

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Comfort in Real Terms

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI BINYOMIN TRAVIS

The *navi* Yeshaya shares many beautiful expressions of consolation with a downtrodden, broken people in this week's *haftorah*. We are reminded that Hashem cares about all of us and is there to give us *chizuk* (strength). Although *Klal Yisroel* strays and suffers as a result, Hashem, through the voice of the *navi*, declares that He still cares about His nation to a degree that it is impossible for us to fathom.


So what are the practical takeaways of this reality for us in our service of G-d? Last week I had the opportunity to hear Rav Ephraim Eliyahu Shapiro speak at the annual Executive Directors Conference in New Jersey. He included in his remarks a Ba'al HaTurim at the beginning of this week's *parasha*. We know that Moshe *Rabbeinu* davened 515 *tefillos* (gematria *v'eschanan*) in an attempt to get Hashem to acquiesce to allowing him to enter *Eretz Yisroel*. What was the most powerful argument Moshe *Rabbeinu* put forth during these supplications? Says the Ba'al HaTurim, Moshe declared "*Chizakti es Yisroel*," I gave *Klal Yisroel* *chizuk*, encouragement, for their upcoming battles and, as a result, Moshe appeals for entry into the land. Rav Shapiro expressed passionately "I don't understand - if Moshe had one chance to make an argument to enter the Holy land, seemingly he had more impressive accomplishments to bring to the fore at this time. Why would he choose "*Chizakti es Yisroel*"? What's so great about that?"

The Ba'al HaTurim, continued Rav Shapiro, is sharing with us a very important rule in life. Moshe chose to highlight his being *m'chazaik* *Yisroel* because *chizuk* is something everyone needs and something everyone can give. Don't believe, said Rav Ephraim, a person when he tells you he is above the need for *chizuk* - there is no such thing.

Rav Shapiro shared a story. Many years ago, a doctor from New Jersey came over to him and related that each year his elderly mother would

call Rav Moshe Feinstein on Erev Pesach to ask him whether she could take a certain medication. He patiently took and answered her call (to the affirmative) about the same medication every year for 20 years. As she advanced in age, she became more forgetful and one year she forgot to call altogether. Late in the afternoon that Erev Pesach the phone rang and when this woman picked it up she heard, "This is Moshe Feinstein. I didn't hear from you this year and I was getting worried, is everything okay?" That, said Rav Ephraim, is what it means to be *m'chazeik* *Yisroel*.

I was recently at a *shiva* where one of the family members shared with me the incredibly powerful legacy of *chizuk zeh l'zeh* (strengthening one another). When the *nifteres* (deceased), as a young woman in Europe, was taken with her two sisters to the camps by the Nazis Y"SS, she protected and was *m'chazeik* her sisters in the cattle cars to enable their survival. At work in the fields the three siblings would be *m'chazeik* each other so the labor would be bearable. Finally at the end of the war they were forced to participate in one of the Nazi's infamous death marches where if you stopped you were immediately shot. This young woman was suffering from typhus at the time, and any chance of survival seemed impossible; somehow, her two sisters were able to carry her through the ordeal, and she not only survived but went on to establish a family that has changed a community.

Mah Hu Af Atah - As G-d is, so do we strive to be - if Hashem chose the next seven weeks as the time of the year to give us chizuk, then perhaps the lesson we are supposed to take out of it is a push within ourselves to find ways to strengthen and build up those around us. May we be able to tap into the tremendous power each and every one of us has to do this, and as a result merit to bring to fruition, in the context of Avodas Hashem, the words of Yeshaya in the next perek of the sefer, One man will assist his friend and to his brother he will say be strong! 

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCKOK PREIS

This week's *parasha*:

Q) When the Torah describes *Tefilin*, the term for the *shel rosh* (head tefillin) is "*totafos*." I was told that this term refers to "four [compartments]" but not in Hebrew, rather in other languages. Is this true? And if so, why would Torah use a foreign language?

A) Rashi quotes Rabbi Akiva's statement that "*totafos*" is a conglomerate of "*Tat*" and "*Fas*" which both mean "two" in languages known as Katfi and Afriki respectively. Thus, the combined terms yield $2 + 2 = 4$. Which brings us to your being understandably perplexed at the Torah utilizing foreign languages. The Be'er Mayim Chayim address this concern. [Note: There are multiple works by this title; the text we are referencing was written by the brother of the *Maharal*]. He writes that our Sages had a tradition that at the time of the Tower of Babel elements of the original *Lashon Hakodesh* (Holy Language) were blended into the newly developed languages. Sometimes, when encountering uncommon words, the Sages looked at word usage in those other languages to recall the meanings of these, originally, *Lashon Hakodesh* terms.

Last week's *parasha*:

Q) It is often mentioned that Moshe's rebuke in the beginning of the *parasha* is veiled to protect the honor of his audience. Yet we find some very direct rebuke immediately following!? Why?

A) The *Maharal* offers two answers.

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

1) When addressing multiple infractions, Moshe uses a softer, more indirect method. That is not necessary when he is giving rebuke for singular offences.

2) Moshe wants to avoid starting on a negative note. Hence the opening remarks don't include direct chastisement. That is saved for later.

Note: Thank you to Rabbi Y Lomner for directing me to this *Maharal*. 🙏

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. 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

In the midst of the ghetto in Szegeed, Hungary, a *bris milah* was performed on a baby boy, already orphaned of his father, in a hidden room that was used as a *shul*. And despite the fact that this boy was now entering the terrifying world of living as a Jew in the darkest of times, tears of joy streamed down the faces of those present as everyone wondered how many more times would they be privileged to witness the performance of this *mitzvah*. In the spring of 1944, the young child was sent along with his mother and the rest of the ghetto to the concentration camp in Strasshof, Austria. There was a Hungarian man named Rudolf Israel Kastner who had a relationship with the Nazi officers in

Strasshof and would, as much as he could, bribe them to release Jews or at least not kill them wantonly. One time Kastner visited the Strasshof and paid enough to release twenty-four Jews. Kastner wanted the Jews who were released to be Jewish leaders. Many Chassidic Rebbes found their way out of the hands of death on the two trucks Kastner had rented to spirit the released Jews away, but one person declined his chance to leave. The Rav of the city of Strasshof, Rav Tzvi Hirsch Cohen, wanted someone else to take his seat. The person he suggested was the young widow and her baby boy who had received a *bris* in Szegeed. Rav Cohen had met her through his children who had lived in Szegeed and had been among those who had been present at the *bris*. The young widow was determined to show her thanks to Hashem and Rav Cohen for giving her the chance to escape. She promised herself that she would spend the rest of her life aiding and assisting Torah scholars to whatever extent she was able. She made good on her promise. She would go on to marry another person whose life was saved on those trucks out of the concentration camp, the Stropkover Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mender Halberstam, helping him rebuild his community in New York after the war. The Stropkover Rebbe would pass away, but she was not done. She then married the Tzelemer Rebbe, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Greenwald, and continued on in supporting her new husband in his role as a leader of men, and eventually the baby that was given a *bris* in the hidden *shul* in the ghetto of Szegeed, when hardly any dared dream of a brighter day, would take on the mantle of his step-father as the leader of the Tzelem community in New York. 🙏

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

Regarding the *passuk* in our *parasha* that states "you were shown to know that G-d is *Elokim* and there is no other besides Him," Ba'al Haturim points out that the word used by the Torah to mean you were shown, "*hareisa*," is used one other time in *Shemos* regarding the structure of the *mishkan* that was commanded to be made in the same form that, "*hareisa*," you were shown, on the mountain of Sinai. The connection, explains Ba'al Haturim, is that the "*hareisa*" of our *parasha* is explained with the other "*hareisa*." Meaning, where were the Jewish people shown that there is no other authority beyond G-d? At Mount Sinai G-d opened the heaven and celestial heights to reveal that there is none other besides Him. 🙏

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THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

THE FRANKISTS (PART II)

Jacob Frank was born to Leyb and Rachel Buchbinder in 1726. There are conflicting reports about Jacob Frank's birthplace. According to some chronicles Frank was born in the Podolian town of Korolowka. Regardless, shortly after his birth, his parents, who were steadfast Sabbatians and related to important Sabbatian leaders in Poland, migrated southward to the Ottoman Empire. There, amongst the Sephardim, Jacob earned the surname Frank (or Frenk) which loosely refers to those of European origin.

As a young teenager Jacob Frank wandered around the Ottoman Empire, spending time in Moldavia, Izmir, and Constantinople. In 1752, Frank married Hana of Nikopol (today in Bulgaria), daughter of a fellow named Rabbi Tova.

Rabbi Tova is presumed to have been an active leader of the Dönme, a sect of Islamic-Sabbatians who strongly believed in the abrogation of the Traditional Law. Accordingly, it was sinful to uphold the commandments of the Traditional Law and it was considered a *mitzvah* to violate its prohibitions, specifically the thirty-six prohibitions which are punishable by *ka'reis* (excision). The Dönme was established in 1683 when three hundred families converted to Islam in Solanika.

One year after his marriage, in 1753, Jacob Frank moved to Solanika where he joined the ranks of the Dönme. Frankist documents report that Frank merited "divine revelations" and quickly rose to the elite of the Dönme whose headquarters was in Solanika. Frank's presidency of the Dönme became official when its leaders proclaimed that the soul of Berukiah Russo, the Dönme's previous leader, entered the body of Jacob Frank. Despite this appointment, Frank was met with opposition from other factions of the Dönme in Solanika, and, as a result, Frank decided to return to his native Podolia.

Upon his return home, in December, 1755, Jacob Frank made contact with many key Sabbatian leaders in Podolia, amongst them the Shorr family. Elisha Shorr was a well-connected Sabbatian, and his three sons elected Frank as their leader. Upon securing this leadership position, Jacob Frank's reputation as a Sabbatian leader flourished. 🙏

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