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Parshat HaShavua  
Yeshivat Har Etzion

PARASHAT EKEV

**Shema Yisrael - The Goals of Mitzva Observance**

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I) Introduction

The first three parshiot of Sefer Devarim include two independent speeches: 1) Chapters 1-4; 2) Chapters 5-11. At first glance, the second speech seems to merely elaborate on the first. We shall see, however, that the second speech also adds a new element.

II) Elaboration

The overall structure of the second speech mirrors that of the first - both address the future in light of the past. After highlighting past mistakes in chapters 1-3 of the first speech and chapters 9-10 of the second, Moshe employs the word "ve-ata" (4:1, 10:12) to turn to the present/future. He implores the people not to revert to the recalcitrance of the desert generation. Both "future" sections submit the exodus miracles as proof of God's existence and a basis for mitzva observance (4:34 and 10:21-11:4) (1). Additionally, both speeches include Sinaitic references (chapters 4 and 5).The speeches also stress a similar theme - the linkage of success in Eretz Yisrael to scrupulous mitzva observance. The first speech makes this point in the parallel opening and concluding verses of chapter 4:

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| Verse 1: |  | Verse 40: |
| "Ve-ata Yisrael Shema  el ha-chukim ve-el ha-mishpatim asher anokhi melamed etkhem la'asot lema'an tichyu u-vatem ve-rishtem et ha-aretz asher Hashem Elokei avoteikhem noten lakhem"  Now Israel, listen to the rules  and laws that I am teaching you to do, so that you will remain alive and come to occupy the land that God, Lord of your fathers is giving you |  | "Ve-shamarta  et chukav veet mitzvotav asher anokhi  metzavkha ha-yom….  -lema'an ta'arikh yamim al ha-adama asher Hashem  Elokekha noten lekha."  Keep His decrees and  commandments that I am presenting to you today... and so that you will endure for a long time in the land your Lord, is giving you |

Despite the overall similarity, the verses differ in that verse 1 relates to the initial inheritance while verse 40 describes longevity and quality of life. The second speech elaborates on both linkages.

The second speech subdivides into three sections: chapters 5-6:3; chapters 6:4-8; chapters 9 - 11 - each of which opens with the exclamatory "Shema Yisrael." (2) In the first section, Moshe identifies the Sinaitic revelation as the source of the mitzvot he now intends to transmit. In the second and third sections, he returns to the correlation between success and mitzva observance.

In the parallel opening and concluding passages of the second section he warns Benei Yisrael not to allow success to "get to their heads."

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| 6:10-12 | 8:7-12 |
| "Ve-haya ki yevi'akha Hashem Elokekha el ha-aretz...  latet lakh arim gedolot  ve-tovot asher lo banita  u-vatem melei'im kol tuv  asher lo mileta... ve-akhalta ve-savata. Hishamer lekha pen tishkach et Hashem asher hotzi'akha  me-eretz Mitzrayim mi-beit avadim" | "Ki Hashem Elokekha mevi'akha el eretz tova...  Ve-akhalta ve-savata u-verakhta et Hashem Elokekha el ha-aretz ha-tova asher natan lakh.  Hishamer lekha pen tishkach et  Hashem...pen tokhal ve-savata  u-vatem tovim tivneh ve-yashavta ...ve-ram levavkha ve-shachakhta et Hashem Elokekha  ha-motziakha me-eretz Mitzrayim mi-beit avadim" |
| When God, your Lord, brings  you to the land...to give you  great, flourishing cities that you did not build and houses  filled with all good things  that you did not put there...  will eat and be satisfied.  Be careful that you do not not forget God the one who brought you out of Egypt, house of slavery. ... | For God, your Lord, is  bringing you to a good land  When you eat and are satisfied, you must therefore bless God, your Lord for the good land that he has given you  Be careful that you do not forget God.  Lest you eat and be satisfied and buil the comfortable houses and settle And your heart might then grow haughty and you may forget God, your Lord, the one who brought you out of Egypt, the house of slavery. |

The first section depicts the spoils of war - houses and fruit-laden fields inherited from the nations driven from Eretz Yisrael. The second section imagines the houses and fields Jews will themselves cultivate after the conquest. Since this section focuses on sustenance, not conquest, it refers not only to God having taken the Jews out of Mitzrayim, but primarily on His having sustained them through the desert. Both sections, though, implore the Jews to "remember" God as the facilitator of both military conquest and economic growth.

The speech's third section also relates to the two aspects of life in Eretz Yisrael. Although it opens with the challenges of conquest (Chapters 9-10) (3), it concludes with parallel sections that relate to both aspects. Moshe attaches two "lema'an" phrases to his observance directive:

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| Verse 8 "Lema'an techezku u'va-atem ve-rishtem et ha-aretz..." | Verse 9 "U-lema'an ta'arikhu yamim al ha-adama... eretz zavat chalav u-devash..." |
| So that you will be strong  and come to occupy the land | So that you will long endure on the land... a land flowing with milk and honey. |

Verse 8 refers to conquest; verse 9 to longevity.

The speech concludes with two parallel passages (both open with "ki") that further explicate the two themes. Verses 10-21 exhibit verse 9 by explaining that since Israel, as opposed to Mitzrayim, relies on rainwater, it requires God's constant attention. This will be forthcoming only if Jews observe God's commandments. (4) Verses 22-25 return to Verse 8 and the theme that opened the speech's third section - mitzva observance as a pre-requisite for God's driving away the nations by transplanting to them Benei Yisrael's fear.

III) New Element

Beyond developing the linkage between mitzva observance and success, the second speech also redefines the man-God relationship forged by this observance.

The first speech demands mitzva observance as an expression of man's fear of God's overwhelming power. In chapters 1-3 Moshe describes God's harsh responses to the desert transgressions for which not even Moshe could be forgiven.

In chapter 4, he introduces the intimidating ultimatum of observance or exile. Even minor deviation from or addition to the mitzvot can prove fatal (4:2-3); Sinai is to be commemorated as an event meant to instill eternal fear (4:10), and idolatry must be absolutely avoided. God is "eish okhla" (a consuming fire) and a "Kel kana" (a jealous God) (4:24) who will punish with austere exile. Here too, Moshe demonstrates the severity of God's wrath by pointing to his own inability to secure clemency (4:21-2).

In the concluding section, Moshe illustrates God's might and flammable anger through his heavenly creations, exodus miracles, and Sinaitic fire-encased voice (4:32-9). Moshe's concluding exclamation of God's uniqueness ("oneness") both in heaven and on Earth (4:39) reflects his earlier depiction of:

"Min ha-shamayim hishmi'akha et kolo leyasrekha ve-al ha-aretz herakha et isho ha-gedola u-devarav shama'ta mitokh ha-esh."

(From the heavens He let you hear his voice admonishing you, and on the Earth He showed His great fire so that you heard His words from it (4:36).)

The second speech, though, adds a new dimension tthe God-man relationship. To be sure, fear is still essential. In fact, the speech's first section's detailed Sinaitic description applauds it (5:26, 6:2). However, the later sections complement fear with love.

The second and third sections of the speech form a unit encased by similar passages - section two opens with "Shema Yisrael ... Ve-ahavta... (6:4-9)" and section three concludes with "Vehaya im shamo'a...(11:13-21) - which we recite thrice daily in the form of kriat Shema. In addition to the similar string of mitzvot that concludes both passages (6:7-9 - 11:18-20), the passages also share similar opening verses which characterize "love" as the goal of mitzva observance:

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| 6:4 "Ve-ahavta et Hashem Elokekha bekhol levavkha u-vekhol nafshekha u-vekhol me'odekha" | 11:13 Ve-haya im shamo'a tishme'u el  mitzvotai asher anokhi metzaveh  etkhem ha-yom le-ahava et Hashem Elokeikhem u-le'ovdo bekhol levavkhem u-vekhol nafshekhem" |
| Love God, your Lord, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. | If you are careful to pay heed to my commandments which I am proscribing to you today and if you love God, your Lord, with all your heart and with all your soul... |

The final passage of the third section (already seen earlier as parallel to "Ve-haya im shamo'a") also stresses love in its opening passage:

"Ki im shamor tishmerun et kol ha-mitzva ha-zot asher anokhi metzaveh etkhem la'asotah le-ahava et Hashem Elokeikhem lalekhet bekhol derakhav u-ledavka bo...(11:22)."

(If you carefully safeguard and keep this entire mandate that I prescribe to you today to love God, walk in his ways, and cling to him...)

Fear is mentioned by this last passage, but ironically it is one transferred from the hearts of the Jewish people to that of their enemy (11:25). Love of God serves to alleviate fears.

The second speech also describes God's love of man. When mentioned in the first speech, it related only to the avot. God's selection of Benei Yisrael was a reflection of His love for their progenitors (4:37). The second speech adds God's love for the descendants themselves as a basis for their selection:

"Ki me-ahavat Hashem etkhem u-mishomro et ha-shevu'a asher nishba la-avoteikhem hotzi Hashem etkhem be-yad chazaka ... Hashem Elokekha hu ha-Elokim ha-Kel ha-ne'eman shomer ha-berit ve-hachesed le-ohavav u-leshomrei mitzvotav..."

(It was because of God's love for you and because He was keeping the oath that he made to your fathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand ... God, your Lord, is the supreme being. He is the faithful God, who keeps in mind His covenant and shows goodness to those who love Him and keep His commandments... (7:8-9)")

Although a love relationship is possible for even the descendants, these verses as well as 7:12-3 link it to mitzva observance. God's love for man hinges on man's expression, through observance, of his love for God. If the descendants show their love, they can achieve the unique relationship enjoyed by their avot:

"Ve-ata Yisrael ma Hashem Elokekha shoel me-imakh ki im le-yir'a et Hashem Elokekha lalekhet bekhol derakhav u-le'ahava oto ... Rak ba-avotekha chashak Hashem le-ahava otam va-yivchar be-zar'am achareihem bakhem mi-kol ha'amim..."

(And now Israel what does God want of you? Only that you remain in awe of God, your Lord, that you follow all His paths, and that you love Him ... Still it was only with your ancestors that God developed a closeness. He loved them and therefore chose you, their descendants after them from among all nations...(10:12))

Here God's love for the avot is presented in context of the prescription of a similar mandate to their descendants.

It is noteworthy that the terms "bekhol levavkha(/em)" and "bekhol nafshekha (/em)" are used three times during the second speech (here, 6:3, and 11:13) and numerous more times in later chapters, but only once, tangentially, during the first speech (5). They befit only a love relationship.

In the spirit of the second speech's call for love, it utilizes God's exodus miracles not to intimidate, but, rather, to inspire.

"Ki Hashem Elokeikhem ... oseh mishpat yatom ve-almana ve-ohev ger ... ve-ahavtem et ha-ger ki gerim heyitem be-eretz Mitzrayim ... Hu Tehilatekha ve-hu Elokekha asher asa itkha et ha-gedolot ve-et ha-nora'ot ha-eileh asher ra'u einekha. Be-shiv'im nefesh yardu avotekha Mitzraymah ve-ata samkha Hashem Elokekha ke-kokhvei ha-shamayim larov. Ve-ahavta et Hashem Elokekha..."

(For God your Lord ... brings justice to the orphan and widow and loves the foreigner ... You must also show love toward the foreigner for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt. He is you praise and your God - the one who did for you these great and awesome deeds that you saw with your own eyes. Your ancestors emigrated to Egypt with only seventy individuals, but now God, your Lord, has made you as numerous as the stars of the sky. So love God, your Lord... (10:17-11:1).)

The exodus expressed God's love for the Jews which they show appreciation for by mimicking it in their relationships with others and reciprocating it towards God.

IV) Conclusion

Of course, fear and love are both essential to a properly balanced relationship with God. Moshe opens Sefer Devarim cultivating fear - the more basic component of man's relationship with God. He uses their own experiences to sharpen their appreciation of His power, temper, and relentless wrath.

After establishing fear, he urges Benei Yisrael to intensify their relationship with God. These same experiences are now tapped for the love and compassion they similarly express.

May we merit to properly develop both aspects of a balanced relationship with God.

Endnotes:

(1) See especially the similar formulations of verse 4:3,9 and 11:7 which stress the exodus having been a personal experience.(2) In truth even this basic introductory phrase - Shema Yisrael - originates in chapter 4 which uses the root "reiya" regarding mitzvot (4:5), but stresses that only "shemi'a" can apply to God Himself (4:12, 15). (3) See especially the opening of the speech (9:1-6).(4) Parshat "Ve-haya im shamo'a" concludes with a pasuk not found in the parallel "Shema" parsha - "Lema'an yirbu...," because the pasuk's predicate - "ki-ymei ha-shamayim al ha-aretz" refers back to the shamayim and aretz described in the unit's opening verses (11:10-12). In truth the terms' origins are in chapter 4 of the first speech which develops the theme extensively. (5) Their usage in 4:29 is an exception mentioned in the context of teshuva - a topic broached only tangentially.