

א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

ה' תשרי תשפ"ד-9/22/2023

האזינו

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ה' The Infinite Mercy of ה'

By Ariel Jeselsohn

In this week's פרשה, פרשת האזינו, משה, בני ישראל, and tells them all the terrible things that will happen to them in the future, all in the form of a song. One of those curses/punishments is that in the פסוק which goes as follows: "אֶסְפֶּה עָלֵימוֹ רָעוֹת חֲצֵי אֲכֹלֶה-בָּם" - I will put misfortunes on them, and use up My arrows on them. At first glance, this seems like it is obviously a curse. However, רש"י, coming from the גמרא in סוטה, says otherwise. The גמרא in סוטה דף ט' עמוד א' asks: What does the פסוק mean when it says, "כִּי אֲנִי ה' לֹא שִׁנִּיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי יִעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם" for I am ה', unchanged, and you are the children of יעקב, you have not ceased to be? The גמרא then answers and says that "אֲנִי ה' לֹא" means that ה' never struck a nation and struck them again, meaning that ה' always defeated nations after the first blow, and never had to strike again. The גמרא then says that "וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי יִעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם" has the same meaning as the פסוק from our פרשה which I just quoted: "אֶסְפֶּה עָלֵימוֹ רָעוֹת חֲצֵי אֲכֹלֶה-בָּם", which means that ה's arrows which He will use on בני ישראל will be consumed, and used up, but nevertheless, בני ישראל will not be consumed and wiped out. Using this idea, רש"י says on this פסוק that the curse, according to the language of the punishment, implies a ברכה. That ברכה being that no matter what punishment ה' inflicts upon בני ישראל, they will survive.

רש"י adds to רש"י, and says that ה' punishes בני ישראל with so many different misfortunes, yet at the same time He gives בני ישראל the strength to outlast them all. רש"י is adding that בני ישראל are going to sin, and that is why ה' is punishing them in the first place. Nevertheless, ה' still loves us, so He gives us strength to outlast the punishment, and stay in existence. Even though we angered ה' through our sins, and we defied Him, ה' has mercy on us out of his love for the Jewish people.

This idea in רש"י and רש"י relates to the גמרא in עמוד ב' where גמרא there quotes the פסוק in ראה which says: "בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם", you are the children of ה' your G-d. Then the גמרא quotes the opinion of רבי מאיר, who learns from this פסוק that even when we do not act like בנים, which means with the will of ה', we are still considered בנים in the eyes of ה'. This means that ה' will be merciful towards us, like we ask ה' many times during סליחות to be merciful towards us "כרחם אב על בנים" - like a father has mercy on his sons. And to support his view, רבי מאיר quotes many פסוקים where it attributes negative characteristics to בני ישראל, and still calls them בנים in the same פסוק. The תורה even goes so far to say that even when בני ישראל do עבודה זרה, they are still considered בנים in the eyes of ה'. The fact that we are considered בנים to ה', no matter how bad of an עבירה we commit, shows the power of תשובה, and the רחמנות of ה'. No matter how bad of a sin we commit, it is never too late to do תשובה, and ה' will always forgive us. Even when it might seem like ה' is angry at us, and there is no chance for forgiveness, there is always a chance to do תשובה, and we should never give up, because ה's mercy is infinite.

Now, in the עשרת ימי תשובה, we are nearing יום כיפור, and we should try to seize every opportunity to do תשובה, and cry out to ה'. We should not think that since יום כיפור is right around the corner, it is too late to do תשובה, and that we have already been judged by ה'. No! We should still say סליחות with כוונה, and we should still Daven with all of our hearts, because no matter how many times we have sinned in the past, or no matter how deep of a hole we feel we are in, ה' will always have mercy on us if we do תשובה. And with that, I wish everyone a טובה חתימה, and we should all be זוכה to be written in the ספר חיים-The Book of Life.

משה's Final Speech

By Eitan Orkaby

In this week's פרשה, פרשת האזינו, one of the main themes is משה's introduction to praise ends by the 7th פסוק, and throughout the rest of שירה, משה recalls the great things ה' has done for בני ישראל. One of the recollections משה gives is, "He found you in a desert land in the wilderness and He surrounded you and gave you wisdom and protected you like the pupil of His eye." This פסוק is referring to ה' bringing us out of the wilderness of the מדבר into ארץ ישראל. The specific language of this פסוק sparks an important question: Why does משה use the language of ארץ מדבר instead of the classic מצרים?

According to the אור החיים, משה wasn't referring to just *any* ארץ מדבר that בני ישראל had encountered. He says that the מדבר in the פסוק is, in fact, referring to מצרים. The purpose of ארץ מדבר instead of מצרים is to reflect משה's view of what ארץ מצרים meant to the Jewish people. If ה' never took us out of מצרים, there would've been two main consequences: First of all, we would have become טמא, at the lowest level of the spectrum, and second of all, we would have been assimilated forever. מצרים is not a great place for Jews in terms of sustaining their identity without assimilating.

The פסוק continues, saying "ובתהו ילל ישמין." The זוהר writes that ובהו correlates to בני ישראל's lack of תורה knowledge (from ובוהו). When they were in ארץ מצרים, they weren't *just* in a physical desert, they were in a religious desert, lacking basic knowledge of תורה. They were completely disconnected from anything beneficial to their spiritual growth. The first thing He did was "יסבבנו", even during those difficult times ה' surrounded us. In the same place where we went down to a very low level, ה' struck מצרים with the מכות and therefore still had mercy on us. Even when בני ישראל were free from מצרים, they *still* had no knowledge of תורה. The second thing ה' did was "יבוננו", gave wisdom to בני ישראל. This wisdom is the תורה—the essence of knowledge—and with תורה we are protected like "יצרנהו כאישון עינו", the pupil of His eye. As the אור החיים puts it, the most protected body part is the eye.

These explanations teach us that no matter what level we are at with our תורה knowledge, ה' will always give us a chance to do תשובה. By learning תורה, you give yourself the זכות to be protected by ה'. When taking out the תורה, we say עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה (משלי ג:ח). תורה is the tree of life; without the תורה we would be like בני ישראל in מצרים, unknowledgeable and completely disconnected from anything good. May we all merit to have תורה in our everyday lives, and be able to do תשובה as we go into שבת טובה, and to be signed and sealed in the Book of Life.

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