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TORAH PERSPECTIVES

RABBI SHMUEL BECHER



THE BRICK'S PERSPECTIVE

Towards the end of this week's parsha the pasuk relates how the z'keinim witnessed a vision of a pure sapphire brick beneath the feet of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Rashi explains that the brick was there to represent the Jews exile in Miztrayim, during which they were forced to build pyramids out of bricks. Seemingly, this would be a fulfillment of עָמַו אֲנֹכִי בַצֵּרָה, in that Hashem wanted a symbolic representation of the pain His people were experiencing in golus. Yet Klal Yisroel had just been taken out of Miztrayim, so what צָרָה was there for Hashem to (so to speak) empathize with? To add another layer of confusion to the vision of the z'keinim, Rashi further explains that the brick was made of sapphire in order to represent the "light and happiness" that Klal Yisroel were experiencing at that time of matan Torah. Why was a symbol of suffering the very mode through which Hashem chose to convey the exhilaration of this most special moment in history?

R' Yeruchom answers very succinctly, and some what mysteriously, that although people tend to push away any painful memories at times of happiness the truth is that the two should co-exist.

Perhaps the message he is trying to convey is that the struggles one faces are a part of the journey that molds one into who they are. Difficult though they were, one must realize that it was overcoming those very difficulties that built them and made them into who they are now. The mishna in Avos says לְפִנּוּם צִעֲרָא אֲגָרָא. I once heard that this is not to say that there is more reward for the pain but rather a more fundamental point. The only way to receive reward, the only way we grow, is through צִעַר. If something is not difficult it has no lasting effect. It must be clear that if a person did grow there were hardships that he had to overcome, and they should be celebrated not hidden.

We know that the ultimate goal of Klal Yisroel going through Miztrayim was in order to be shape them into a people able to receive the Torah. It would follow therefore, that at the culmination of Klal Yisroel's collective growth towards

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RABBI AVI GOLDSTEIN

THE IBN EZRA

Rav Avraham Ibn Ezra was born in Tudela, Spain, in approximately 1090. Not much is known about his life, especially in his younger years. However, in 1140, he traveled to Rome, where he published his first sefer, a commentary on Koheles. Throughout the rest of his life, he traveled throughout Italy and France. In France, he met Rabeinu Tam and corresponded with Rashbam. Some sources claim that he traveled around northern Africa, while others say this was not possible. He may have also traveled to England (a sefer, called Iggeres HaShabbos, is ascribed to him, and clearly states that it was written in London. However, its authenticity is uncertain).

He published about 100 seforim throughout his lifetime, around 40 of which are still extant. He is most known for his commentary on most of Tanach, which is known as the go-to sefer when it comes to dikduk and pashut pshat, which the Ramban greatly respected, although he does argue fiercely many times. The Ibn Ezra (also popularly pronounced "Even Ezra" or "Ebn Ezra") felt that besides for the drash, there is value to the simple pshat of the pasuk (which, since it was separate from drash, was not subject to the way Chazal explain the pesukim whether in halacha or aggada, and also had absolutely no halachic ramifications). He also writes against Christian, Karaite, and Tzadoki interpretations of the Chumash, and describes debates that he had with the Tzadokim.

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ZEMANIM

🕯️ CANDLE LIGHTING | 5:52

SHABBOS ENDS: 6:56 | RABEINU TAM 7:23

that goal, all the pain they went through to get there would also be represented. Hashem was showing the z'keinim that the galus was part of a process. The brick itself was symbolic of the "light and happiness" of matan Torah, for it was representative of the struggles that had made them into the people they were, the people who were able to accept the Torah.

Chazal tell us that Hashem is מקדים רפואה למכה. Asks R' Levi Yitzchok, if so why is there any illness at all? He answers with a beautiful idea. It is known that in order to fully appreciate something, one must first experience a lack there of. After one recovers from an illness, there is a much deeper appreciation for the health one has. Says R' Levi Yitzchok, that level of appreciation is the bracha that Hashem is bestowing on a person. The higher level of awareness of Hashem's kindness is itself the bracha. This is why it is necessary for there to be a maka before there is a refuah. In order for Hashem to give of Himself to a person, there must be a vacuum to be filled, a space for the higher level of closeness to be experienced.

Understanding how our past experiences have shaped us can help put our life experiences in perspective. To realize that we are a result of all that we have gone through whether pleasurable or painful is both a tremendous source of chizuk and, as R' Levi Yitzchok says, a brachain of itself. May we all be zoche to truly experience all of our lives and see the berachos that Hashem has given us. ▲

Sages through the Ages >>> continued from front

He wrote several seforim on dikduk, feeling that it was especially important, and wrote a sefer called Yesod Mora about the reasons for mitzvos. The Ibn Ezra wrote extraordinarily concisely, and has an incredible ability to use few words to paint a very big picture.

The Ibn Ezra also wrote several beautiful piyyutim. One of them (א-ל אהד בראגני), is still sung by some on Friday night, and the Chasam Sofer writes that it is clear to him that it was written in ruach hakodesh.

He also wrote many works dealing with astrology. He believed in astrology, and felt that he had bad luck. He was extremely poor his whole life, and wrote a famous poem describing how difficult his mazal was, and writes that the galgal hamazalos stopped when he was born, meaning to say that no good luck ever crossed his path. He adds that if he were to sell candles the sun would never set, and that if he were to sell burial shrouds then no one would ever die. He always had a very difficult time with parnassa, and all of his children dies in his lifetime.

He had much correspondence with Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, and some say that they were also mechutanim; that the Ibn Ezra's son married Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's daughter.

One famous story about the Ibn Ezra is when he had some sort of eye ailment, and traveled to the Rambam (who was known as a highly regarded doctor), who had a clinic in France at the time. When the Rambam saw him coming, he told his servant to take the Ibn Era and lock him up in a tiny

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DID YOU KNOW?



RABBI BINYAMIN SCHIERMEYER

PARSHAS MISHPATIM

That Calev Ben Yefuneh and Moshe Rabbeinu were brothers-in-law? (Rashi 24:14)

1

2

That the only time that the Torah actually states the wording of "Shalosh Regalim" is in this weeks parsha. (23:14)

3

That all of Klal Yisrael wanted and accepted the Torah, because if even one person would have protested the accepting of the Torah, the Torah would not have been given. (Sefer Chasidim)

„מטילת סיוט לטא, יולל
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PARSHA PIX SOURCE


EVERYBODY LOVES A GOOD SMOOTHIE

Everyone loves a good smoothie. The sweet fruity taste in its blended, frozen form can really hit the spot on a hot day. However, like many of life's delights, it comes with its complications. Many of the fruits typically used in such drinks are known to be the home of numerous insects. This being the case, the question arises, must we check for bugs in each fruit prior to throwing it in the blender? May we purchase smoothies in a place where the fruits were likely not checked?

To be clear, there's no doubt that it's forbidden to eat bugs. The Torah is replete with negative commandments forbidding us from eating these creepy crawlers. In fact, the Gemara lists four separate prohibitions one can violate by simple eating an ant! However, not all scenarios are alike. In some circumstances we are more stringent than others.

Generally speaking, when we discuss the issue of bugs being in a food we'd like to eat, it's a matter of potential; we aren't actually sure that there are bugs in the food. Based on the level of our concern for the bugs, is our level of stringency. Therefore, a fruit that isn't generally known to house bugs, such as an orange or a melon, wouldn't require any checking. It's safe to assume that it's bug-free. If however the fruit is known to be infested, it would need to be cleaned and then checked for any remaining insects. This would apply even if in most cases the fruit doesn't contain bugs — as long as it's common to find some, we are required to check. (The process of cleaning is complicated and beyond the scope of this article.)

There is one saving grace, which is that the prohibition to eat these creatures is subject to the regular rules of rov. Therefore, in many situations since the majority of a mixture is permissible food, a bug shouldn't create a problem since it's battul in the mixture. Mid'Rabbanan, however, the laws of rov are suspended in a scenario where the bug is in its complete form since it's what we call a berya (a complete creation). Because the issur is a full being that was at some point a living being, the Rabbanan decreed that it's too prominent to become nullified

Therefore, regardless of the ratio of issur to heter, it would be prohibited to eat the mixture. This stringency is built on the fact that the bug has a certain prominence while it's in its full form. However, if the bug is cut up or blended, it is no longer considered prominent and thus falls under the standard rules of rov. At this point it would seem simple — since the ingredients in a smoothie get blended, there should be no concern. Even in light of the issur d'Rabbanan that prevents rov, there should be no problem since it loses its status of berya when it gets crushed. Shockingly, it's not that simple. The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. 95) paskens that there's an issur d'Rabbanan to be mevatal issur lchatchila. This means that although issur that fell into heter is battul, one may not actively pour the issur in to cause the bittul.

Following this logic, it would likewise be prohibited to chop up a berya as this would cause it to automatically be battul. If so, one has to ask, is it permissible to add fruits to a smoothie knowing that there's a decent chance that there are bugs in them? While clearly his intention is only to blend his fruit, never thinking about bugs, on the possibility that bugs are present, he is certainly chopping a berya, which would otherwise assure his drink. By doing so, he's essentially actively being mevatal the issur.

The Mechaber in siman 84 paskens that if some ants fell into honey, a person can heat it up until it "melts" and then strain out the ants. Seemingly, the Mechaber's prescription involves bittul issur

l'chat'chilah, since by heating up the honey he actively moves the taam from the ants throughout the honey, causing the team to be battul. Both the Taz and the Shach explain that in such a case, there's no problem of bittul issur l'chat'chilah since heating it up is for the preparation of the food and not to be mevatal the issur. To the contrary, this is the process of removing the issur. The Noda BeYehuda agrees with this idea, but only to a point. He maintains that this is only permissible since the ants already fell in. Doing this l'chat'chilah would be forbidden. For example, if someone has an empty pot that has been infused with taam of issur, it's forbidden to cook in the pot even though there will be shishim and his intention is only to cook, not to be mevatal the issur.

Based on the above, what emerges is a machlokes whether or not one may add fruits known to be infested, to be blended in a smoothie. According to the Taz and Shach, it should be fine since his intentions are only on the preparation of the food. According to the Noda BeYehuda, however, this would be forbidden, since adding a fruit known to be infested would constitute bittul issur l'chat'chilah.

The Chochmas Adam (siman 84) cites the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch allowing one to heat up the honey and then remove the ants. He states clearly that since the motive of the man is to prepare his honey and not to be mevatal the taam of the ants, there's no issue at all.

The Chochmas Adam writes further that the whole issur livatal issur l'chat'chilah only applies when you're dealing with definite issur. Accordingly, we'll need to deal with each fruit individually. Blackberries, for instance, are known to have bugs and be extremely difficult to clean. For this reason, they assume the status of being muchzak bitolaim — assumed to have bugs in them. It would therefore be forbidden to actively place them in the blender to add to a smoothie. On the other hand, melons are generally bug-free, and are thus permissible to add to a smoothie. These two examples are the extremes, whereas many other fruits are much more questionable and therefore the subject of much debate. As an example, anyone who checks strawberries regularly is sure to encounter numerous bugs clinging to the outside of the strawberries at some point. However, the majority of the time there are no bugs. This fact renders strawberries a miut hamatzui — a common minority. Thus, if one wants to eat the strawberry whole, he must check for bugs first. Regarding blending them for a smoothie, however, we can utilize this second svara of the Chochmas Adam since it's not clear that there are bugs here at all.

At the end of the day, this issue is the point of dispute among contemporary poskim. Kashrus agencies each adopt a policy regarding the use of different fruits based on the psakim of their respective Rabbanim. However, many are willing to be lenient in scenarios where both of the aforementioned sevaros apply. Hence, many Rabbanim will pasken that one may buy fruits that although sometimes have bugs, are generally bug-free, and blend them for a smoothie or the like. Since the presence of bugs is in question, and additionally, the reason he is crushing the fruits is only to enhance the food, we can be meikel. In essence this view is decidedly saying, we aren't comfortable relying on either of the two svaros by itself, but in situations where both are present, we can be lenient.

It must be reiterated that this matter is complicated and everyone is advised to consult with their own Rav. ▲



RABBI ELI PERELMAN

HOW DOES THIS SCENE CONNECT TO THE PARSHA?



SEE PAGE 2 FOR THE ANSWER

Sages through the Ages >>> continued from front

room in the basement, and told him that the only thing he should give him was an empty glass for which to cry into. After being thrown into the prison, the Ibn Ezra, who had an extremely difficult life, sat there sobbing. The Rambam instructed his servant to check every few minutes to see if the cup was filled with tears. Eventually, after it was overflowing, the Rambam had him released, and explained to him that when a person yearns very much for somebody, there are little worms that get created in the eye that have potential to blind a person. If the person cries, the worms leave together with the tears, and explained that he had the Ibn Ezra locked up in order to heal him this way.

However, as fantastic and well-known as this story is, its accuracy is doubtful, as the evidence that the Ibn Ezra ever met the Rambam is negligible. Still, there is a letter from the Rambam (printed in Igros HaRambam) in which he writes to his son that he should only learn

Chumash with the commentary of the Ibn Ezra. However, this letter's veracity is also doubted by some (specifically, the Maharshal).

Interestingly, although he was not one of the Baalei Tosfos, the Ibn Ezra is mentioned in Tosfos in three different places in Shas (ר"ה י"ג; קידושין; תענית).

The Ibn Ezra, although he lived a life of suffering and knew no rest, still lives on through his many seforim that are still learned today and through the method of pshat, something for which he is still known as the father of. He passed away in about 1164, and four different places claim to have his kever.

(Primary source: Harav Aharon Lopiansky (EshelPublications.org)) ▲

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