

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

### Mitzvos Become You

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As *B'nei Yisrael* took control of the real estate east of the Jordan River, it seems that they had to adapt—to learn the place this new material wealth should take in the context of serving Hashem. This factored into the negotiations between Moshe and the tribes of Reuven and Gad (see Rashi's commentary to 22:16), and it continued as the men of Menashe wrested Gilead from the Emorites.

Ya'ir ben Menashe... conquered their towns; he called them Chavos Ya'ir (the Towns of Ya'ir). And Novach... conquered K'nas and its villages; he called it—vayikra la—Novach, in his own name. (32:41-42)

The Hebrew word *la* here is missing its normal punctuation; usually there would be a dot in the last letter, and it would be pronounced *lah*, with an emphasis on the “h” sound. Rashi notes this and explains why, quoting R' Moshe haDarshan:

The name (Novach) didn't last. Therefore, the word [*la*] is weak, as if it were [the Hebrew word] *lo* [meaning “not”].

Ya'ir's conquest was still known as Chavos Ya'ir decades later, in the time of the Judges (see *Shof'tim* 10:3-4). Why didn't “Novach” stick, while “Chavos Ya'ir” did?

Rabbi Shimon Schwab, in *Ma'ayan Beis haSho'eiva*, says it all comes down to how Ya'ir and Novach related to their new possessions. Ya'ir correctly saw his land as belonging to him—but that was the extent of his association with it. Novach, on the other hand, identified so strongly with his holdings that he gave them his name, as if they were part of him. That

is not a Torah attitude and, like every falsehood, it didn't last.

However, the opposite is true of spiritual conquests. Obviously, a person can't become a shofar on Rosh Hashanah, or a lulav and esrog on Sukkos. But the *mitzvos* of the mind can affect a person in such a way that he is transformed.

Take Torah study, for example. A Torah scholar can grow to be holier than a Torah scroll.

“How foolish are [those] who rise in the presence of a Torah scroll but don't stand up in front of a great man!” (Talmud, *Makkos* 22b)

This is also true of prayer. Someone who *davens* with all his heart, whether in joy or despair, becomes more than just an instrument of prayer. As King David put it,

...But I am prayer. (*Tehillim* 109:4)

We have other opportunities to identify with *mitzvos*, too. When we refrain from anything the Torah forbids, we sanctify ourselves. When we keep the Shabbos, we become physical reminders that Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Someone who lives at peace with the people around him, who treats others the way the Torah expects, becomes again like King David, who wrote

...I am peace. (*Tehillim* 120:7)

*Mitzvos* and spirituality can become parts of us in ways that no material possession ever can—and they remain ours forever, after we've passed from the physical world to spend eternity with Hashem. 🌟

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH  
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

This week's parasha:

Q) When did half of the tribe of Menasheh get involved with living on the eastern side of the Jordan? Was it not only Gad and Reuven who asked to live there?

A) There are several approaches to this. Ibn Ezra maintains that the half of Menasheh originally were together with Reuven and Gad in requesting the eastern land, but being only part of a tribe, they were not mentioned originally. However, the *Yerushalmi* in *Bikkurim* understands that Moshe gave it to them without any request. Ramban understands that when Reuven and Gad realized that the area was larger than their needs, they asked who else may want to join them, and part of Menasheh expressed interest.

Q) There seems to be an emphasis that the cities of the *Levi'im* have an empty space outside the city and Rashi explains that it is there to beautify the city. Is there an explanation to why this is said specifically regarding the cities of the tribe of Levi as opposed to all cities of the land of Israel?

A) The reason it is discussed regarding the cities of the *Levi'im*

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## THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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may be because the prohibition to change the balance of empty space versus city is only true of the *Levi'im's* cities (according to one opinion in the *mishna Erchin* 33b). The *Chinuch* (*mitzva* 343) explains that the reason the Torah is more concerned with maintaining the beauty of the *Levi'im's* cities is because the tribe of Levi's role as spiritual leaders made their cities more public than the average city. An entertaining example of this is the house of the Brisker Rav (a Levi!) in Brisk. He would teach his students in his dining room and people would randomly enter and post public announcements on his dining room wall! 🤖

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to [parasha@cincykollel.org](mailto:parasha@cincykollel.org). Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

Yaakov was always impressed by the punctuality of Chanoch, another member of his Kollel. Chanoch was not only punctual, but he never seemed to waste a second the entire day, and Yaakov wondered how he was able to stay so driven. Finally catching Chanoch on the way out of Kollel one day he popped the question, "Chanoch," said Yaakov, "How are you able to stay so driven to never waste any of your time?" "Yaakov, you are aware that I was not religious when I was a teenager. When my friends and I heard that McDonald's was opening up in Israel we were so excited to try a cheeseburger, and we wanted one of the real ones, so we found out which McDonald's were going to be non-kosher. The closest one was two hours away, but we did it just to go try a cheeseburger! Later, after attending Arachim seminars, I decided I wanted to learn in a *yeshiva* every day but the closest one to where I lived was an hour away, and I was going back and forth about it until I remembered that I had driven two hours for a cheeseburger. That did it. If I could drive four hours in total for that, then I can drive an hour back and forth to learn G-d's Torah! Ever since then I'm driven by that thought. If you could drive for four hours to eat a cheeseburger, what are you capable of doing in order to learn Hashem's Torah! 🤖

## A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

The tribes of Gad and Reuven promised Moshe "*Nachnu na'avor chalutzim* – we shall cross over armed," at the head of the tribes entering the land of Israel to wage war. Ba'al Haturim brings that there are two other places the word "*Nachnu*" is used. One is when the brothers answered Yosef's accusation of them coming to spy out the land of Egypt by saying "*Kulanu b'nei ish echad nachnu* – We are all the sons of one man." The other is from *Eicha* where it states "*Nachnu pashanu umarinu* – We have transgressed and rebelled." The connection, explains Ba'al Haturim, is that either we are all as one, as sons of one man, or we will have transgressed! 🤖



## THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

### FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST RAMCHAL (PART VI)

Upon his arrival in Amsterdam in the spring of 1736, Ramchal was warmly received by the Sephardic *kehillah* and was soon appointed as a teacher in the *yeshiva* of Amsterdam. Although his students thirsted for knowledge in *kabbala*, Ramchal faithfully kept his promise and refused to utter a word. Despite this, Ramchal's opponents didn't rest. They demanded that the box of manuscripts in the possession of Rabbi Bassan be destroyed, lest they find their way into the wrong hands. Rabbi Bassan was devastated by the thought that the holy writings of his dear student might be destroyed and searched for another rabbi who would look over the documents and publicly declare their authenticity and sanctity. Unfortunately, none of the rabbis accepted responsibility to review Ramchal's writings, and with the consent of Ramchal, the chest arrived at the home of Rabbi Yakov Paparsh in Frankfurt am Main in the fall of 1736. Several months later, in the beginning of 1737, Rabbi Yakov Paparsh burned a selection of Ramchal's writings and buried the rest in an unmarked location. Evidently, the Divine willed that these writings should not survive and enlighten the world of Torah.

Meanwhile, although Ramchal had lost many of his cherished manuscripts, he settled into a somewhat normative life in Amsterdam and eventually brought his parents there as well. During his eight years in Amsterdam (1736-43), Ramchal authored and published his two most renowned works: *Mesilas Yesharim* and *Derech Hashem*. In 1743, Ramchal, together with his wife and their only son, decided to move to Eretz Yisrael. Almost nothing is known of these last years of Ramchal's life besides that he initially settled in the port city of Acco. Whether he travelled the country and visited the holy cities of Jerusalem, Chevron, Teveria, and Tzfas remains unclear. However, the Polish rabbi and historian Rabbi Ahron Walden (died 1912), in his *Shem Ha-gedolim Hachadash* reports that Ramchal did in fact arrive in Jerusalem and was accorded great honor by the many rabbis who came out to greet him.

Approximately three years after their arrival, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, 1746, Ramchal and his family sadly perished in a plague which swept through Eretz Yisrael. Ramchal is buried next to the holy sage Rebbi Akiva in Teveria on a hilltop that overlooks the Sea of Galilee. 🤖