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A KOSHER WAY OF EATING

by *Rabbi Yoni Mandelstam*

Many of the Jews who transition into Orthodoxy from less-observant backgrounds struggle with the Mitzvah of *Kashrut*. There is no doubt that giving up lobster and cheeseburgers is a necessary sacrifice to fully observe the Torah. However, this sacrifice is necessary because the Mitzvah of *Kashrut*, by its very nature, aims to differentiate and separate. Specifically, the Torah itself (VaYikra 11:47) concludes Parashat Shemini by stating that the laws of *Kashrut* require us "LeHavdil Bein HaTamei UVein HaTahor," "To separate between the pure and impure." Therefore, focusing on the proper "separation" between kosher and non-kosher food, as well as within the way we eat in general, is of the utmost importance.

Rashi (11:2 s.v. Zot HaChayah), citing the Midrash Tanchuma, notes that the Mitzvah of *Kashrut* ultimately stems from Hashem's love for the Jewish people. While the Hebrew word "Chayah" literally means "wild animal," it is also directly related to the word "Chayim" (life). Therefore, when the Torah tells us which "animals" may or may not be consumed, the Torah is also telling us how to better connect to "life itself." To highlight this message, the Midrash Tanchuma details a parable of a doctor who treats two patients very differently. The doctor gives no dietary restrictions to his deathly ill patient, but he gives much stricter dietary instruction to the healthy patient. The doctor expresses genuine concern for the healthy patient due to his potential for life. This Mitzvah of *Kashrut*, although limiting on one level, is ultimately liberating and beneficial in the long run for the Jewish people (the healthy patient). However, if the Mitzvah of *Kashrut* is intended to separate the Jewish people as beloved to God, surely we must focus on the way we consume Kosher food. Unfortunately, Kosher food is not always directly linked with "Kosher" eating habits.

It is no coincidence that the Mitzvah of *Kashrut* is found in the Parashah immediately following Pesach. After the Mitzvah of *Kashrut*, the prohibition of Chametz establishes the clearest dietary boundary. Does a week long break from Chametz have a positive influence on the way that we eat in general, or do we simply return to our normal eating habits? Perhaps, Parashat Shemini can remind us how to properly enjoy Chametz. Just as

there is a difference between Kosher and non-Kosher food, there is also a difference between proper and gluttonous eating of Kosher food. Interestingly, there is an entire chapter in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 170) devoted to the Halachot of proper etiquette during a meal. For instance, the head of the household should not be upset at the table (170:6). The Mishnah Berurah (170:18) explains that the guests and family members will be afraid to enjoy the meal, lest they incur the anger of the head of household. Additionally, the Shulchan Aruch prohibits one against eating too much food at one time (170:7), and children taking food before the parents have been served (170:12). As a child, my mother always taught me to clear my silverware and leftover food off the table when I was through with my meal. However, in addition to motherly advice, these are laws found in our Torah. The Shulchan Aruch specifically prohibits one from leaving half eaten food on the table (170:10) and the Mishnah Berurah explains that staring at others' leftovers is repulsive. Similarly, the Shulchan Aruch (170:17), writes that one should not leave empty cups on the table after drinking, and the Mishnah Berura explains that leaving dishes on the table is simply disrespectful.

These Halachot clearly demonstrates that the Torah not only commands us to eat Kosher food, but also it requires a respectful approach towards eating in general. Matzah represent a simple approach to eating; the basic flour and water represent a simplistic meal. Chametz, on the other hand, reminds us that food can be complex and creative. Now that we return to our regular menus we must internalize the message of the Matzah, so our Chametz can be consumed with the values of Matzah. The Torah specifically wants the Jewish people to be distinguished by the way we eat. Let us appreciate the connection between Parashat Shemini and Pesach, as we transition from Matzah to Chametz as a refined nation.

NADAV AND AVIHU: HASHEM'S JUSTICE

by *Akiva Sturm* ('19)

After the death of Nadav and Avihu, the Torah writes "*Hu Asher Diber Hashem Leimor BiKrovai Ekadeish Ve'Al Penei Kol Ha'Am Ekaveid VaYidom Aharon*," "This is what Hashem meant when he said: through those who are near me I will be sanctified and gain glory before all the people, and Aharon was silent" (VaYikra 10:3). Rashi (ibid sv. VaYidom Aharon) notes that "Kibeil Sachar Al Shtikato"; Aharon received a reward for remaining silent when his elder two sons died. So why were Elazar and Itamar, Aharon's younger two sons who were instructed by Moshe not to mourn, not rewarded as well? I heard the following answer from Rav Yosef Adler, the Rosh Yeshiva of TABC. Moshe's specific instructions to Aharon and his remaining sons were "*Al Tipra'u U'Vigdeichem Lo Tifromu VeLo Tamutu Ve'Al Kol Ha'Eidah Yiktzof*," "Do not bare your head and do not rend your clothes, lest you die and anger strike the whole community" (10:6). Even though it is

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The first part of the redemption is “*HaMa’aleh Etchem Mei’Eretz Mitzrayim*” – the physical freedom brought about through the Makkot and Kriat Yam Suf. It removed us from the spiritually corruption of Egypt. The second part of the redemption was “*LeHiyot Lachem Leilokim*” – Hashem’s selection of us as his chosen nation.

In Parashat Kedoshim, the Seforno again mentions that the Mitzvot were to separate us from impurity, and elaborates on the fact that the Mitzvot were to emulate Hashem. (VaYikra 19:2 s.v. Daber) The goal of reaching the level Kedushah to serve Hashem wasn’t just about being holy, but about having a meaningful existence in the presence of Hashem.

When we celebrate Yetziat Mitzrayim, it’s about more than just our freedom from slavery; otherwise, Pesach would just be called Chag Cheiruteinu. The holiday is called Pesach because Hashem passed over the Jewish homes during the 10th plague; He chose *us* as his first-born nation. As the Netivot Shalom said, Pesach was about becoming the Am HaNivchar. We commemorate Hashem’s choosing of us for this special relationship.

Egypt was a spiritual wasteland, as we know from the Ohr HaChaim, and many hold that we were on the 49th level of Tumah and had we sunk any lower, we would have never left. We, therefore, needed the first part of the redemption (physical), as formulated by the Netivot Shalom, and we also began the process of returning to the Midbar – an environment more conducive to spirituality.

Dayeinu is a classic Pesach song that extends Yetziat Mitzrayim far beyond just our materialistic freedom. Hashem chose us, and Dayeinu centers the story beyond our Exodus towards the Beit Hamikdash and towards our servitude of Hashem, because the real goal of Yetziat Mitzrayim was to become an Am Kadosh to serve Hashem. This is really the main point of the second part of the redemption as formulated by the Netivot Shalom – being Hashem’s chosen nation and serving Hashem.

The Omer helps us transition from Pesach to Shavuot; yet, it is more than just a count. It is also where we rectified each of the 49 levels that distanced us from holiness and Hashem. This was a necessary part of our Yetziyah before Matan Torah. The Kedushah culminates at Shavuot, at which point the Bnei Yisrael were able to serve Hashem as his Am HaNivchar, and accept His Torah to safeguard their purity and have a meaningful relationship with Him.

SEFER YONAH, PART I: TARSHISH

Co-Authored by Rabbi Chaim Jachter & Binyamin Jachter ‘17

The following article is the first part of a series on Sefer Yonah, presented by Rabbi Chaim Jachter and Binyamin Jachter. See next week’s issue of Kol Torah on Parashiyot Tazria and Metzora for Part II.

Tarshish, where is it? From the fact that Pasuk 3 names Tarshish as the place Yonah sought to flee, there must be some significance to this intended destination. In order to determine its significance we must first endeavor to discover where Tarshish is located. The fact that our Pasuk mentions Tarshish no less than three times adds to the urgency to discover an explanation.

Approach #1 – Rashi

Rashi (to Pasuk 3) writes that Tarshish is a sea. Targum Yonatan ben Uzziel follows this approach as well. According to this explanation, this indicates that Yonah does not care about the ship’s destination. Rather, he simply was desperate to flee the Land of Israel. Rashi cites a Midrash which presents a well-known Mashal (parable): A slave flees his master who is a Kohen and he runs to a cemetery, a Tamei (impure) place where his master is forbidden to enter. The master says I cannot retrieve you but I can send others to get you. Chutz LaAretz (outside Israel) is the Tamei place Yonah believes he can escape Hashem and the storm is the agent which is sent to recover the slave.

Approach #2 - Da’at Mikra (three options)

The Da’at Mikra is well-described at Wikipedia as “a series of volumes of Hebrew-language biblical commentary published by the Jerusalem-based Mossad Harav Kook and constitutes a cornerstone of contemporary Israeli Orthodox Jewish bible scholarship. The singularity of Da’at Mikra lies in its combination of a traditional outlook and the findings of modern research. The Da’at Mikra editors have sought to present an interpretation based primarily upon Peshat – the direct, literal reading of the text – as opposed to Derash. They do so by incorporating geographic references, archaeological findings and textual analysis, presenting a clear link between the commentary’s traditional approach and contemporary methodology”¹. Editors of the Da’at Mikra series include the following acclaimed scholars: Professor Yehuda Elitzur of Bar-Ilan University, the International Bible Contest champion and Bible scholar Amos Hacham, Rav Sha’ul Yisra’eli and Rav Mordechai Breuer.

Thus, Da’at Mikra is a perfect source to help us in our search for the location of Tarshish. Da’at Mikra notes that the word Tarshish refers to the sea² and thus a number of cities that lie near the sea are called Tarshish. It also notes that it is not clear which Tarshish is the one referred to in Sefer Yonah. It offers three possibilities: One is a Tarshish (or Tarsos) located one hundred and thirty kilometers northwest of Alexandria (located in the south of contemporary Turkey³). A second possibility is a city located on the southern coast of Spain, near the Straits of Gibraltar⁴. Da’at Mikra notes that some suggest a third possibility and identify the Tarshish of Sefer Yonah as a different city located along the Mediterranean coast.

¹ Wikipedia notes “There has been some suggestion that the Da’at Mikra’s dualistic approach reflects an underlying polemic against biblical criticism, without directly addressing the views and queries of bible critics but via a commentary aimed at debunking their methodology”.

² Da’at Mikra notes that in Greek the word Talsos means sea. Exchange the letter l with an r and one is left with the name of the city Tarsos, one of Da’at Mikra’s candidates for the identification of the Tarshish of Sefer Yonah.

Da’at Mikra notes that Targum Yonatan translates Tarshish as sea every time it appears in Tanach, when it refers to a location. It also notes that Onkelos translates the word Tarshish, one of the stones included in the Choshen (Shemot 28:20) as “Kerum Yama”, the color of the sea.

³ This city is described at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarsus>, Mersin. The classic Jewish historian Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 9:10:2) identifies Tarshish of Sefer Yonah with this city.

⁴ This city is called Tartessos, and is described at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tartessos>.

Why is the location important for us to know? Da'at Mikra explains that Yonah is heading in the opposite direction of Nineveh. Nineveh lies to the east of Israel where Yonah is located and Yonah attempts to escape to the west. If the location in Spain is accurate, this expresses the rebellion best because that was regarded as the farthest western point on earth during the time of Sefer Yonah.

Professor Simon - The Spain Option

Professor Uriel Simon argues for the Spain identification. He notes:

"In three different passages (Yishayahu 60:6-9, Yechezkeil 38:13 and Tehillim 72:10) the full geographical extent of the known world is delimited by Tarshish at one end and Sheva at the other. Given that the latter lies in the east (in the southern Arabian peninsula), at the end of the overland caravan route, the other must lie in the uttermost west, at the end of the maritime trade route".

Professor Simon argues that the threefold mention of Tarshish in Pasuk 3 stresses the point that Yonah "was not merely seeking to leave the Land of Israel by sea and flee to whatever destination the first ship might carry him, but in fact was trying to sail to the farthest possible point from his assigned destination". Indeed, the Spain option gives you the most clues. It's in the opposite direction of his mission, it's the most drastic of places to go, and gives him peace of mind that the status quo will continue to exist just as he wants

Supporting the Spain Option

Yonah most certainly presents throughout the Sefer as a character who goes to extremes. In both Perek 1 and Perek 4 makes crystal clear his willingness to die for his beliefs. Despite the great pressure placed on him in Perek 1 by both the storm and the sailors to repent, Yonah refuses to relent. In Perek 2 he does not call out to Hashem until he has spent three full days in the large fish. Chazal (Nedarim 38a) understand that Yonah paid the fare for the entire ship, expending an enormous sum to achieve his goals. Understanding Yonah as fleeing all the way to Spain is quite compatible with his temperament and personality.

Implications of the Spain Option

If we understand that Yonah fled all the way to Spain, the Ibn Ezra and Spain Peshat/literal explanation of the phrase "VaYitein Secharah", and he paid its fare is sensible. Chazal as quoted understand that "its fare" refers to Yonah paying for the entire ship's fare. Radak explains this as an expression of Yonah wishing to leave as soon as possible. Torah Academy students suggest it shows Yonah's desire to reduce the number of people he would expose to danger by his undertaking a journey which is likely to incur the wrath of God.

Ibn Ezra and Radak offer a literal explanation of "its fare" that Yonah paid for his and only his fare. The question one might ask why then does the Tanach record this seemingly trivial fact⁵. This is not a problem if one adopts the Tarshish as Spain option. A trip to Spain in ancient times took a year, as reported in Bava Batra 38a. Professor Simon explains this based on frequent stops

⁵ This question does not impose a problem for Ibn Ezra who understands that Diberah Torah KeLashon Bnei Adam, the Torah speaks as an ordinary person would and not every word carries profound significance.

at ports for supplies and trade. Such an ambitious adventure was made with expectations and hopes to make large profit. As such, Yonah would have had to expend a very large sum to pay for such a journey. Thus, recording Yonah's paying such a huge sum expresses his burning desire to flee as far away from Nineveh as possible at the time.

Another implication of the identification of Tarshish in Sefer Yonah as Spain is in regards to the cargo shed by the sailors in their attempt to save themselves from the storm (1:5). If the ship was destined for Spain it must have been loaded with an enormous and very expensive cargo. Thus, the shedding of such valuables must have not a matter taken lightly at all. This underscores the extreme danger in which the sailors felt and the profound relief upon their survival⁶.

Conclusion

According to Rashi, Yonah fleeing to Tarshish is all about avoidance but according to Da'at Mikra and Professor Simon it is about Yonah getting as far as possible away from Eretz Yisrael. Yonah seeks to do the exact opposite of what Hashem commands, as Yonah is a person of extremes. Yonah rarely rebels against Hashem, but when he does rebel against Hashem, it is done in the most intense manner possible.

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⁶ The shedding of the cargo must have significant spiritual import, otherwise, it is difficult to understand why it is mentioned in Sefer Yonah. The sailors made a great spiritual advance as part of their shedding their precious cargo. Some are so weighed down with very expensive items it prevents them from scaling and ascending the mountain of God (paraphrasing Tehillim 24:3). Rav Avraham Pam tells of a Rosh Yeshiva who visited a Talmid who amassed considerable wealth and lived in an opulent home. The Rosh Yeshiva noted the very expensive wall paper and bemoaned the fact that the time the Talmid could have invested to master Masechet Berachot or Masechet Ketubot, was devoted to amassing wealth to afford such costly furnishings. The sailors' shedding of the very expensive cargo certainly fits with the Rosh Yeshiva's perspective.