A MOUNTAIN, A FIELD, A HOUSE

That good mountain, and the Levanon. Everyone called the place a mountain. Avraham called it a mountain, as it says (Bereishis 22:14): “On God’s mountain He will be seen.” David referred to it as a mountain, as it says (Tehillim 24:3): “Who will ascend to the mountain of God?” Yishayahu called it a mountain, as it says (Yeshayahu 2:2): “And it shall be at the end of days that the mountain of the house of God shall be established at the top of the mountains.” - Yalkut Shimoni (816)

Our Sages also tell us (see Rashi, Bereishis 28:17) that there were other references to the place where the Shechinah resided. Avraham called it a mountain, Yitzchak called it a field, and Yaakov called it a house.

In Ateres Mordechai, Rabbi Mordechai Rogow elaborates on these different designations. A mountain rises majestically above its surroundings. A mountain symbolizes a place of notable heights and significant achievement. So it is with those who climb the ladder of spiritual ascent to exceptional degrees, for they stand above the average man in their stature and achievement. King David lauds these individuals as he proclaimed (Tehillim 24:3): “Who will ascend to the mountain of God?”

A field is a place that is essential for everyone. People would die from starvation without the vegetation and grains that are grown there. A house, however, is even more necessary for each person in order to live. After all, if any one person does not own a field, he can still obtain his sustenance from others who grow the staples of his diet. However, the shelter of a house is something which every person must have for himself.

At the time that Avraham lived, the concept of worship of God was not universally accepted. Har HaMoriah was named accordingly, for it was the mountain from which Torah teaching was disseminated. People looked upon the lessons of Avraham as emanating from a high and lofty, almost inaccessible, source. Those few individuals who had made the climb to the mountain learned the moral and ethical lessons, and the multitudes watched from afar by observing them.

Time passed, and these ideas began to take root. People became familiar with the concept of an omnipotent Creator of the world. Now, during the lifetime of Yitzchak, people began to realize that the ethical demands of such a realization were not so remote or unthinkable to adapt to their lives as an inaccessible mountain. It was now recognized as something essential for each person to experience directly. It was no longer possible to rely upon the few individuals to set their example and to influence everyone else. Everyone needed to familiarize himself personally with Torah and fear of Heaven. The mountain of Moriah was now looked upon as being a field.

Finally, during the days of Yaakov, the moral and ethical teachings of Avraham and Yitzchak were now familiar to all. These teachings were a common and necessary component of everyone’s life, just like a “house”, which is something that every person utilizes.

This gradual shift and series of developments have repeated themselves over the past one hundred and fifty years in the Jewish world. At one time, people
considered the gathering of young men into the major yeshivos as a “mountain”, in that they were places where only the elite studied. The general community felt as if they had no place there. The typical Jew might have felt that he could maintain his yiddishkeit simply by enjoying the spirit of observance that was felt in the streets and markets. However, we now see that the yeshivos serve as bastions of spiritual strength even to the common man. They are no longer mountains, but they are rather as fields and homes, in that they are essential to everyone. They not only serve to contribute to individuals developing into Torah giants, but they also assist every family and every member of the community to become sincere and educated Jews in the service of Hashem.

THE STRENGTH TO SEE ONLY GOOD

It is quite evident that if Moshe’s prayer would be answered and he would be allowed to cross the Jordan into Eretz Yisrael, then this would also enable him to merit seeing the Land. Why, then, did Moshe specifically mention that he wished not only to cross the river into the Land, but also that he be able “to see the good Land”?

Sefer Ohel Torah explains that the lesson we see from here is very potent. While it was obvious that Moshe would see the Land once he would cross over and enter the Land, yet, Moshe prayed that he merit to see the good of the Land. In fact, it is always appropriate for a person to pronounce a prayer that he have the strength and vision always to see the positive aspects of all that Eretz Yisrael has to offer. In fact, everyone should strive to see the best in other people and in every situation he experiences.

We should follow this lesson of Moshe and daven that we maintain the insight to perceive the best of Eretz Yisrael under all circumstances.

LESSONS FROM THE LUCHOS

Moshe Rabbeinu emphasizes that the Ten Commandments were written out on two separate tablets of stone. Therefore, we must assume that the fact that they were written in such a way was not simply a trivial fact, but it was an integral part of his message. What is the significance of splitting them up into two groups of five?

In his Sefer Oznaim LaTorah, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin notes that, in essence, the first tablet serves as a prerequisite for the second tablet. One must firmly establish the moral structure inculcated by the first five commandments in order to accept the moral basis to heed the commands of “do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, and do not covet”. As long as there is no higher authority, no absolute determinant of human behavior, then all of the laws dealing with inter-human relationships (bein adam l’chaveiro) become the function of popular whim or the opinion of some demagogue who can define the morals and ethics of society according to his own logic, which is invariably tainted as it is influenced by his thirst for control over others.

“The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God.” (Tehillim 111:10) Only through a thorough acceptance of Hashem not only as Creator of all existence, but also as Arbitor of reward and punishment and the hand behind all historical events, can one prepare himself to accept the laws on the second tablet according to the dictates of the Torah. Even the focus of the fourth and fifth comandments, keeping the Shabbos and honoring one’s parents, can be seen in this light.

The Torah commands parents to train their children in keeping the laws of Shabbos (Devarim 5:14): “You shall not do any work – you, and your son and your daughter”, to be part of the process of the Mesorah from Mount Sinai. Similarly, the children are to look towards their parents with a respect that enables them to receive the instruction from them. Only through proper fear and awe of Hashem, together with proper education in the mitzvos, can a person be truly prepared to fulfill the commandments featured on the second tablet.
Beware for yourselves lest you forget the covenant of God, your Lord, that He has sealed with you, and you make yourselves a graven image of a likeness of any thing, which God, your Lord, has commanded you.” Devarim 4:23

And God commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you shall perform them in the land to which you cross, to take possession of it.” Devarim 4:14

Mitzvah observance together with genuine yir'as shomayim has the ability to affect the very nature of a person.

And you shall love God your Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your possessions.” Devarim 6:5

This translation of the phrase “כלשכיכם את הנפשותיכם” is understood in the Tanchuma (Ki Savo, 1) to mean that Moshe was to make and fashion the Jews themselves in some manner. What does this mean?

Sefer MiRosh Amanah explains that fulfillment of the will of Hashem must be something that is natural and comfortable for a person. He should become accustomed to doing that which the Torah demands from him, and even considering any action which is contrary to halachah should be objectionable and unacceptable to him. When a person makes a commitment to accept the yoke of heaven upon himself, he is transformed as a new person, whose entire being is different than one who does not bear this title. Moshe Rabbeinu proclaimed that the mission of the Jews was to be fashioned into new people, ones who incorporated the mitzvos of the Torah as a natural expression of their personalities. This, in turn, influenced their character, as mitzvah observance together with genuine yir’as shomayim has the ability to affect the very nature of a person.

This is also the underlying concept of לשבש בשם. When a person expresses an initial willingness to listen intently, this gesture in and of itself brings in its wake the invariable outcome in the realm of action and compliance. This is the.realization. This, in turn, leads a person to yearn to understand and seek a complete appreciation of the meaning of his actions. This, then, is the further aspect of לבש שם which we seek.

FULL OF VITALITY

The forming of an image mentioned here is actually something which Hashem commanded us not to do. Why does the verse seem to state the reverse?

The Kotsker Rebbe notes that a graven image or a form or picture is something which replicates a living creature or natural body, such as an animal or planet. This, by definition, merely represents the item itself, but it is not the item itself. The image is lifeless and static, unlike the original and genuine item it mimics.

This, then, is the message of the Torah. Do not take the mitzvos of the Torah and fashion them into lifeless and meaningless graven images and forms or mere pictures. The observance of a mitzvah should be an activity filled with vitality and vibrancy. It should always be a genuine expression of emotion and devotion, and never a thoughtless and habitual movement.

UTILIZING THE YETZER HARA

The translation of the phrase “לכללך לבך” – “With all you heart” – means with your two impulses, your evil inclination – as well as your good inclination. -- Berachos 54a

How can the yetzer hara be utilized in one’s worship of Hashem? Is this not the vehicle by which a person is steered away from Hashem? Rather, explains Yad Yechezkel, it is through our familiarity with the yetzer hara that we come to the realization that we have plenty of work to do. We realize that we have a sublime soul, whose source is from the most holy heavens, and together with it we must contend with the body, which is rooted in the very soil upon which we tread. This material element of our being tends to drag us down and crave basic...
mundane pleasures. While all other creatures function according to their instincts, human beings often act in ways which are counter-productive to their spiritual well-being. By acknowledging this aspect of our being, we can be alert and carefully plan our ways to remain focused.

For example, two of the most self-destructive physical drives are those of jealousy (יהוה) and covetous envy (יהיה). To illustrate how dangerous these traits can be, the Sma''g brings a parable. A king had two subjects brought before him, one who possessed the selfish trait of jealousy, while the other was infected with envy for what anyone else had. Neither one was capable of compromising his character. The king presented them with a challenge. One of them could ask for whatever he desired, and the king would grant his request. However, the other would automatically be given a double portion of whatever the first one asked. It was up to them to decide who would go first. Now, the one who was gripped with jealousy refused to ask for anything, because although he could ask for millions and receive it, he could not tolerate the thought of the other having double of what he would get. He was unwilling to ask for anything for himself, knowing that it meant that the other person would receive so much.

The envious one also felt paralyzed by the king’s offer. Although he was oblivious to the possessions of the other person, he was blinded with an unbearable desire that the double amount should be his. This standoff continued until the covetous one insisted that the jealous one make the first request. The jealous person, unable to fathom the other getting more than him, turned the tables and pronounced his request. “I hereby ask that the king remove one of my eyes!” The result of his wish meant that the covetous one would have both of his eyes blinded! This standoff continued until the covetous one insisted that the jealous one make the first request.

This example clearly demonstrates how self-destructive these qualities really are. Without exercising proper discipline, man has the tendency to be controlled by these desires. The mission of man is to acquire fear of heaven, and thereby to develop a refined character and to perform noble actions, and to direct his ways in a manner which is most beneficial for him and for the world.

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TU B’AV – THE END OF SUMMER

From here [the fifteenth of Av] and onwards, one who adds [more time to Torah study at night] will add [to his life], and one who does not add [more time to Torah study at night] shall be gathered. - Gemara Ta’anis 31

Rav Moshe Isserles, the Rema (Yoreh De’ah 246:23), cites this Gemara as halachah. Shulchan Aruch makes a more general statement regarding Torah study at night. Shulchan Aruch writes that one who wishes to merit the crown of Torah should be careful not to waste even one night by sleeping, eating, drinking or participating in idle chatter. Rather, one should be involved with conversations of wisdom and Torah study. Rav Yehoshua Falk Katz, the Perisha, explains (ibid.) that one is obligated to study Torah at night even during the short summer nights. Although the Gemara in Eruvin (65a) states that night was created for sleeping, nonetheless, the Gemara does not mean that nighttime is not a time to study Torah. Rather, it means that during the summer, although much of the night is spent sleeping, one is certainly obligated to make time to study Torah as well.

Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 238:1) also writes that one should be more careful regarding learning at night than one is with regard to learning during the day. Mishnah Berurah (ibid., #1) cites a number of statements of Chazal that emphasize the importance of studying Torah at night. For example, the Gemara in Menachos (110a) states that scholars who engage in Torah study at night are considered as if they are involved in the offering of korbonos. Similarly, the Gemara in Tamid (32) writes that the Divine Presence stands opposite those who study Torah at night.

Rav Yeshayah HaLevi Horowitz, the Shelah, notes that the Torah one studies at night will endure longer than Torah studied during the day. Rav Yaakov Chaim Sofer, the Kaf HaChaim adds that one hour studied before morning is worth many hours of Torah study during the day.

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When reciting a brachah, one should be mindful of the meaning of the words which he is saying and should recite it slowly and deliberately. B'diavad, if a person recited a brachah without being mindful of the meaning of the words, the brachah is, nevertheless, valid. One should not talk to a person while he is reciting a brachah so that the brachah can be made with the proper intent. One must also enunciate the words of a brachah clearly and distinctly. In many cases, if words are deleted, or slurred to the extent that whole syllables are not pronounced, the brachah is not valid. It is especially important to enunciate God's Name – “A-do-noy” – correctly, with the accent on the third syllable.

God’s Name may not be said as written, “Yud Kay Vav Kay”, which signifies, “He was, He is, and He will always be.” It is recited “Adonoy”, which signifies “Master of all”. Many poskim rule that upon saying this Name of God one must be mindful of both meanings of His Name – “He was, He is, and He will always be” and “Master of all”. Some poskim rule that it is sufficient to have in mind “Master of all”. When reciting the word “Elokeinu” – “Our God”, one should have in mind that He is all-mighty, all-capable, and all-powerful. One must recite a brachah loud enough so that one hears himself say the entire brachah. B'diavad, if a brachah was whispered so quietly that he could not hear it, as long as the words were actually recited, it is valid. However, if one merely formulates the brachah in his mind without actually reciting the words, it is not valid, according to most opinions. If, however, one is unable to recite a brachah audibly (for example, if one has laryngitis), according to some poskim one is permitted to formulate a brachah in his mind without reciting the words.

Questions for Thought and Study
1. What are the four conditions for נטולות (prayer) to be accepted? See Ohr HaChaim 3:23
2. How is the sin of idol worship treated more severely than other sins? See Ohr HaChaim 4:3
3. How can one be considered as if he is serving false gods just by living somewhere? See Ramban 4:28
4. What are the varying degrees of darkness indicated in the phrase יֵמָעַר וְשָׁעָר וְחָסְרָךְ (literally: “darkness, cloud, and thick cloud”) mentioned in Pasuk 4:11? See Malbim 4:11
5. What fear caused part of Bnei Yisrael to worship the Golden Calf? See Ohr HaChaim 5:26
6. Which letter in יֵשָׁר represents why Bnei Yisrael are a perfect fit for receiving the Torah? See Ba’al HaTurim 6:4
7. What do the dots on top of the letter ג’ in עֲקֵבָנִים (“when you get up”) represent? See Ba’al HaTurim 6:7

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LIKUTEI PESHATIM HAS TORAH CONTENT - PLEASE TREAT IT RESPECTFULLY

Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Samber, Managing Editor

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AEI PESHTAM HAS TORAH CONTENT - PLEASE TREAT IT RESPECTFULLY

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By Mrs. Barbara Eisenberg and Mrs. Deborah Barnes in memory of their mother, Mrs. Betty Rosenberg, on the occasion of her yahrtzeit on 11 Av.

By the Karesh and Amster family, remembering their beloved son, father, brother and uncle, Avi, on his fourth yahrtzeit on the 13th of Av. He is missed every day. May his memory be for a blessing.

By Ilene & Phil Finkel in loving memory of our dear mother, grandmother & great-grandmother, Malka, on the occasion of her 1st yahrtzeit on the 12th of Av. We love her and miss her. She is always in our hearts. May your neshama have an aliyah.

In beloved memory of Paul Rosenberg, on the occasion of his sixth yahrtzeit on 13 Av. He was an outstanding husband to Doris, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and leader in the Jewish community. Love from Elaine & Mark, Debbie & Ira, Sharon & Seymour, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

By Alida and Daniel Harris; Tye & Nikki, Gemma, and Baer; Marmina & Eli; and Dodi, and the Feld family, in loving memory of our mother and grandmother, Miriam Herzberg, on the occasion of her 27th yahrtzeit on 13 Av - August 3, 2020. May her memory be for a blessing.

By Rabbi Dr. Avraham Isenberg, and Rabbi Dr. & Mrs. Yacov Isenberg, and their families, in beloved memory of Paul Rosenberg.

By Rabbi Dr. Avraham Isenberg, and Rabbi Dr. & Mrs. Yacov Isenberg, and their families, in loving memory of their beloved father and grandfather, HaRav Zvi Isenberg, on the occasion of his twenty-first yahrtzeit on 13 Av.

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Answers:
1. One should pray like a pauper, with humility. One should also invoke Hashem’s attribute of mercy. Thirdly, he should pray at a time that is opportune for prayer. Lastly, a person should be explicit and clear in what he desires when praying.
2. Idol worship is punished even for the thought of doing this sin. Those who considered doing the worship of Baal Peor were punished with those who actively did it.
3. According to Ramban, when it says אנק Prevention ("There you will serve gods"), the Torah is telling us that when one lives outside of Eretz Yisrael, it is as if he worships false gods (Kesuvos 10b).
4. There are three levels behind which the שוכן (fire) of Hashem that is mentioned in Pasuk 4:12 is hidden. The fire is completely hidden behind שוכן and its innermost covering. The second level is שוכן, which covers the fire of Hashem, but some light still escapes. שוכן is a scattered cloud and the outermost covering. Through שוכן, Hashem’s fire can be seen but it is blurry and unclear. Moshe was able to see Hashem’s fire without any barriers. Bnei Yisrael saw Hashem’s fire only through שוכן, which was unclear, as they couldn’t handle Hashem’s direct image.
5. When Moshe was returning from Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael were afraid to see the fire. The Ramban explains that they would have no intermediary to hear from Hashem. (Some say that the calf spoke through the power of sorcery.)
6. The large letter ד (numerical value of 70) represents the 70 names of Bnei Yisrael and the 70 names of the Torah, and Torah is explained in 70 ways. (It also separates us from the 70 nations.)
7. One should get up every day and say 100 berachos (the value of ד) throughout the day.

Prepared by Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand, Editor, and Mrs. Naomi Samber, Managing Editor

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