



PARSHAS EIKEV

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SHALOSH SEUDAH
TORAH

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Hashem's Bond with the Jewish People is Permanent

The Shattering of the Luchos – Destroying the Marriage Bond

In this week's parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu recounts how he shattered the Luchos when he saw the Jewish people worshipping the Golden Calf.

The written word aids remembrance. The Luchos enabled retention of the entire Torah because the Ten Commandments – which encapsulate the entire Torah – were engraved upon them.

The shattering of the Luchos nullified that power of retention. Since then the Torah is easily forgotten,¹ and continuous review is necessary.²

The Luchos served as the marriage contract between Hashem and the Jewish people. The Maharal marvels at the incredible unity of Hashem and the Jewish people that was inherent in the Luchos.^x

Serving idols is akin to infidelity on the part of the Jewish people. Upon seeing the Golden Calf being worshiped, Moshe quickly broke the Luchos in order to annul the marriage contract between G-d and His people. Thereby, they would not be judged as a married woman who commits adultery, but as an un-betrothed maiden, and their sin would then be considered much less severe.³

Hashem Overlooks the Sin of the Golden Calf, but not the Acceptance of the Torah

After reading the parsha from the Torah scroll, we recite the Haftorah - a chapter from the Prophets which is closely related to the essence of each week's parsha.³

In this week's Haftorah, Yeshaya voices a complaint of Tzion^א, 'ותאמר ציון עזבני ה' "Tzion declared, 'G-d has forsaken me. Hashem has forgotten me.'"

Hashem responded, "התשכח אשה עולה, מרחם בן בטנה? גם אלה תשכחנה, ואנכי לא, אשכחך! הן על כפים חקתיה חומתיה נגדי תמיד." Does a woman forget her suckling baby, the fruit of her womb toward whom she is full of compassion? And even if a woman were to forget her baby, I will never forget you! Upon the palm of My hand I engraved you; your fortresses are constantly facing Me.

¹ It was Moshe's tremendous stature combined with the enormous significance of the Luchos that effected reality in such a powerful way. When the Luchos, which symbolized retention of the Torah, were shattered by the leader of the Jewish people, the result was the forgetting of the Torah.

In a similar vein, through destroying the actual Golden Calf, Moshe destroyed the evil energy created by the sin. (אור החיים דברים ט:כא)

² This explains how the end of the Torah is connected to the beginning. The last words of the Torah are לעיני כל ישראל, which Rashi explains refers to the breaking of the Luchos. As a result of the shattering of the Luchos, we constantly forget the Torah. Even though we just finished learning, we must begin again from Bereishis, because only through constant review can we retain our learning.

³ When the Romans forbade reading from the Torah, a chapter of the Prophets was read instead. We continue this custom and read the chapter of Prophets after reading the parsha. (סוף מ' מגילה)

Hashem's response to the Jewish people alleviated their very deepest fears, the Gemara explains. Just as a woman would not forget her עולה (suckling baby), so too, Hashem will not forget the עולה sacrifices brought by the Jewish people in the wilderness.

However, the Jewish people feared that because Hashem never forgets, He will also never forget the sin of the Golden Calf. Hashem reassured them, גם אלה תשכחנה, I will forget that you lauded the Golden Calf saying, "אלה אלקיך ישראל" – this is your G-d, Yisrael.

Now the Jewish people were anxious that if it is possible for Hashem to overlook something, perhaps He will disregard the bond they formed at Mount Sinai? "No," Hashem set them at peace. "ואנכי לא אשכחך", I will not forget that you accepted the Ten Commandments which began with the word, אנכי – I am Hashem your G-d.¹

Did Hashem Forget His Union with the Jewish People, or not?

Upon the breaking of the Luchos, forgetfulness descended, and the marriage between Hashem and the Jewish people was forgotten. Therefore, they were not punished as harshly for worshiping the Golden Calf.

However, if the sin of the Golden Calf could be ignored by disregarding our marriage to Hashem, could our relationship with Hashem be completely lost?

"No," Hashem reassures us. ואנכי לא אשכחך, I will not forget our marriage which was cemented with the Ten Commandments. Our relationship stands and is eternal. "וארשתיך לי" "I remember the love of your nuptials." "אהבת כלולותיך" "I betrothed you forever."

How can this be? Is the marriage between Hashem and the Jewish people permanent or is it not? Can it only be disregarded for the benefit of the Jewish people? Is that not fraudulent?

There are Different Levels in our Relationship with Hashem

Hashem's love for the Jewish people is compared to the love a king had for his daughter. He loved her so much that he called her "My daughter." He did not desist from loving her until he described her as "My sister – my wife." He continued in his affection for her until he dubbed her "My mother."¹

Our bond with Hashem can be compared to a marriage.⁴ However, despite its intensity, the marital bond can be dissolved by divorce. If the Jewish people sin, Heavenly prosecutors will insist that Hashem forego His relationship with them.

However, Hashem will not desist from loving the Jewish people, despite their failings. He will inform the prosecutors that, well, His bond with the Jewish people is deeper than that of a couple which can be destroyed. It can be compared to the relationship of a father to his daughter⁵. No matter how badly a daughter behaves herself, a parent cannot abolish the relationship.

⁴ Hashem refers to the Jewish people as wife "אחותי רעיתי", 'My sister, My beloved.' (שיר השירים ה:ב)

⁵ In Tehillim, chapter 41:11, the Jewish people are referred to as a daughter of G-d, "שמעי בת וראי", "שמעי בת וראי".

However, even though he cannot annul their connection, a father can become very angry at his daughter and their relationship can turn sour.

But Hashem will not allow His love to falter. If necessary, He will compare His relationship with them to that of a mother and her suckling baby. A mother will, amidst kissing and hugging her baby, call her, 'Mamale' (my little mother)⁶.

The love a mother has to her small baby cannot even be dented. Even if the baby were to wipe her chocolaty face in her mother's white Shabbos dress, or drop her diamond ring down the drain, the mother would still hug and kiss the baby as much as before. There is no room for estrangement between an אשה and her עולה.

If the Jewish people sin to the extent that even as a father-daughter relationship their bond would suffer, Hashem will not discontinue loving them. He will merely refer to them as his 'Mamale,' My sweet and ever-so-innocent little darling.

Hashem reassured the Jewish people, that if they violated their marital bond, and He would have the Luchos shattered, He would cease comparing their relationship to the sensitive one that exist between a husband and a wife, and will therefore be able to overlook the sin of the Golden Calf. However, our relationship to G-d would not be lost because we are much more essentially connected. Hashem will regard our connection as that of a mother to her baby, and we will still be wondrously one.

The Jewish People Will Never be Exchanged

An Esrog can only be used to fulfill the mitzvah of the four species on Sukkos if one is allowed to eat itⁿ. However, an Esrog of Terumah – the first fruit of the crop which may only be eaten by the Kohen in purity - may nevertheless be used by an ordinary Jew. But not, Rashi forewarns, because it can be exchanged with something else (as Maaser Sheini may). Anybody, who claims that Terumah may be exchanged, is a rasha! Rashi exclaims.

If somebody does not know the law that Terumah cannot be exchanged, then he is, at most, mistaken. Why does Rashi insists that such a man is evil?

There was once a king who sent his wife away. Afterwards, he ordered a golden piece of jewelry for her. A friend of the king told the queen, "Don't worry, the king will certainly bring you home shortly. He has already ordered a piece of jewelry for you!"

Yirmiyahu interrupted his depiction of the terrible tragedies that would befall the Jewish people with a G-dly recollection of better times. 'זכרתי לך חסד נעוריי וכו' "כה אמר ה', זכרתי לך חסד נעוריי וכו' "קודש ישראל לה' ראשית תבואתו..." the Jewish people are holy onto G-d, they are (his Terumah,) the first of his crop.'

It seemed that the connection between Hashem and the Jewish people was being severed - they were being exiled from His home. However, Yirmiyahu interrupted his bleak narrative with a golden guarantee from G-d. It is impossible to cut the golden strands that tie the Jewish people to their Heavenly Father. They are the Terumah of Hashem and cannot be exchanged.

⁶ In Shir HaShirim, chapter 3:11, the Jewish people are referred to as a mother of Hashem, "בעטרה שעטרה" לו אמו".

It was Bilam and his like who advised Hashem to let go of His exclusive union with the Jewish people. They requested that His presence should dwell on all of mankind. The founder of Christianity also charged that G-d exchanged His people with the nations of the world due to their sins.

However, this cannot be. A Jew's sin affects him superficially only⁷ – essentially, he remains pure. We remain the Terumah of G-d no matter what and, indeed, evil is the man who claims otherwise.⁷

Because Hashem is the Heart of the Jewish People

We remain the people of Hashem, because our souls are essentially a glimmer of G-d Himself. At our very essence we contain a spark of Divinity.⁸

The Jewish people declare, "אני ישנה ולבי ער." Although it may seem as if I am sleeping – I am not doing any mitzvos - my heart is awake; because my heart is Hashem himself. "צור לבבי וחלקי אלקים לעולם", 'G-d is forever the rock of my heart and my portion.'

The Esrog, the פרי עץ הדר - beautiful fruit of the tree - is symbolic of Hashem, who is "עוז והדר לבשת יב", clothed in beauty and strength.

Each of the four species we shake on Sukkos corresponds to another organ. The Esrog corresponds to the heart and the heart of the Jewish people is Hashem. Therefore, we cannot disconnect from Him.

The seven weeks from Tisha B'Av until Rosh Hashana are referred to as the ז' דנחמתא, seven weeks of consolation, because every week we read a passage of consolation from the prophet Yeshaya.

The first week, we read, "נחמו, נחמו עמי, יאמר אלקיכם. דברו על לב ירושלים" – Be consoled My people, G-d says. How? Speak about the heart of the Jewish people⁹; tell them who their heart is. Although all they see are ruins, their destruction is not complete, nor forever.

Because the heart of the Jewish people is Hashem Himself.

⁷ The last three words of the Torah are לעיני כל ישראל. These words, says Rashi, refer to the breaking of the Luchos, which annulled our marriage contract with Hashem. Is our relationship with Hashem over? Did Hashem exchange his Terumah?

No. You have to begin again from the beginning of the Torah, בראשית ברא אלקים. Rashi explains that this means that Hashem created the world for the sake of ראשית, the first of His crop. This refers to the Jewish people who are ראשית תבואתו. If as a marriage our relationship fails, it isn't over. It goes deeper and deeper and deeper.

⁸ The very essence of a Jew is completely G-dly. A sinner is biblically subject to forty lashes. However, the Sages abolished one lash, so he is only subject to thirty-nine lashes. The forty lashes correspond to the forty days of the creation of an embryo. Through sinning, he violated the forty days in which G-d created him. Why then did the Sages abolish one lash?

Our sages understood that his sin does not touch the first day of his creation - his G-dly essence can never be tainted.

⁹ על can also mean 'about.' It is used this way in Melachim 5:13 – וידבר על העצים etc. The Jewish people can be referred to as Yerushalayim.

כעין שנים אוחזין בטלית שנעשו שותפין בחלק האמצעי - עיין נצח ישראל, פ"ב א

אבות דרבי נתן ב

פרק מ"ט ג

ברכות דף ל"ב ע"ב ד

ירמיהו ב:ב ה

הושע ב:כא ו

פסיקתא דרב כהנא א' סימן ה' ז

סוכה דף ל"ב ע"א ח

ביאור באריכות במהר"ל נצח ישראל פרק א' ב' ט

מדרש שיר השירים י

תהלים עג:כו יא

תהלים קד:א יב