

We read in our *Parashah* (9:1), "Hear, *Yisrael*, today you cross the Jordan, to come and drive out nations that are greater and mightier than you . . ." *Midrash Rabbah* comments on this verse: What *Berachah* does one recite if he drinks water when he is thirsty? Rabbi Tarfon says, "*Borei nefashot rabbot ve'chesronan*"--commonly translated: "Who creates many living things and that which they are lacking." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

What is the connection between the blessing of *Borei Nefashot* and our verse? R' Yoel Teitelbaum z"l (1887-1979; *Satmar Rebbe*) explains: R' Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum z"l (1808-1883; rabbi of Sighet, Hungary, and the *Satmar Rebbe's* grandfather) asks for what purpose *Hashem* caused the Patriarchs (Sarah, Rivka, and Rachel) to be barren. He answers that *Hashem* did this so that the Patriarchs would pray for their wives, setting a precedent so that future generations could be given children in response to prayer. R' Y.Y. Teitelbaum likens this to a king who was traveling and was thirsty. Members of his entourage offered to travel great distances to bring the king water, but the king said, "Dig a well right here so that future travelers will not be thirsty."

The *Satmar Rebbe* continues: The word "*rabbot*" in *Borei Nefashot*, the blessing recited after drinking water, can mean "great people" (see *Rashi* to *Tehilim* 3:2). As such, the blessing would be read: "Who creates great people (like the Patriarchs and Matriarchs) and that which they are lacking," i.e., *Hashem* caused them to be lacking children so that they could open a pathway for future generations to pray for children and be answered.

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Shabbat

R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l (*Ramchal*; Italy and *Eretz Yisrael*; 1707-1747) writes: Given the nature of this world, it should have been completely *Chol* / mundane, with no built-in *Kedushah* / holiness at all (see below). Nevertheless, this world needed to contain some *Kedushah* from the outset so that the "darkness" would not overpower man. In his wisdom, *Hashem* calculated everything precisely: how much *Chol*, how much *Kedushah*, where should the boundaries between them be, etc.

Ramchal continues: *Hashem's* wisdom decreed that this *Kedushah* should recur on a seven-day cycle. The number seven represents completeness and perfection, for all of existence was created in that number of days, and no more time was needed for Creation. This cycle of seven days will continue until the end of the 6,000 years during which mankind is meant to toil to perfect the world.

Ramchal adds: *Shabbat* is a great gift that *Hashem* gave to the Jewish People because He wants to have a holy nation. It was not given to any other nation, for this level is neither fitting nor intended for them.

The Jewish People's behavior on *Shabbat* should be in line with the lofty level that they attain on this day. Toiling in this world connects a person to materialism and drags him down, lowering him from the level and the glory that should have been his. Man must disconnect from all of this on *Shabbat*, *Ramchal* writes. Of course, to detach from one's body entirely is impossible. Therefore, *Hashem's* wisdom calculated the degree to which we must detach. This explains why some activities are prohibited on *Shabbat* and not others.

(*Derech Hashem* IV ch.7)

Why does *Ramchal* write that this world should have had no built-in *Kedushah*? R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) explains: Man's task in this world is to sanctify the *Chol* and create *Kedushah*. Therefore, one might argue that this world should have started out containing no *Kedushah* at all.

(*Derech L'chaim*)

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Moshe Yosef ben Meir Hakohen a"h (26 Av)

“Take care lest you forget Hashem, your Elokim . . .” (8:11)

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (1210-1263; Spain) writes: The Torah is cautioning us to remember *Hashem* at all times. This means adopting behaviors that follow logically from remembering *Hashem*--for example, *Yir’ah* / reverence, *Tzni’ut* / discretion, and generally having refined thoughts and *Middot* / character traits. By remembering *Hashem*, members of the holy nation can acquire every characteristic that is beautiful and which serves as a crown to the one who possesses it. (*Sha’arei Teshuvah* 3:27)

R’ Gershon Edelstein z”l (1923-2023; Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) adds: Remembering *Hashem* means that at every turn a person asks himself, “What does *Hashem* expect of me right now.” R’ Yonah is teaching us that having such an attitude is not a *Middat Chassidut* / extra piety; it is a basic obligation from the Torah. Indeed, this obligation is found in the very first paragraph of the *Shulchan Aruch*, where R’ Moshe Isserles z”l (“*Rema*”; 1530-1572; rabbi of Cracow, Poland, and author of the glosses on *Shulchan Aruch* that adapt that work for *Ashkenazim*) writes: “‘I place the Name before me always’ is a great principle of the Torah.” (*Peninei Chizuk*)

“Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem, your Elokim, ask of you? Only to have Yir’ah / reverence of Hashem, your Elokim . . .” (10:12)

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 33b) asks: Is *Yir’ah* a small thing? (Why does the verse say “only”? Attaining *Yir’ah* is extremely difficult!)

The *Gemara* answers: Yes, for Moshe it was a small thing. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Nissim (see facing page) asks: In this verse, Moshe is speaking to the Jewish People, not to himself. How is the fact that *Yir’ah* was “small” for Moshe relevant to us?

He explains: We read (*Bereishit* 29:20), “Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him like a few days, because of his love for her.” How was that so? Usually, when a person anticipates something, the waiting time seems to drag on and on!

The answer, R’ Nissim writes, is that the verse should be understood as follows: Yaakov worked seven years for Rachel, but it seemed to him as inconsequential as a few days of work compared to the immense reward that awaited him at the end--i.e., the right to marry Rachel. Similarly, our *Gemara* means that once one understands the value of *Yir’ah*, it will be as easy for him to attain as it was for Moshe.

(This may be compared to the difference between telling someone, “I climbed this mountain, so it should be easy for you,” versus, “I climbed this mountain and saw the incredible view. Once you do the same, you will realize that the effort it took was nothing compared to the reward.”)

(*Derashot Ha’Ran* #10)

“Hear, Yisrael, today you cross the Jordan, to come and drive out nations that are greater and mightier than you . . . Do not say in your heart, when Hashem pushes them away from before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness Hashem brought me to possess this Land . . .’” (9:1,4)

Earlier in the *Parashah* (8:12-14), we read, “Lest you eat and be satisfied, and you build good houses and settle. And your cattle and sheep and goats increase, and you increase silver and gold for yourselves, and everything that you have will increase. And your heart will become haughty, and you will forget *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, Who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of slavery.” The Torah continues, cautioning *Bnei Yisrael* (8:17-18), “You may say in your heart, ‘My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!’ You shall remember *Hashem*, your *Elokim*--that it was He Who gives you strength to make wealth.”

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi z”l (Spain; 1320-1376) notes a contrast between the two sets of verses quoted above: The verses (from chapter 8) that speak of material wealth express a concern that we may attribute our wealth to our own talents instead of recognizing that *Hashem* gives us strength to make wealth. In contrast, the verses (from chapter 9) that speak of the conquest of *Eretz Yisrael* express no such concern, for the simple reason that *Bnei Yisrael* could make no such a mistake, for the Canaanites are “nations that are greater and mightier than you.” *Bnei Yisrael* were not likely to deny *Hashem*’s role in the Land’s conquest.

Instead, the Torah expresses a different concern: *Bnei Yisrael* might conclude that *Hashem* drove the Canaanites out because *Bnei Yisrael* were righteous and deserved the Land. Such is human nature, R’ Nissim writes. One way or another, a person will give himself credit for his own success. Therefore the Torah reminds *Bnei Yisrael* (9:6-7), “You should know that not because of your righteousness does *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, give you this good Land to possess it, for you are a stiff-necked people. Remember, do not forget, that you provoked *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, in the Wilderness; from the day you left the land of Egypt until your arrival at this place, you have been rebels against *Hashem*.” It is only thanks to *Hashem*’s kindness that He gives us *Eretz Yisrael*. (*Derashot Ha’Ran* #10)

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Similarly, the *Satmar Rebbe* continues, why did *Hashem* cause *Bnei Yisrael* to face off against nations that were greater and mightier than they? Why didn’t He just give them the Land? He did this to pave the way for later generations of the Jewish People to defeat their enemies--the very same concept alluded to by the blessing of *Borei Nefashot*.

(*Kuntrei Chiddushei Torah U’derashot*)