



THE LEARNING IS
FOR A MERIT FOR
THE HOLY AUTHOR
OUR TEACHER
HARAV SHIMSHON
CHAIM BEN REB
NACHMAN MICHAEL
NACHMANI.
PASSED AWAY 6
ELUL 5539 (1779)

B'SIYATTA D'SHEMIYAH

ZERA SHIMSHON

Fascinating excerpts and intriguing discourses from the works of the great Gaon and kabbalist Morainu HaRav Shimshon Chaim ben Reb Nachman Michael Nachmani Author of *Zera Shimshon* and *Toldos Shimshon* who lived almost 300 years ago.

HE PROMISED THAT WHOEVER LEARNS HIS WORKS WILL SEE HELP WITH CHILDREN, LONG LIFE, AND PARNASSAH. MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEST TO THEIR PERSONAL SALVATIONS!

This week's *Divrei Torah* are being sponsored *l'iluy nishmas* Shlomo Ariyeh ben Dov Eliyahu HaLevi whose eighth *yahrtzeit* is this Shabbos, 8 Tishrei, and for Chana Leiba bas Zusha who passed away this 2 Elul. Also, that all of their descendants will experience the *brachos* of the *mechaber* very soon.

Parshas Ha'azinu

עַל אֲשֶׁר מָעַלְתֶּם בִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִי מְרִיבַת קֹדֶשׁ מְדָבֵר צֵן עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְשְׁתֶּם אוֹתִי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Because you betrayed Me in the midst of *Bnei Yisroel* at *May Merivah*, [in] the desert of *Tzin*, [and] because you did not sanctify Me in the midst of the *Bnei Yisroel*. (*Devarim* 32/51)

At the end of this week's *parsha*, *Hashem* once again tells Moshe that he will not enter Eretz Yisroel together with the rest of *Bnei Yisroel*, and that he will die in the *Midbar*, just as his brother Aharon did. The reason for this was that Moshe struck the rock to provide water for *Bnei Yisroel* instead of speaking to it as *Hashem* had commanded.

The *Medrash* asks: Although Moshe did something wrong by hitting the rock, why was Aharon punished? Aharon himself had done nothing wrong.

The *Medrash* explains with a *mashal*. A lender came to collect grain from a borrower. When he found that the borrower did not have enough grain to repay the debt, he also took grain from the borrower's neighbor. The borrower protested, "It is true that I owe you, but why are you taking from my neighbor?"

So too, Moshe was like the borrower. He had sinned and therefore deserved punishment. Yet *Hashem* also took Aharon, just as the lender in the *mashal* took from the borrower's neighbor. In other words, the *Medrash* seems to be saying that sometimes one person may suffer consequences because of another person's wrongdoing. Aharon was punished because of Moshe's

act, even though Aharon himself had done nothing wrong.

The *Medrash* concludes that because Aharon's accepting the decree without protest the Torah praises him and he received the *beracha*, "And of Levi he said: "Your *Tummim* and *Urim* belong to Your pious man, whom You tested at *Massah* and whom You tried at the waters of *Meriva*."

The *Zera Shimshon* asks several questions on this *Medrash*. He first asks on the *mashal*. First, how could the lender possibly take grain from the neighbor? This is pure theft! If Shimon owes someone money and does not have the money to repay him, Shimon's creditor cannot simply go to his neighbor and take the money from him..

Second, why did the borrower complain rather than the neighbor? It would make more sense for the neighbor, who lost his grain for no reason, to complain rather than the borrower.

There is also a third question. From the *mashal*, it does not seem that the neighbor did anything particularly praiseworthy by remaining silent and not protesting. Yet at the end of the *Medrash*, Aharon is praised for

accepting the Heavenly decree that he would die because of what Moshe had done. This seems to imply that Aharon's acceptance was something exceptional. So which is it? Is remaining silent when one suffers because of someone else's wrongdoing something extraordinary and praiseworthy, or is it simply what is expected of a person?

The *Zera Shimshon* answers based on a *halacha* in *Choshen Mishpat* (99:6). If Shimon owes Reuven money and, in order to avoid paying his debt, transfers his possessions to Levi, the transfer is not recognized as a genuine gift, and Reuven may still collect from those possessions.

Accordingly, the *Zera Shimshon* explains that the *mashal* in the *Medrash* is describing a specific case. The borrower had placed his grain with his neighbor in order to hide it from the lender, and the neighbor mixed the borrower's grain together with his own. By agreeing to this arrangement, the neighbor is essentially helping the borrower to evade his obligation of paying off his loan.

Since the grain was now mixed together and could no longer be distinguished, the lender was entitled to collect from what was there, even though some of it belonged to the neighbor, who himself owed the lender nothing

The neighbor, however, would ultimately not suffer any loss from what happened because he could bring witnesses and recover from the borrower the value of his grain the lender had taken.

That is why the neighbor himself did not protest. First, he had knowingly participated in the borrower's attempt to conceal his property, and second, any loss he suffered could ultimately be recovered from the borrower. The borrower, on the other hand, did protest because he did not want his neighbor to resent him for the inconvenience and trouble he had caused.

This answers the first two questions. The lender was permitted to take from the grain because the borrower's grain had been hidden together with the neighbor's and could no longer be distinguished from it. The neighbor did not protest because he had knowingly helped the borrower conceal his property, and in any case he could recover from the borrower whatever the lender took from him. The borrower, by contrast, did protest—not because he had a *halachic* claim, but

because he had caused his neighbor this entire inconvenience and did not want him to bear a grudge against him.

The answer to the third question is now also clear. Why does it seem that the neighbor in the *mashal* did nothing extraordinary by remaining silent, while Aharon is praised for accepting his punishment, implying that he did something praiseworthy?

The neighbor in the *mashal* had good reason not to protest, like we just wrote. Aharon, however, had done nothing wrong. The only possible complaint against him was that he did not stop Moshe from hitting the rock. Yet even for this, Aharon would ordinarily not have been at fault. While still in the Desert, before *Bnei Yisroel* crossed the *Yarden*, they had not yet accepted the responsibility of *arvus*—mutual accountability through which one Jew can be held accountable for another's wrongdoing. This only happened when they accepted upon themselves the oath at *Har Gerizim* and *Har Eival*. Therefore, since at that time there was no *mitzvah* to rebuke Moshe, if Aharon would have, he would been embarrassing him in public for no reason, which is something that is prohibited.

This brings us back to the original question: Why, then, was Aharon punished if he had done nothing wrong?

The answer is that although under ordinary circumstances Aharon would not have been required to rebuke Moshe, this case was different because Moshe's striking the rock involved a *chillul Hashem*. The *Gemara* teaches, *b'makom chillul Hashem ein cholkin kavod l'rav*—in a situation of *chillul Hashem*, one does not refrain from acting out of respect for one's teacher. Since Aharon could have intervened and prevented the *chillul Hashem*, but did not, he too was held accountable.

According to the *Zera Shimshon*, then, the *mashal* and the *nimshal* are not completely identical. In the *mashal*, the neighbor actively assisted the borrower in concealing his grain and therefore bore some responsibility, even though he himself did not owe the lender anything.. Aharon's responsibility, on the other hand, was far more indirect. He had not committed Moshe's sin, nor had he even assisted him. His fault was only that, in this exceptional case of *chillul Hashem*, he did not intervene.

The point of the *Medrash*, however, is that a person can sometimes be held accountable for another person's wrongdoing even when his own involvement was only indirect. Although his role may have been only *agav d'agav*, secondary and indirect, he can still be held accountable as though he had some share in the wrongdoing itself.

Although on the surface this seems like a rather frightening lesson, hidden within it is also a very encouraging message.

Rashi in *Parshas Vayikra* writes that if *Hashem* punishes even a minor partner in a sin as though he had committed it himself, then *kal vachomer*, how much more so, does He reward a minor partner in a *mitzvah* as though he had done it himself. Applying that logic here—if *Hashem* punishes for a certain degree of involvement in a sin, He certainly rewards a person for

that degree of involvement in a *mitzvah*—then it follows that since Aharon's indirect involvement was enough to bring consequences upon him, then certainly an indirect role in another person's *mitzvah* will also bring reward.

We might not see how our *davening* a slightly longer *Shemoneh Esrei*, staying a few minutes after *davening* to learn something, or showing patience to a cranky child or the neighborhood *nudnik* affect others. However, someone may notice it and he changes. We may never even know it. But *Hashem* does. We can learn from the way *Hashem* dealt with Aharon that He rewards us even for our small part in helping another person become better.

(Adapted by Rabbi Shevach Pepper from *Zera Shimshon*, *Parshas V'zos Habracha*, *Derush 4*)

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יִזְכְּחוּ לַשְּׂדִים לֹא אֱלֹהִים לֹא יָדְעוּם חַדָּשִׁים מִקְרֵב בָּאוּ לֹא שְׁעָרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם:

They sacrificed to demons, which have no power, gods they did not know, new things that only recently came, which your forefathers did not fear. (*Devarim* 32, 17)

Rashi, in the name of the *Targum*, explains: “Are not gods—they are completely powerless. If they had some power, *Hashem*’s anger would not be so great.” This implies that *Hashem* is angrier at someone who serves an *avodah zorah* that is powerless than one who serves an *avodah zorah* that has some power.

Zera Shimshon quotes *Mefarshim* who ask that this seems to contradict the *Medrash*. On the possuk, “Why are You angry at Your nation [who worshipped the Golden Calf]...” the *Medrash* comments: “Moshe said, ‘*Ribono shel Olam*, why are You angry with them? This calf they made can help You—You will make the sun shine in the morning and it will bring out the moon at night. You will be in charge of the stars and it will be in charge of the constellations...’ Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied, ‘You too erred—it is completely powerless!’ Moshe answered, ‘If so, why are You angry at Your nation?’” From this *Medrash* it seems the opposite: that if Bnei Yisroel serves a powerless *avodah zorah* there is no reason for *Hashem* to be angry.

Zera Shimshon explains that even though the *Medrash* appears to contradict *Rashi*, the *Gemara* supports him. The *Gemara Avodah Zorah* (55a) relates that Agrippas

the general asked Rabban Gamliel why the Torah warns against *avodah zorah* by saying, “For *Hashem* your Lord is a devouring fire, a jealous God” (*Devarim* 4:24). “A wise man is only jealous of another wise man, a mighty man of another mighty man, a rich man of another rich man—why is *Hashem* jealous of useless idols?” Rabban Gamliel answered with a *moshal*: a man who takes a second wife causes more jealousy in the first wife if the second wife is less distinguished. If the second is more distinguished, the first wife understands and is less angry.

This is exactly what *Rashi* meant: *Hashem* is “more jealous” when Bnei Yisroel serves something that is beneath Him, something useless.

Zera Shimshon concludes there is no real *machlokes* between *Rashi*, the *Gemara*, and the *Medrash*. All agree that *Hashem* is angrier when Bnei Yisroel serves a useless *avodah zorah*. Moshe’s argument was that the Golden Calf was never intended as a replacement for *Hashem*; Bnei Yisroel continued to serve *Hashem* and only sought a leader to replace Moshe. Since they sought a helper, not a rival god, Moshe argued that there was no reason for *Hashem*’s anger. Had they

HaRav Shimshon Nachmani had one child who died in his lifetime (hence the name "Zera Shimshon") and in the preface he promises for people who learn his sefarim after he dies "... And your eyes will see children and grandchildren like the offshoots of an olive tree around your tables, wise and understanding with houses filled with all manner of good things... and wealth and honor..."

To dedicate a week of Zera Shimshon for a yahrtzeit, a zechus for a refuah or shidduch, or in honor of a simcha — contact:

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