

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy" a, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



אמרות שמשון

The Miracle of the Splitting of the Sea Occurred Through the Merit of Moshe

“And Moshe said: ‘The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand men on foot...’” (Bamidbar 11:21)

Our Sages said in the Gemara (Sotah 12b): Moshe said to Israel, “For my sake, all of you were saved.”

The Tosafot (ibid., under the heading “Bishvili”) questioned this, arguing that the opposite seems true: it was because of Moshe that Pharaoh issued the decree, “Every son who is born, you shall cast into the river” (Shemot 1:22), since Pharaoh’s astrologers saw that the end of Israel’s savior was destined to be through water.

The Tosafot answered that Moshe was the first to be cast into the Nile. That is to say, once Moshe was placed in the Nile, the Egyptians saw through their divination that the future redeemer of Israel whom they feared so much had already been delivered to the water, and so they canceled the decree. It turns out, then, that because he was cast into the river, the decree was nullified.

Yet, seemingly, a difficulty remains: even if in the end no other children died, the entire decree still began because of Moshe. If so, the question stands: how can Moshe praise himself by saying, “For my sake, all of you were saved”?

It can be explained that Moshe’s intention was to tell them that it was precisely because of him that that specific decree was enacted, and that was the very reason all the Children of Israel were saved from Egypt. If the Egyptians had not executed that decree, HaKadosh Baruch Hu would not have punished them with a corresponding measure, drowning them in the sea. Without that, the Children of Israel would never have been considered truly saved from the Egyptians. As the Tosafot Yom Tov wrote (Pesachim, Ch. 10, Mishnah 6), Israel was not fully liberated from Egypt until the Egyptians drowned in the sea, in accordance with the verse (Shemot 14:30): “And Hashem saved Israel on that day from the hand of Egypt”—meaning they were saved precisely “on that day.”

And it was regarding this that the Tosafot questioned: how can Moshe boast that they were saved thanks to him from the Egyptians, if the decree caused children to be thrown into the Nile? They answered that Moshe was the first to be thrown in, and after that, they did not continue throwing other children; thus, it turns out that no child of Israel died from this decree.

Therefore, Moshe can indeed say that thanks to him, the Children of Israel were saved from the Egyptians, since because of him, the great miracle of the Sea of Reeds occurred, where the Children of Israel were completely and finally liberated from Egypt.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Behaalotecha, Art. 5)

The Humility of Moshe

“And the man Moshe was very humble, more than any man upon the face of the earth.” (Bamidbar 12:3)

It is worth noting that it would have sufficed to say, “more than any man upon the earth”; the phrase “the face of” seems superfluous.

It can be explained in the following manner: the term “adam” (man) is named after its relationship to the “adamah” (earth), and seemingly alludes to two opposing concepts. On one hand, it points to the strength and harshness of pride, hard like the earth. But on the other hand, it alludes to humility and lowliness, like the earth

upon which everyone steps and walks.

In reality, however, the strength and hardness of the earth are found primarily in its interior and its depths, where the ground is compact and solid; whereas the exterior part of the earth, called “the face of the earth,” is the part upon which everyone steps and is not nearly as hard.

And this is precisely what the verse wished to express with exactness: that Moshe was humbler than any other man who receives the name “adam” due to his humility—that is, for conducting himself like “the face of the earth,” upon which everyone steps and walks. Meaning, Moshe was humbler than all others who are humble, and not merely humbler than the rest of humanity, who are strong and proud.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Behaalotecha, Art. 6)

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Chapter 2 Mishna 2

“Rabban Gamliel, son of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, says: ‘Beautiful is the study of Torah together with derech erez (the way of the world, meaning an occupation or livelihood), for toil in both causes sin to be forgotten. And any Torah that is not accompanied by work will ultimately cease and lead to sin. And all those who labor together with [providing for the needs of] the community should labor with them for the sake of Heaven, for the merit of their forefathers assists them and their righteousness endures forever. And as for you, I consider you worthy of great reward as though you yourselves had accomplished it.’”

Torah without work leads to the sin of pride and arrogance

One must examine what sin is in the hands of one who occupies himself with Torah study, such that it is necessary for him also to exert himself in work so that the effort of both should cause that sin to be forgotten. And that which he said, that “any Torah that is not accompanied by work will ultimately cease,” is understood according to what was said in the *Gemara (Berachot 35b)*: “Many acted like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who maintained that one should engage solely in Torah and not in any labor, and they did not succeed.” But why does he additionally say, “and leads to sin,” meaning that it brings a person to transgression?

It may be explained that this refers to the sin of pride and arrogance, which, unfortunately, is found among Torah scholars. And since one who is appointed as a leader of the community is forbidden to engage in labor, the Tanna taught: “Beautiful is the study of Torah together with *derech erez*,” that is, together

with work, for exertion in both causes thoughts of pride to be forgotten. But a “Torah that is not accompanied by work,” and consists only of rabbinic authority, “will ultimately cease,” because positions of leadership bury those who hold them (causing an untimely death), and it “leads to sin,” namely, the grave sin of arrogance.

According to this, it becomes clear why at first he called it *derech erez* (“the way of the world”), and afterward referred to it directly as “work.” At first he spoke about the necessity of engaging in any kind of labor, as is the custom of the world, even in lowly work in order to earn a livelihood. Later he said: “And any Torah that is not accompanied by work,” referring even to a person who occupies an important and honorable position, that if he devotes himself only to his “important function” and does not complement it with Torah study, “it will ultimately cease and lead to sin.”

Those who occupy themselves with the needs of the community for the sake of Heaven will be saved from sin and their possessions will endure

It is necessary to understand why those who engage in communal affairs require two things: both that the merit of their forefathers assist them and that their righteousness endure forever.

It may be explained that the intention of the Tanna refers to communal leaders, regarding whom it was explained that such an appointment leads to sin. And since it is impossible for there not to be leaders, he therefore said: “And all those who labor,” that they should labor “for the sake of Heaven,” for if their intention is for the sake of Heaven, they will be saved from sin.

And since at times no one will be found who wishes to serve as a communal leader, because, being forbidden to engage in labor, he will fear losing his possessions, and furthermore, even if his possessions endure, merits might be deducted from him in Heaven, the Tanna added that “the merit of their forefathers assists them,” and thus their possessions will endure and they will find sustenance abundantly without needing to work. In this manner, “their righteousness endures forever,” and no merits will be deducted from them.

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