i>	50	Seifer Devarim	174
<i>Yisro</i>	55	<i>Vaeschanan</i>	178
<i>Mishpatim</i>	62	<i>Eikev</i>	183
<i>Terumah</i>	66	<i>Re'ih</i>	187
<i>Tetzaveh</i>	69	<i>Shoftim</i>	190
<i>Ki Sisah</i>	72	<i>Ki Seitzei</i>	194
<i>Vayakheil</i>	77	<i>Ki Savoh</i>	200
<i>Pekudei</i>	81	<i>Nitzavim</i>	206
Seifer Vayikra	86	<i>Vayeilech</i>	214
<i>Tzav</i>	89	<i>Haazinu</i>	219
<i>Shmini</i>	92	<i>V'zos Ha'bracha</i>	223
<i>Tazriah</i>	95	Glossary	230
<i>Metzora</i>	99		

Seifer Breishis

Breishis

Following Orders

-Based on the insights of Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg zt"l-

Hashem placed Adam in *Gan Eiden* and told him that he may partake of all the fruits of the garden, but “from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (*etz ha'daas*) you shall not eat from it (2:17).” Tragically, Chava was seduced by the *Nachash* (primordial Serpent) to eat from the fruits of the *etz ha'daas*, “and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate (3:6).” Hashem demands an explanation for why they violated His command. Adam responds, “The woman that you gave with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate (3:12).” Then it is Chava’s turn to provide an excuse: “The Serpent seduced me and I ate (3:13).” The *pesukim* then continue to describe the punishment and curse that each party received for their involvement in the sin.

Let us focus in on Adam’s response. “The woman that you gave with me gave me from the tree and I ate.” What type of an excuse is this?! So what that she gave him from the fruits to eat? Is that a reason to violate a direct command of Hashem? Furthermore, why does Adam say “the woman that you gave *with me*,” would it not have sufficed to say “the woman that you gave me” – why the seemingly extra “with”¹?

Adam had a dilemma; on the one hand, he was explicitly commanded by Hashem to not eat from the *etz ha'daas*; but, on the other

¹דע"פ דקדוק לשה"ק היה צריך לומר האשה שנתת לי ולא עמדי



hand, the fact that Hashem had given Chava to him as a wife was an implicit command that Adam live together with her. Indeed, during the chapter of the creation of Chava, the Torah says, “Therefore, a man will leave his father and mother and he will cling to his wife, and they will be to one flesh (2:24).” When Chava ate from the *eitz ha'daas*, she was destined to die, as Hashem had told Adam, “because on the day you eat from it you shall surely die (2:17).”

Interestingly, Adam and Chava did not die on the same day that they ate from the tree; only much later did they die. It must be, then, that the meaning of the warning is that death would become a part of their reality. Before they ate from the tree, they were supposed to live forever, but after they sinned they were destined to die. Imminent death, though, no matter how delayed it may be, is not a one-time experience. Rather, it reshapes the entire form and reality of the person's existence. If there is no death, you do not have to “watch what you eat.” If there is no death, you do not have to worry about getting proper exercise. Without death, there is no such thing as illness. All of these things, and many, many others like them are all a function of the fact that man's body was lowered to a state of gross imperfection in which there is an overall process of degeneration. It is this overall process of degeneration towards death that produces the myriad symptoms that are a tremendous part of our everyday lives. It is not just an occurrence at the end of life; it is a powerful reality that affects the totality of one's existence.

With this understanding, we can now begin to comprehend why it is that Adam was cast into a serious dilemma. When Chava ate from the tree, her whole form of existence was completely altered. This made it impossible for Adam to continue to live and be one with her. Therefore, Adam had to decide which path to take: the path of following the explicit command that Hashem gave him to not eat from the tree, or the path of following the implicit command to be united with his wife.

He chose the latter.

Hence, Adam tried to excuse himself by saying, “the woman that



Lech Lecha

Merely a Corridor

Based on the insights of Rabbi Eli Resnick (of the Mir Yeshiva)

Hashem commands Avraham to leave the Land of his fathers and move to the Land of Canaan (later to become the *Eretz Yisrael*). There, Avraham is to achieve untold greatness, and his influence will spread throughout the world.

Avraham did not travel alone, however. Aside from his wife Sarah, Avraham's nephew Lot also went with him. Avraham ultimately reaches the great spiritual heights for which he set out, but Lot descends into deep moral decay and earns for himself a shameful name for all eternity.

What happened?

The following pasuk (which is describing the capture of Lot by the four kings) provides the clue we are looking for: "And they took Lot and his property the son of the brother of Avram and they left and he was dwelling in Sodom (14:12)."

The syntax sounds very strange at first glance. Is the property of Lot also the son of the brother of Avraham? Shouldn't the pasuk read "and they took Lot the son of the brother of Avram and his property"?

The implication is inescapable: Lot and his property were one; they were inseparable.

When Hashem told Avraham to leave the Land of his fathers, he was effectively telling him that he must completely disconnect himself



from the society from whence he came. He must utterly divest himself of all the impurity of idolatry, hedonism, and immorality that was typical of that society (of course, Avraham had already accomplished this to a great extent while still living in his ancestral Land, but Hashem was indicating to him that there was much more to be achieved). It was not simply a geographical move; rather it was a physical move that was meant to be accompanied by a deep spiritual move.

Avraham succeeding in doing this and, therefore, he succeeded in reaching those great achievements which the move was meant to facilitate.

Lot, on the other hand, did not fully get the point. He may have moved geographically, but essentially he brought with him the heavy load of hedonism that blocks one from achieving great spiritual heights; and it was this continued connection with materialistic pursuit that led to Lot's ultimate moral downfall. Indeed, this was what motivated him to settle in the immoral city of Sodom in the first place.

As the descendants of Avraham, we must take this message very much to heart, especially since we live in an age of such gross hedonism (which is called 'consumerism' in today's language to make it sound less unflattering). We must try as much as we can, to guard ourselves from allowing material pursuit to become a goal in life. We must always maintain a strong awareness that this world is merely a corridor leading to the next, and that, as such, material matters are meant to serve only as facilitators towards that goal – and they are not the goal itself.



Chayei Sarah

Details, Details

The topic that occupies the bulk of this week's parsha is the search for Yitzchak's wife. Avraham sends his faithful servant, Eliezer, on a mission to visit Avraham's family and find a suitable match. Clearly, this is a matter of the utmost importance and significance: the next link in the formation of the Jewish People is at stake!

Amazingly, right in the middle of this spectacular sequence of events we find details of Eliezer taking care of the camels (e.g. removing their muzzles when they are brought into the family's property, providing them with food, etc., 24:30,32). One cannot help but wonder why these seemingly petty details appear in the middle of a subject which is of such incredible significance.

L'havdil, imagine that while reporting to the president on the most recent developments regarding the nation-wide lawsuits against healthcare reform, the messenger would also update him on how the cleaning help properly carried out their responsibility to mop the floors of the oval office.

This issue can be resolved with the answer to a similar question.

Before appointing Moshe as the liberator and leader of the Jewish People, Hashem tested Moshe by checking (as it were) how he would take care of his sheep. Moshe passed the test with flying colors, as we see from when, on a particular occasion, one of the sheep wandered off and showed signs of fatigue, Moshe displayed extraordinary *rachmanus* by carrying the sheep back to the flock. This served as an indication of Moshe's general sense of responsibility and care, thus



proving him fit to lead the Jewish People.

Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, quoting Rabbi Tzadok of Lublin, pointed out that, at first glance, this seems rather odd. Wouldn't it make more sense to test a leader with something like a great act of heroism or self-sacrifice? Doesn't taking care of sheep seem a bit too mundane to be the barometer of who is fitting to be a great leader?

He answered that momentous acts of heroism and the like do not necessarily demonstrate the true character of a person. In such unique moments of particularly great significance, one can be filled with a rush of adrenalin that enables him to perform acts that are generally not in consonance with his true character.

Successfully leading a nation requires being able to live up to the far-more-formidable task of properly dealing with the day-in-and-day-out "nitty-gritty" details of life. It is the ability to act with kindness and compassion, mercy and understanding, on an ongoing basis - and in all of the endless minutiae of daily living - that is the real litmus test of true *gadlus*. As such, Moshe's conduct regarding caring for his sheep was the perfect indication of whether or not he would be able to successfully lead the Jewish People.

With this *yesod*, we can now answer our original question. Eliezer was in the midst of one of the most important missions imaginable - to find the next matriarch of the Jewish People. At this moment of pomp and glamour, of great consequence and magnitude, the Torah is teaching us that the real test of morality lies in not forgetting about the "small" details. The fact that Eliezer is involved in such a substantial endeavor does not change the fact that the camels that are with him do not belong to him; they are the property of his master Avraham, placed under his charge, and it is his responsibility to properly care for them.

It is by not losing sight of these "small" details that Eliezer's true colors as a genuinely moral individual come shining through in all their brilliant light. It is this phenomenal lesson that the Torah is teaching us by telling us about these details in the middle of this most weighty matter: true greatness is to be found in properly dealing with the myriad, "small" details of daily life.



Vayishlach

True Gratitude

From Yaakov Avinu's tefillah for salvation from the hand of his brother Eisav, we can glean a great lesson regarding the middah of gratitude. Yaakov said, "I have become small from all of the kindnesses and from all of the truth that You have done with Your servant, because with my staff did I pass over this Jordan [river] and now I have become two camps (32:11)." Herein, Yaakov is expressing how he is so utterly beholden to Hashem for the great chesed of developing him into a large and prosperous family.

Let's review some of the pesukim from last week's parsha that describe the process of how this happened. "And Yaakov loved Rachel, and he said (to Lavan) 'I will work for you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter (29:18).'" At the end of those seven years, Lavan (Yaakov's uncle!) deceives Yaakov by marrying Leah to him instead of Rachel. The result? "Finish the week [of celebration] of this one (Leah) and we will give you also this one (Rachel) for the work that you will work with me another seven years. And Yaakov did as such (29:27,28)..." Grand total? Fourteen years!

Just imagine, Yaakov had to work for fourteen years (!) just to get married to his wife of choice!

Perhaps one may think that the work wasn't so terrible. Well, let's take a look at how Yaakov describes his experience: "This is now twenty years that I am with you, your sheep and your goats did not miscarry, and the rams of your flocks I did not eat. A killed animal I did not bring to you, I made up for it, from my hand did you demand



Mikeitz

True Confession

When Yosef's brothers descend to Mitzrayim to buy food, Yosef recognizes them and carries out the necessary steps to see his dreams from long ago come to fruition. He imprisons Shimon and demands that the brothers bring Binyamin down to Mitzrayim.

Upon experiencing this very difficult situation, the brothers express themselves by saying, "Indeed, we are guilty over our brother (Yosef) that we saw his emotional anguish when he begged us [to take him out of the pit] and we didn't listen. Therefore has this tribulation befallen us (42:21)."

Upon hearing this, Reuvein (who had not participated in the sale of Yosef, and had intended on coming back later to remove Yosef from the pit and bring him home) says, "Didn't I tell you [then]...do not sin against the lad and you didn't listen, and also his blood behold is being demanded [by Heaven] (42:22)."

At first glance, Reuvein seems to be saying, "I told you so! See?! This is what happens when you don't listen to me!" If that is the case, though, it would be very difficult to understand. Think about it, what is the point of saying "I told you so"? It doesn't help anything now; it is just to emphasize that "I am right, you were wrong, and you ought to feel terrible about it, so there!" Not exactly an expression of the height of character refinement. Certainly, it is most unreasonable to posit that Reuvein, the bechor of Yaakov Avinu, would indulge in such purposeless "sticking-it-to-them".

Furthermore, why does Reuvein express himself by saying "and



behold also his blood is being demanded”?

As such, it would seem that Reuvein is most definitely not engaging in purposeless and immature “I told you so” behavior. Rather, he is directly responding to what he sees as a serious flaw in the brothers’ feelings of remorse over what they did to Yosef.

In last week’s parsha it says, “And they took him, and they threw him into the pit...and they sat to eat bread (37:24,25).” While Yosef – stripped of his clothing³ and vulnerable to snakes and scorpions – was pitifully crying and begging them to have mercy on him, they sat down to a meal! They didn’t just sell Yosef into slavery; they did it in a very cruel manner. They made themselves completely insensitive and immune to Yosef’s intense suffering.

So, when Reuvein heard them saying, “Indeed we are guilty over our brother that we saw his anguish when he was begging us [to let him out] and we didn’t listen,” he understood that they were only remorseful for the cruelty with which they carried out the sale of Yosef. But for the actual doing away with him they were not remorseful because they still maintained that it was necessary to do so and that Yosef deserved it⁴. Therefore, Reuvein rebuked them by saying, “Didn’t I tell you [then]...do not sin against the lad...and also behold his blood is being demanded.” In other words, Reuvein was saying to them, “You guys just don’t get it! It’s not just the cruelty with which you did it for which we are all suffering now. Rather, it is also the actual doing away with him itself for which Hashem is punishing us. You must recognize this and repent the whole sordid episode; not just the cruelty with which you did it⁵.”

3 See *Ohr HaChaim*

4 See *Sforno and Ohr HaChaim on Parshas Vayeishev, 37:18-20*

5 See *Sforno 42:21,22. This could very well explain why it is that the Asarah Harugei Malchus had to occur as a kaparah for the aveirah of the brothers. Perhaps even until the very end they never fully repented their actual wrongdoing of selling Yosef. In fact, at the end of Parshas Vayechi all they said is, “Your father commanded...please bear the iniquity of your brothers and their sin,” but they never explicitly admitted that they were wrong, and they never directly asked for forgiveness.*



Reuvein's statement, then, was crucially important. He was trying to instruct them to do proper *teshuvah*, and not to allow themselves to indulge in self-deception at any level.

This carries a very pertinent message for all of us. Inevitably, in the course of our lives, we make mistakes and we do things that are wrong; whether in the realm of *bein-adam-la'Makom* or *bein-adam-la'chaveiroh*. Often, when the negative consequences of our actions begin to surface, we have no choice but to confront the fact that we "messed up somewhere". Nonetheless, human nature is such that we greatly dislike admitting fault. So, even when we are forced to admit our guilt, we have a strong tendency to minimize that confession as much as we possibly can.

This of course is a serious problem, because it prevents us from properly doing *teshuvah* and fully rectifying our wrongdoing. It is not easy, but when those introspective moments come (and we hope that they come even without having to suffer Heaven-sent repercussions!) we need to try our best to do some brutally honest soul searching, and develop the maturity whereby we can confess to ourselves, our fellow man, and to Hashem - the full extent of our wrongdoing. And that, of course, is the greatest tool that will enable us to bring about a complete healing from that wrongdoing.