

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת בהעלתך

ואתנה את הלויים נתנים לאהרן ולבניו מתוך בני ישראל לעבד את עבדת בני ישראל באהל מועד ולכפר על בני ישראל ולא יהיה בבני ישראל נגף בגשת בני ישראל אל הקדש

“I assigned the Levites to be presented to Aharon and his sons from among the Children of Israel to perform the service of the Children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting and to provide atonement for the Children of Israel, so that there will not be a plague among the Children of Israel when the Children of Israel approach the Sanctuary” (8:19)

Rashi, citing a midrash, says that the five occurrences of the words “Bnei Yisrael” in this single posuk are a sign of Hashem’s love for Klal Yisrael because they are mentioned one time for each of the five books of Torah. The Birkas Ish points out that the paragraph “Tzur Yisrael,” which we say immediately before Shemone Esrei, also contains the word “Yisrael” five times, perhaps for the same reason.

What is the idea behind the five occurrences for the five books of Torah? Rabbi Friedman suggests that this is because each Jew is like a living Sefer Torah. Each individual has the capability to learn and live according to the entire Torah. The Gemara in Moed Katan 25a teaches that one who is present when a person dies must tear his outer garment, even if he is not a relative, because it is similar to when a Sefer Torah is burnt. The reason for this comparison is that had this person lived, he could have learned more Torah and performed more mitzvos but now he cannot. When we follow the Torah, it is as if we are writing a Sefer Torah and transforming ourselves into one.

ויעשו את הפסח בראשון בארבעה עשר יום לחדש בין הערבים במדבר סיני ככל אשר צוה ה' את משה כן עשו בני ישראל

“They made the Pesach offering in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, in the afternoon, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according

to everything that Hashem had commanded Moshe, so the Children of Israel did” (9:5)

The Sifri says that this was the only קרבן פסח that was sacrificed during Bnei Yisrael's years in the wilderness. Why didn't they bring it in any subsequent years? The Ramban suggests that they did not circumcise their sons for the forty years of their travels because there was no north wind, a wind that is vitally important for the healing of a newly circumcised baby. This prevented them from bringing the sacrifice because one who has uncircumcised children is forbidden to partake of the Korban Pesach. Another possible answer is that the Jewish people were simply lazy and never brought a קרבן פסח after this time. However, the Ramban writes that he prefers the first answer because it is impossible that Moshe would have allowed them to forsake this important mitzvah for all those years and violate a commandment punishable by כרת. Of course, the Ramban adds, they still kept the holiday of Pesach and the mitzvah to remove all חמץ, which apply even when there is no קרבן פסח.

We can learn an important lesson from this Ramban. It is taken for granted that Moshe, as the leader of the nation, would have made sure that the people did the right thing at all times. This is something that should be taken for granted about every leader, that he always ensures proper conduct and adherence to the Torah. This should also apply to the head of each household. A leader should be sure to live up to the Torah's expectations by earning a reputation that sinful activity could not possibly take place on their watch.

ותסגר מרים מחוץ למחנה שבעת ימים והעם לא נסע עד האסף מרים
“So Miriam was closed away outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not journey until Miriam was brought in” (12:15)

Rashi explains that the people waited for Miriam because she had waited to watch Moshe for one hour when he was floating in the river as a baby in Egypt. The Yalkut Maamarim points out that at the same time that Hashem meted out punishment to Miriam, he also rewarded her. A person needs to rectify whatever he does wrong, but at the same time he will be repaid for every good deed. Hashem does not forget anything and no bad

deed can erase the positive things that we do. In fact, Hashem's reward is even greater than His punishment.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz notes Rashi's emphasis on the fact that Miriam watched Moshe for one hour. In exchange for that one hour of waiting, 600,000 people waited for her for seven days. We see from here how much a person can accomplish in a very small amount of time. Life is made of many small opportunities and we should never feel that we can just waste away a small window of time here and there. Stories are told of people who completed large amounts of Torah from learning regularly during their commute to work. Small acts of kindness take almost no time at all but can likewise have a great impact. We should make the most of every moment that we have.

*Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman
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